

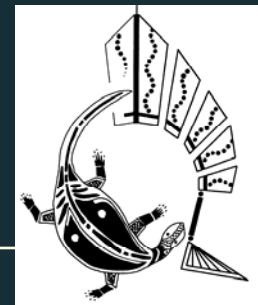
# National Rural Health Alliance **Indigenous Workshop**

Albury 7 March 2007

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Social Justice Commissioner

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission





# What the presentation will cover

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- Background on the challenge
- Progress and achievements to date
- The way forward

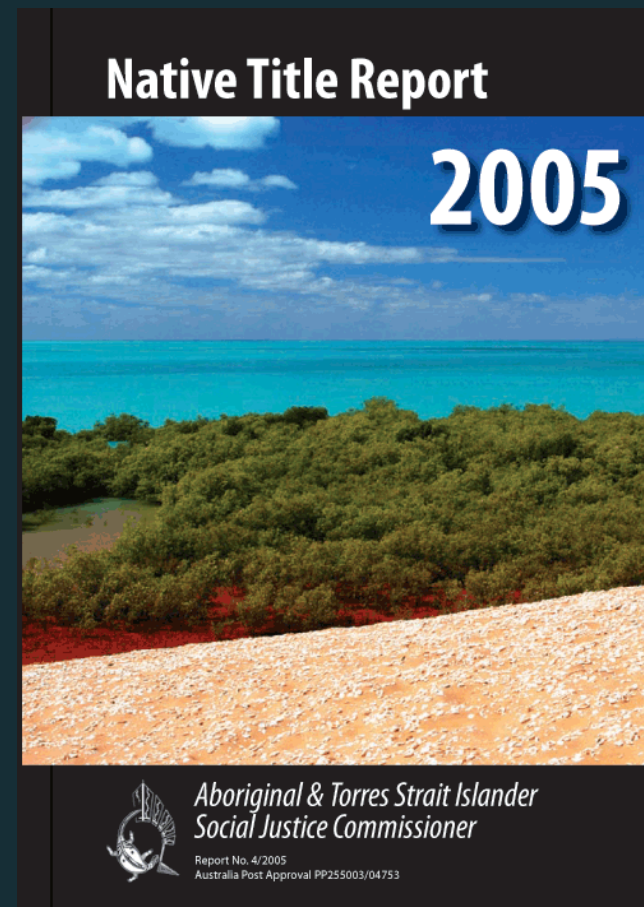


# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

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- ❑ Position created in 1992
- ❑ Response to Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
- ❑ Response to National Inquiry into Racist Violence
- ❑ Advocate for the rights of Indigenous Australians

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner's Reports





# Statistics on Indigenous health

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□ **Life expectation:**

Estimated 17 year gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (1996–2001).

**Death age and rate:**

For all age groups, Indigenous people are dying at twice the rate of non-Indigenous people (1999-2003).

**Infant and child health:**

Twice the number of low birth weight babies are born to Indigenous women when compared to non-Indigenous women (2000-02); Indigenous infant mortality is up to 3 times the non-Indigenous rate (1999-2003).



# Statistics on Indigenous health

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## **Chronic diseases:**

Indigenous males are hospitalised for heart disease at twice the rate of non-Indigenous males; Indigenous females at 4 times the rate of non-Indigenous females. One in five people have diabetes.

## **Communicable diseases:**

Indigenous children are most affected. Headline conditions - trachoma, otitis media (middle ear infection) - rates of infection much higher.

## Examples of health infrastructure needs

### **Housing:**

5.5% of all Indigenous households reported as overcrowded.

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Households renting from housing organisations - 25.7% overcrowded. Northern Territory - 23.7% of all Indigenous households overcrowded

*Australian Bureau of Statistics - Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, 2001*

# Examples of health infrastructure needs

## □ **Diet:**

The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (2005) reported that the diets of only **1 in 5** Indigenous children in WA met all four of its indicators of dietary quality.

*Telethon Institute for Child Health Research*

**Food** has been reported as up to **150% - 180%** more expensive in remote Indigenous communities than that in major centres.

*Fred Hollows Foundation*

# Human rights and health

- Article 12 of the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**
  - Sets out the right to health





# Human rights and health

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- Article 2 (i) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
  - Sets out the principles of
    - Non discrimination
    - Progressive realisation



# Social determinants of health

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- Addressing the social determinants of health:
  - Overcrowded and run down housing
  - Poor education and literacy
  - Poverty
  - Poorer income
  - Chronic stress can impact on the body's immune system
  - **Mental health and wellbeing**
  - Unemployment



# Why social determinants?

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- “Changing the marginal position in society of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will need an approach that takes in the whole of life, starting with women of child bearing age, focussing on the care of infants and young children and proceeding through the life course”

Professor Sir Michael Marmott, 2005 *Social Justice Report*

# Achieving Indigenous health equality



FACT FILE

Commission on the  
Social Determinants of  
Health



**Poverty, social exclusion, poor housing and poor health systems are among the main social causes of ill health.**



# Achieving Indigenous health equality

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- Basic commitments are in place to address Indigenous health:
  - National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
  - Whole of Government approach
  - Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Framework
  - Community Housing & Infrastructure Program

# Recognition & Commitment

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- Recommendation that the governments of Australia *commit to* achieving equality of health status and life expectation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians **within 25 years**

# Government actions required

- Governments need to have benchmarks and targets and be accountable
- Governments need to set timeframes and commit to them



# Primary Health Care

- Governments need to *commit to* achieving equal access to primary health care and health infrastructure **within 10 years**
- Governments to fund programs **based on need**





# Non Government action

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- Building alliances

- With a broad range of stakeholders across a broad range of areas:

- Academics
- Human rights
- Health
- Reconciliation
- Corporates



# Health equality campaign

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- Right to Health Campaign - Briefing, March 2006
  - Steering Committee formed. Consists of a:
    - Policy Working Group
    - Campaigning Working Group
  - Steering Committee - developing key messages for the right to health campaign



# Building partnerships

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- NACCHO
- Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association
- Australian Medical Association
- ANTaR
- Oxfam Australia
- Australian General Practice Network
- Royal College of Australian General Practitioners



# Building partnerships

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- Heart Foundation of Australia
- Reconciliation Australia
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- .....
- Public Health Association of Australia
- Indigenous Nurses Association
- *National Rural Health Alliance*
- **Many others**

# Upcoming events

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- ANTaR Health Forums in partnership with HREOC in Port Augusta - 1 December 2006 ✓
- Launch of a *Right to health campaign communiqué*, in early 2007 – Open Letter Dec 2006
- Celebrity Launch April 2007
- 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum May 2007
- Indigenous Health Equality Summit – July 2007
- Garma Festival – August 2007
- Other events



# Key Principles & Actions

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- ❑ Indigenous Leadership
- ❑ Community Ownership
- ❑ Real and equal partnership between Indigenous and non Indigenous Stakeholders

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- ❑ Health Campaign site within HREOC Website
- ❑ Engage Policy Officer and Summit Organiser

# Thank you

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- For more information on the right to health campaign and the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Unit go to our website:

- [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/index.html)

or;

- Telephone HREOC: Sydney (02) 9284 9600