

Media Release
Searching for Health Equity

July 10 2008

Health experts and activists from across the country and the world are meeting in Adelaide today to discuss ways of increasing health equity and addressing the health impacts of social determinants including education, employment, housing, governance and racism.

The conference was earlier opened by Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, who announced the formation of the new National Indigenous Health Equality Council which will advise the Australian Government on how best to achieve the closing of the health gap between Aboriginal and other Australians.

Announcing that CRC for Aboriginal Health research director, Professor Ian Anderson, will chair the new Council, the Health Minister told the Symposium that increasing the numbers of Aboriginal health professionals will be one of the Council's first challenges.

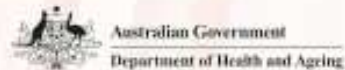
Ms Roxon said that more Aboriginal doctors, nurses and other health workers "may well hold the key to making a lasting difference long term".

"Closing that gap is what marks us out as a decent, humane, compassionate community, with a commitment to equality which we can be proud of," she told the audience. "We are determined to do what is necessary. We are investing in health; we are investing in education; in employment; and in housing."

CRAH executive officer, Mick Gooda, welcomed Professor Anderson's appointment saying that his decades of commitment and intellectual rigour in the Aboriginal health sector meant that he was a "particularly strong choice".

"The continuing appalling state of Aboriginal health is an enormous challenge facing this nation and we need the best Aboriginal leadership possible to drive the response," said Mick Gooda. "Minister Roxon has chosen wisely in picking the new National Indigenous Health Equality Council and the CRC for Aboriginal Health will work closely with the new council in providing evidence of what works and where the gaps are.

"One of the keenest challenges facing us is the way we address the social issues, or determinants, which affect health," he said. "The challenge is that unless we have a coordinated approach to addressing housing, employment, educational and other disparities and end the political marginalisation of Aboriginal people all our efforts in providing quality primary health care will be undermined."



Fulbright Symposium 2008 Healthy People, Prosperous Country

“It is this challenge that has led to the Fulbright Symposium on social determinants of health in Adelaide over the next two days which has brought together experts in the field from around the globe.”

Mick Gooda said that the Minister’s commitment of \$19 million plan to strengthen the Indigenous health workforce announced in her opening address to the Fulbright Symposium this morning was a good start but the deficit of trained Aboriginal doctors, nurses and other health professionals meant that a substantially larger investment would be needed if the Government’s aims were to be achieved.

“There is no other initiative more important in turning our health around than increasing the Aboriginal health workforce.

“However, the initial obstacle to achieving this is the poor educational services provided to so many Aboriginal kids and the poor educational outcomes that condemn so many of our kids to long term unemployment and poverty.

“Education is certainly one of the principal obstacles to improving health,” he said.

Professor Anderson will be delivering a key note presentation to the Fulbright Symposium tomorrow at 10.00am on “Crisis intervention in Indigenous health – issues raised by the Northern Territory intervention.

Fulbright Symposium *Healthy People, Prosperous Country*

Thursday 10 July – Friday 11 July 2008

National Wine Centre, corner Botanic and Hackney roads, Adelaide

Full program and speaker biographies available on website link below.

Further information:

Alastair Harris: CRC for Aboriginal Health: 0409 658 177

www.flinders.edu.au/fulbright-symposium

