



**THE HON NICOLA ROXON**  
**Minister for Health and Ageing**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Launch of the National Indigenous Health Equality Council**

The Rudd Government's efforts to reduce the 17 year life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians took another step forward today with the establishment of the National Indigenous Health Equality Council.

The Council will advise the Government on the development and monitoring of health-related goals and targets to support the Government's commitments to closing the appalling life expectancy gap and unacceptably high rates of child mortality in the Indigenous population.

The Prime Minister, Minister for Health and Ageing, and Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin announced the establishment of the National Indigenous Health Equality Council in March.

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, today announced that Professor Ian Anderson will be Chair of the National Indigenous Health Equality Council.

Professor Anderson is a leading researcher in Indigenous health with wide ranging experience of the health sector.

Minister Roxon also announced that Dr Mick Adams will be the Deputy Chair of the Council. Dr Adams is currently the Chair of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and a well recognised expert in Indigenous men's health.

Other members of the Council will include:

- Paula Arrol, Chair of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory and CEO of Danila Dilba Health Service in Darwin
- Sally Goold, current Chair and founder of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses
- Dr Tamara Mackean, President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
- Dr Alex Brown, Head of the Centre for Indigenous Vascular Research at the Baker Heart Institute
- Gregory Phillips, a medical anthropologist with extensive expertise in Indigenous health workforce and medical curriculum issues

- Romlie Mokak, experienced Indigenous policy maker and current CEO of the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

Non-Indigenous experts on the Council will include:

- Associate Professor Paul Torzillo, a respiratory physician with particular expertise in child health, and Medical Director of Nganampa Health Council in the APY Lands
- Professor Kerin O'Dea, a leading expert on nutrition and diabetes
- Dr Ian Cameron, currently the CEO of the NSW Rural Doctors Network, who has extensive experience in rural and remote health

As a first priority, the Government will ask the Council to consider how to boost the participation of Indigenous people in the health workforce.

Releasing a new report, Pathways into the Health and Workforce for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: A Blueprint for Action, Minister Roxon said that boosting the Indigenous health workforce is critical to closing the life expectancy gap.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health cannot be improved without the appropriate workforce to support the attainment of these goals.

"The Blueprint for Action focuses on promoting and improving pathways between schools, vocational education and training and higher education; and retaining and building capacity of the existing workforce by addressing ongoing support and career development needs.

"The National Indigenous Health Equality Council will have an ongoing role in progressing recommendations contained within the Blueprint for Action," Ms Roxon said.

Today's announcements are the latest in a series of important steps the Rudd Government is taking to deliver on its commitment to work in partnership with the Indigenous community to close the life expectancy gap:

- at COAG last week the Rudd Government and State and Territory Governments agreed to a new National Partnership to improve support for Indigenous kids and their parents which will see \$547.2 million spent to address the needs of Indigenous children;
- the Government has also committed to \$112m to enhance maternal and child health services, part of which is included in the COAG commitment;
- the Government is providing an additional \$50 million to support Indigenous drug and alcohol services;
- nearly \$15 million is being provided to tackle high rates of smoking in Indigenous communities;
- significant additional resources are being provided to strengthen primary care, improve workforce supply, and boost Indigenous health infrastructure in the Northern Territory; and

- the Government has committed to a \$19 million plan to strengthen the Indigenous health workforce.

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