



**Senator the Hon Fiona Nash**  
**Assistant Minister for Health**  
**Senator for New South Wales**  
**Deputy Leader of the Nationals in the Senate**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**A Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce  
Key to Closing the Gap**

The Australian Government has made a \$3.1 billion commitment to Indigenous health funding for the next four years, a crucial part of which is supporting the role of Indigenous health workers, the Assistant Minister for Health, Fiona Nash, said today.

Speaking at the 2014 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) Annual Conference in Canberra, Minister Nash said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers play a pivotal role in improving the health disadvantage of many Indigenous Australians.

“Several recent studies have found that the contribution of Indigenous health workers in tackling diabetes, mental illness, maternal and infant care and palliative care have made a real difference to the health and wellbeing of many Indigenous people,” Minister Nash said.

“Their efforts are also significantly contributing to the reduction in Indigenous smoking rates, the reduction in infant deaths and a decline in preventable diseases like trachoma. These positive outcomes have led to the incremental improvements we are now seeing in the overall average life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“Without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, the gap in the health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians would be ever wider than it is today.”

Minister Nash also told the conference that the Government would continue to work in partnership with organisations like NATSIHWA to create more opportunities for Indigenous people to have a career in the health sector. This includes supporting NATSIHWA’s work to deliver a National Scope of Practice to bring professional recognition and consistency to the role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker.

“The Australian Government is committed to closing the gap and achieving health equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, but this can only be achieved in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers,” Minister Nash said.

“The Government will continue to deliver training and scholarships programmes to ensure they have the skills and support they need to build a long-term, rewarding career.

“Working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, Aboriginal health organisations and the communities themselves, I’m confident we will continue to see further improvements to the health of Indigenous Australians in the future,” Minister Nash said.

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