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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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More Health Services For Indigenous Families

The Government today announced the first sites for its expansion of Indigenous child and maternal health services, as well as 30 new Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarships to help Indigenous health professionals studying child and maternal health. These initiatives form part of the Government's \$260 million Indigenous early childhood package.

The Government will also deliver \$18 million in immediate funding to six sites to help boost primary health care service delivery in areas where health services are lacking.

By helping tackle disturbing trends in infant mortality, low birth weights and poor access to health care, these initiatives will play an important role in closing the 17-year life expectancy gap within a generation by giving Indigenous kids the best possible start in life.

Investing in early childhood health is one of the best investments we can make in Australia's future.

Expansion of child and maternal health services

The early roll-out of funding to expand child and maternal health services will provide for up to three additional health professionals to be employed in each of these areas to provide child and maternal health services to local communities.

Delivering additional health professionals will mean that more Indigenous children can be seen and treated – directly resulting in better health.

Child and maternal health services will be expanded at these sites:

- Yerin Aboriginal Health Service (Wyong NSW);
- Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney Co-op Ltd (Mt Druitt NSW);
- Marwarnkarra Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (Roebourne WA);
- Carbal Medical Centre (Toowoomba QLD);
- Danila Dilba Health Services (Darwin NT).

These areas have been identified because of high levels of need, and their capacity to immediately implement expanded health services.

The health professionals will include child and maternal health nurses, Aboriginal health workers and other health professionals.

Puggy Hunter Scholarships

The Puggy Hunter Scholarships will help Indigenous health professionals studying in the areas of child and maternal health in disciplines such as nursing, Indigenous health and allied health.

Family Centred Primary Health Care Initiative

In a separate initiative, the Government will deliver \$18 million in immediate funding to six sites to help boost primary health care service delivery in areas where health services are lacking.

To support greater investment in primary health care, the Government is providing additional total funding of \$28.5 million over 4 years under the Family Centred Primary Health Care Initiative – an initiative funded by the previous Government in last year's Budget which was never implemented.

The first six sites will be:

- Country Health in South Australia;
- Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Co-operative in NSW;
- The Royal Flying Doctor Service with North & West Queensland Primary Health Care and Queensland Health;
- Victoria-Ramahyuck and District Aboriginal Corporation;
- Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, Western Australia; and
- Dubbo Region/Western NSW.

Every Australian should be able to get the health care they need when they need it.

The Rudd Government is committed to closing the appalling 17-year life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within a generation, by taking practical steps – like these ones announced today – to improve the health status and social and economic wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.

The Government's \$260 million investment in early childhood will help tackle those challenges, and ensure that Indigenous children are healthy, happy and ready to learn.

Media inquiries only: Sean Kelly - 0417 108 362

For all other inquiries please contact the Minister's office - 02 6277 7220