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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Recruiting and deploying doctors in the NT

The Australian Government has now established the Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) to recruit and deploy doctors, nurses and allied health workers in remote Northern Territory Indigenous communities.

This will place the recruitment of health professionals for remote communities on a much firmer, more sustainable footing into the future.

The RAHC began operations after a funding agreement was signed with Aspen Medical to run it. The first deployment of health professionals to the Territory is expected to occur by the end of 2008.

Funding of about \$5 million a year, over two years, has been committed to establish and operate the new RAHC.

Health professionals recruited through the RAHC will work in the remote communities, targeting the health needs of Indigenous children, adolescents, adults and older people.

They will deliver core primary health care and, where necessary, make referrals to secondary and tertiary care services.

The RAHC will draw on urban health professionals for short-term deployment, building on the positive response of health professionals to the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

Northern Territory health service providers will first identify staffing requirements, and then contact the RAHC to outline their additional health service requirements. The RAHC will then draft implementation plans, and place the required health professional/s in the community in question.

This new measure will boost recruitment efforts of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families and the Territory's Aboriginal Medical Services, and build the capacity of existing community-based health services in each region in the Territory.

The RAHC will play an important role in helping close the life-expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, by responding to the health workforce needs of remote communities in the NT.

Aspen Medical is a Canberra-based company that has offices and operations worldwide. It is experienced in mobilising health professionals in difficult and challenging environments. For example, it has been providing nurses for remote areas in Western Australia and has also been providing medical services to Australian Defence Force members in East Timor.

Aspen Medical was chosen to establish and operate the RAHC after an extensive selection process.

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