



# Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

C/- PO Box 280 Deakin West ACT 2600 ABN 64 051 645 674  
[www.healthreform.org.au](http://www.healthreform.org.au)

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### 7 BETTER WAYS TO SPEND \$7 BILLION – INDIGENOUS HEALTH

The Australian Healthcare Reform Alliance (AHCRA) today called on the Government to re-direct funding in the upcoming Budget from the \$7 billion private health insurance (PHI) rebate to improve the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

AHCRA is a coalition of peak health organisations working together to create a better and fairer health system for Australia's future.

"Indigenous health is the number one health issue facing Australia. It is unacceptable that in Australia today Indigenous people have significantly poorer health and a much lower life expectancy than the non-Indigenous population," Jennifer Doggett, AHCRA Chair, said today.

"It is also unacceptable that despite their much greater health need, Indigenous Australians receive much less benefit from the \$7b PHI rebate than non-Indigenous Australians (due to their much lower levels of PHI membership).

"Re-directing funding from the PHI rebate to Indigenous health services would help address this imbalance in funding. This should be used to support a comprehensive population-wide approach that incorporates the social determinants of health and empowers people to take control of their own lives and improve their health through culturally appropriate mechanisms.

"At the centre of efforts to close the health and life expectancy gap are community- controlled health services which provide person-centred and to culturally relevant care, including both a biomedical and preventative health focus. These services, and their representative body NACCHO, require more consistent and assured long-term funding to enable effective planning and capacity development that will deliver the best possible outcomes.

"Therefore, AHCRA supports the allocation of funding from the PHI rebate to achieve the following:

- Allocate secure long-term funding to progress the strategies and actions identified in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan Implementation Plan.
- Provide secure, long-term funding for the Rural Health Outreach Fund and Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program.
- Allocate sufficient and secure long-term funding to the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector to support the sector's continued provision of Indigenous-led, culturally sensitive healthcare.
- Build and support the capacity of Indigenous health leaders by committing secure long-term funding to the Indigenous National Health Leadership Forum.
- Reinststate funding for a clearinghouse modelled on the previous Closing the Gap clearinghouse, as recommended in the latest draft of the Fifth National Mental Health Plan.

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“The health and well-being of Indigenous Australians should be a higher priority for funding than PHI industry subsidies. AHCRA calls on the Federal Government to re-direct funding from the \$7b rebate in order to close the health and life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians,” Ms Doggett said.

**For further information or comment:**

Jennifer Doggett, AHCRA Chair, 0403 325 980

*This proposal forms part of AHCRA’s ‘7 better ways to spend \$7 billion’ campaign. The aim of this campaign is to highlight the benefits of redirecting funding from the private health insurance rebate to areas of greater need in the health system. [www.healthreform.org.au](http://www.healthreform.org.au)*