



Australian Government

Department of Health

NACCHO



National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

Rheumatic Fever Strategy (RFS) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

Inaugural Meeting 24 February 2022

Communiqué

Summary

The inaugural meeting of the Rheumatic Fever Strategy (RFS) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was held virtually on 24 February 2022. The meeting was co-chaired by Dr Dawn Casey PSM FAGA, Deputy CEO, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), and Mr Ben Mudaliar, Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Health Division, Australian Government Department of Health (DoH).

The meeting outlined the newly established governance arrangements for the RFS. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap is the foundation of this new approach, with particular emphasis on Priority Reform One (formal partnership and shared decision making). The new arrangement is designed to harness the expertise of representatives across multiple sectors to provide advice on a nationally integrated and coordinated approach to addressing Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This new governance structure reflects the need for a whole of government and community effort.

NACCHO overview

The Australian Government has committed \$12 million to NACCHO over four years (2021-22 to 2024-25) to support RFS national coordination and implementation. NACCHO will work alongside the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector to develop a new service delivery model for the prevention and treatment of ARF and RHD. This model will support community-controlled and community-led actions to address these preventable conditions which are strongly influenced by poor housing and the social determinants of health.

A NACCHO RHD Expert Working Group (EWG) is included in the new RFS governance structure and comprises experts from the ACCHO sector. The EWG has been appointed to provide advice to NACCHO to ensure the program aligns with the best available evidence while meeting the needs of the sector.

Jurisdictional Overview

In the jurisdictions where ARF and RHD are notifiable, state and territory government departments of health retain and manage registry data for ARF and RHD. The Australian Government will continue to support these registers (Qld, WA, SA, and the NT) with funding of \$12 million under Federation Funding Agreements. Representatives of the funded registers provided an overview of key achievements and challenges in delivering ARF and RHD activities in their jurisdictions and will provide advice on possible strategic issues around ARF and RHD as the JAC progresses.

Next steps

Members agreed to meet every two months, with provision to also progress business out of session as required. A draft workplan for the JAC will be discussed at the next meeting to be held in May 2022.

For further information, please contact the RFS JAC Secretariat via: RFS@health.gov.au.