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Minister for Health and Ageing

Budget 2003-2004 Indigenous Affairs – Health fact sheet

**Better Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
56% boost to the Primary Health Care Access Program (PHCAP)**

The Government has again built on its commitment to indigenous primary care with a 56% boost to the primary health care access program (PHCAP).

Initially announced in the 2001-02 Budget, the \$19.7 million increase will flow this year, raising the program to around \$55 million in 2003-04.

The boost will expand this exciting program to high priority sites in Western Australia, the Top End, NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT.

	2002-03 \$m	2003-04 \$m	2004-05 \$m	2005-06 \$m
2001-02 Budget measure	0	19.7	20.5	21.4
1999-2000 Budget measure	33.5	35.0	36.4	38.0
Total increase	33.5	54.7	56.9	59.4

Under PHCAP, local health systems are strengthened to improve access to comprehensive primary health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and additional services developed based on priorities identified through the regional and local area planning processes.

PHCAP is being implemented in partnership with State and Territory Governments, the community controlled health sector and ATSIC and in close collaboration with the local communities.

The initial allocation of funds is allowing the implementation of PHCAP in 17 priority areas across South Australia, Central Australia and Queensland, two capacity building sites in Queensland and for the continuation of funding for the former Aboriginal Coordinated Care Trials in NSW, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

BUDGET
2003-04

Overall approach

To achieve the Government's commitment to raising the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, a two pronged approach is being implemented, which aims to:

- Improve accessibility and responsiveness of the mainstream health system; and
- Provide complementary action through indigenous specific programs.

Improvements to the accessibility and responsiveness of the mainstream health system that have been implemented over the past few years include:

- **Access to medicines** directly from Aboriginal Medical Services at the time of consultation without a formal prescription or charge (under Section 100 of the *National Health Act, 1953*) is an example of our improved mainstream services. Reported expenditure on the relative level of **Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS)** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared with the general population has increased by 50% since 1996.
- Action has been taken to improve **access to Medicare**, including through improved enrolment and availability of services funded through Medicare. Reported expenditure on the relative level of **Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS)** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared with the general population has increased by 50% since 1996.

Action in relation to raising the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is starting to show improvements. For example:

- **Pneumococcal and Influenza programs** tackling the high incidence of vaccine preventable diseases among Indigenous Australians. In Far North Queensland, cases of vaccine preventable pneumococcal disease have fallen to a quarter of the levels reported in 1993-94.
- **A STD and HIV control program** in a South Australian health service. Outcomes include a 5-year reduction in gonorrhoea prevalence from 14.3% to 5.3% and a chlamydia prevalence decrease from 9% to 4.5%.
- **A blood pressure and renal treatment program** in the Tiwi Islands has led to significant health improvements including a halving of the risk of dialysis and death.
- **A comprehensive diabetes management study** in the Torres Strait, leading to a 32 per cent reduction in hospital admissions. Another study in the Kimberley led to improvements in insulin levels and cardiovascular risk factors.
- **Respiratory disease mortality falls** in the Northern Territory, from over 5 deaths per 1,000 persons in 1986 to around 2 per 1,000 in 1999.

As part of the Howard Government's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, total spending on specific Indigenous health services will rise to more than \$258 million per annum in 2003-04. This is a real increase of nearly 90 per cent since the Government took office in 1996. \$55 million per annum of this funding is committed to the continuation and expansion of the Primary Health Care Access Program.