



Cooperative Research Centre for  
Aboriginal Health

# Media Release

## Making real inroads into improving Indigenous health outcomes

June 18 2008

Cairns will play host to more than 120 researchers, community health activists and managers and health workers from Aboriginal health services and government health agencies when the Audit & Best Practice for Chronic Disease (ABCD) project holds its annual planning meeting this week.

Funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH), ABCD is a continuous quality improvement project with 58 services formally enrolled across four States and Territories through five regional hubs.

The project works with health centre staff to identify strengths and weaknesses in their systems, set goals for improvement, develop strategies to achieve these goals and assess the effectiveness of these strategies in improving key aspects of primary health care.

Project leader, Professor Ross Bailie says the purpose of the Cairns meeting is to discuss key lessons from the project to date, plan future development of the project and more specifically to develop strategies to strengthen the potential for wider learning from the project.

“It’s a forum where participating sites can share their experiences of implementing the ABCD project and celebrate the improvements in patient care, and health outcomes, that follow better data collection and analysis.

“Our experiences in this project strongly indicate the professionalism of health staff and the strong desire of Aboriginal-controlled health services to understand their strengths and weaknesses and make improvements.

“It really is about providing the tools so people can be better informed and therefore make better decisions about treatment and other priorities,” said Professor Bailie.

Professor Bailie said that data which shows the improvements in quality of care and of health outcomes associated with completion of successive Continuous Quality Improvement cycles will be presented at the meeting in Cairns.

One Aboriginal community health service which has already benefited from the ABCD project is the Broken Hill-based Maari Ma Aboriginal health service which has been a project participant for the past four years.

CEO, Richard Weston, said the project has provided Maari Ma with “solid information on our performance”.

“It’s very important for us to be able to measure the effectiveness of our work; to see where we are performing and where we need to do better and the ABCD project has helped us achieve that,” said Richard. “In the four years we’ve been involved we have been able to measure improvements in blood sugar levels, blood pressure and indicators for renal disease in our patients.

“Given diabetes, kidney failure and heart disease are the big killers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people this data shows we are winning; it’s really good for the morale of our front line staff to see where our work is making a difference,” he said.

Professor Bailie said 58 Indigenous primary health care centres from NT, WA, NSW and north Queensland are formally enrolled in the project and Canada, Fiji and South Africa have all expressed interest in using the project methodology and tools.

The project has led to improvements in health systems as well as delivery of services according to best practice guidelines (such as more regular monitoring of blood pressure and blood glucose) and intermediate health outcomes (such as better control of blood glucose and cholesterol).

**The ABCD Annual Planning meeting is being held at the Cairns Convention Centre on June 18 – 19.**

**For further information go to:**

**<http://www.crcah.org.au/research/abcd.html>**

**Or call CRCAH Communications - Alastair Harris 0409 658 177**