



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

Meeting 24 October 2024

Communiqué

Summary

The sixth meeting of the Rheumatic Fever Strategy (RFS) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was held in Canberra on 24 October 2024. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Dawn Casey, Deputy CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), and Mr. Ben Mudaliar, Assistant Secretary, First Nations Health Division, from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

The meeting covered several topics, including previous meeting records, national notification of Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD), current function and utility of RHD registries, and the benefits of nationally consistent ARF and RHD data. Members and observers also provided updates on recent developments in their organisations or jurisdictions.

Highlights

Members and observers provide updates on various activities undertaken to end new cases of ARF and RHD.

NACCHO is developing a National Strategic Roadmap to Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Workforce and continue to pursue housing matters as lead convener of the Coalition of Peaks. Other members also noted jurisdictional environmental health strategies including a model of care framework, and collaboration with Housing and Environmental Health portfolios. The Committee received an update from the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) regarding the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Protection Subcommittee (NATSIHP) endorsed application for the inclusion of ARF and RHD on the Nationally Notifiable Disease List (NNDL).

Queensland is developing an RHD action plan for the next three years, following the conclusion of the Ending RHD: Queensland First Nations Strategy (2021 – 2024). The NT and SA also continue to progress work on their respective RHD Strategies.

The Committee discussed the benefits of a national coordinated effort to address ARF and RHD. This included the need to improve access to tertiary care to ensure clients receive the care required, and the opportunity to co-design a new RHD registry.

Some of the features of a fit-for-purpose RHD register discussed included Indigenous Data Sovereignty and appropriate governance structures; accessible data at service community and regional levels; real time data and dashboards that can provide up to date data and visual representations for better decision making; integration of legacy data; interoperability; centralised support for data entry; ensure data availability without state or territory jurisdictional barriers

Next steps

The next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee will be held in June 2025. For further information, please contact the RFS JAC Secretariat via: RFS@health.gov.au.