



# NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community  
Controlled Health Organisation

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**3 February 2023**

## **World Cancer Day: Closing the Care Gap**

**The avoidable mortality rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is over 3 times that of other Australians.**

While mortality rates have been declining for other Australians for the last two decades there has been an uptrend for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Pat Turner, NACCHO CEO says, "This disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is unacceptable and NACCHO has been collecting data and evidence over the last two years for the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cancer Plan. This will be presented to Government soon." "This year's World Cancer Day theme is *Closing the Care Gap*, reinforces the National Agreement to Close the Gap."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in rural and remote areas are less likely to be diagnosed and less likely to receive treatment than other Australians. The discrepancy in five year survival rate between major cities and remote areas is particularly stark for certain cancers including lung cancer (12% compared with 6% and head and neck cancer (47% compared with 31%).

Donnella Mills the Chair of NACCHO comments, "We know many of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people fear cancer and this fear and the lack of culturally safe programs prevents people from participating in screening which is key to early diagnosis and treatment."

The Plan will cover culturally safe and appropriate programs in areas including: cancer prevention, screening, early diagnosis, treatment, supportive care and the wrap around support.

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*NACCHO is the national peak body representing 145 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across the country on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing issues. NACCHO is the third largest employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, with over 3,500 out of the 6,000 staff working in ACCHOs being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.*

**Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands**

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