



Joint Media Release



19 November 2007

For Immediate Release

Aboriginal Health and Health Workforce Sectors Unite to Tackle Aboriginal Health

Launch of Historic Partnership on Monday 19th November Sheraton on the Park, Sydney

NACCHO and Rural Health Workforce Australia are joining forces today to improve Aboriginal health outcomes by addressing one of the key factors contributing to their poorer health status - health workforce shortages.

The level of chronic diseases such as diabetes, renal disease, heart disease, strokes and hypertension are much higher than in the rest of the population and contribute to the 17 year life expectancy gap. Many of these premature deaths could be prevented through timely access to comprehensive primary health care services, including GPs.

Chair of NACCHO, Mr Henry Councillor said "Lack of access to health professionals for Aboriginal Australians is reflected in the statistics for the Medical Benefits Schedule (Medicare). For every dollar spent on non-Indigenous Australians under the MBS, only 39 cents is spent on Indigenous Australians. These statistics mean that Aboriginal peoples have much lower levels of access to the primary health care system –due in part to a shortage of health professionals."

Mr Jim Birch, Chair of Rural Health Workforce Australia said "This is a priority area for us because, whilst there is a shortage of health workers across Australia, the additional health needs of Aboriginal peoples mean that we must develop targeted strategies and campaigns to encourage health professionals to live and work in Aboriginal communities."

This historic partnership brings together two organisations with expertise in health workforce and Aboriginal health.

Jim Birch explains, "In order to make any long term impact on the health status of Aboriginal peoples, we must support health professionals to live and work in communities. We can make a difference to close the health inequality gap including the life expectancy gap."

Interview & Visual Opportunities:

NACCHO Outgoing Chair, Mr Henry Councillor 0419 929 422

Rural Health Workforce Australia Chair Mr Jim Birch 0401 122 367

200 NACCHO members including doctors and Aboriginal Health Workers

When and Where:

12 pm Monday 19 November

Grand Ballroom, Sheraton on the Park, 161 Elizabeth Street Sydney

For further media information, please contact

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NACCHO Media & Communications Officer Dr Margaret Chirgwin on 0424 644 465**