
Media Release
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New book highlights need for action

A groundbreaking new book aimed at improving understanding of the social causes of Aboriginal ill-health will be launched in Darwin next week.

Pat Anderson, Chair of the CRC for Aboriginal Health, will launch *Social Determinants of Indigenous Health*, which examines the long-term health impacts of dispossession, alienation from country, racism and other elements of Aboriginal disadvantage at the Museum and Art Gallery of the NT on Tuesday 8th May

The book, designed as a teaching resource, also investigates factors such as poverty, class, community and social capital, education, employment, and housing on the current state of Aboriginal health.

The book scrutinises the social dynamics of making policy for Indigenous Australians and the interrelation between human rights and health and outlines a framework for effective health interventions that take social factors into consideration.

Ms Anderson said that copies of the book will be sent to all Australian health ministers and other politicians and expressed hope that it would be read by them and by senior public servants.

“This book, if read and understood by those that design and implement Aboriginal health policies, will make a difference,” she said. “A thorough understanding of the complexities of the social determinants of our health would put an end to the situation we’ve seen all too often in recent years; the development of health policy in the back of a light airplane after ministerial visits to one or other of our remote communities.

“The challenge to turn around the health of Aboriginal people will take clear thought and real collaboration between governments, and between governments and Aboriginal people ourselves, in dealing with the issues presented in this important book,” said Ms Anderson.

Assoc Prof Terry Dunbar, one of the editors of and contributor to the book stated that the level of health inequities experienced by Indigenous Australians should no longer be about who is to blame.

“This situation has reached a point where action is necessary,” Prof Dunbar said. “Indigenous Australian’s values and conceptual frameworks of ‘health’ should fundamentally frame national and local level solutions.”

“It is also hoped that this resource book, which is only introductory, will be used in public health, primary health and across disciplines in academic settings. Finding multi-level solutions to complex and highly politicised matters is difficult but should not be an excuse for rushing through inappropriate action or for inaction.”

The book, published by Allen and Unwin and based on a series of short courses developed by Menzies School of Health Research, the CRC for Aboriginal Health and Charles Darwin University, will be launched at the Cornucopia Museum Café, at the Museum and Art Galleries of the NT from 7.00pm on Tuesday 8th May, following a lecture by Professor Joan Cunningham on “Why health services can’t fix us, and what people and governments can do about it.”

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