



Cooperative Research Centre for
Aboriginal Health

Media Release

COAG investment strongly welcomed

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Australia's leading Aboriginal health research organisation has strongly welcomed yesterday's Council of Australian Government commitment to invest in Aboriginal health initiatives.

The COAG Communiqué released yesterday announced an agreement for an Indigenous Health package worth \$1.6 billion over four years, with the Commonwealth contributing \$806 million and the States \$772 million.

Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health chief executive, Mick Gooda, says the COAG commitment is amongst the largest investment into improving Aboriginal health ever made and will be welcomed by all Australians.

"We are particularly pleased that the package represents a coordinated investment from both federal and state and territory governments and appears to signal a new cooperative approach to resolving the appalling health suffered by our people," said Mick Gooda.

"The targeting of chronic disease; particularly the risk factors for chronic disease such as smoking does suggest that COAG is truly identifying its Aboriginal health priorities based in real research evidence and this is something that will please the Aboriginal health sector."

Mr Gooda said he hoped that when further details of the COAG funds are released that there would be money set aside to support the development of good research and proper evaluation of existing and future Aboriginal health programs.

Professor Ian Anderson, CRCAH Research Director and Chair of the Federal Government's National Indigenous Health Equality Council, joined Mick Gooda in welcoming the communiqué but said that there was that there was a continuing challenge posed to closing the gap by discrepancies across the country in the collection of Aboriginal health data.

"One of the principle underpinnings for any successful closing the gap strategy must be the collection of high quality and reliable data and that is just not happening in a number of Australian state and territory jurisdictions," said Professor Anderson. "This will continue to be a critical challenge to COAG because unless we get this right it will be extremely hard to know when the gap is closed."

Professor Anderson also nominated Aboriginal health workforce development as a key priority for investment. "I look forward to seeing some of the finer details of where the \$1.6 billion will be spent but I believe that a strong professional Aboriginal health workforce, including doctors, nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers and researchers is another prerequisite for health equity between Indigenous and other Australians."

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