



LABOR’S INDIGENOUS HEALTH PLEDGE A GOOD START

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said that today’s Indigenous Health policy announcements by Labor are a good start to a much-needed, strongly-funded, long-term strategy to close the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

Dr Bartone said that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to enjoy the same level of good health that is experienced by other Australians.

“A key part of achieving this goal is to provide culturally responsive services for Indigenous people, where and when they need them,” Dr Bartone said.

“Today’s announcements, costing at \$115 million, recognise the expertise and unique experience of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.

“The AMA wants to see funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services increased so they can continue to deliver sustainable, high-quality, comprehensive primary health care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.”

The AMA welcomes Labor’s commitment to:

- invest in reducing Indigenous suicide and mental health issues, including having an adequately resourced mental health workforce in this area;
- develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Plan;
- funding to address Rheumatic Heart Disease; and
- adopt a justice re-investment approach by funding services for at-risk communities to address the unacceptably high incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system;

These are all highlighted in the AMA’s *Key Health Issues for the 2019 Federal Election* document, which is available at <https://ama.com.au/article/key-health-issues-2019-federal-election>

Dr Bartone said the AMA also supports Labor’s stated intention, if elected, to work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to design the health policies and programs that will affect their lives.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health must be in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander hands,” Dr Bartone said.

Dr Bartone said that today’s \$115 million Indigenous Health package from Labor is welcome, but current data suggests that more funding money is needed if health equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is to be achieved.

“It is widely acknowledged that a new \$100 million capacity-building program should be implemented over four years to fill health service gaps and reverse the current funding freeze on Aboriginal health services,” Dr Bartone said.

The AMA welcomed the Coalition's Budget commitments for Indigenous health, including \$15 million for Indigenous suicide prevention and \$20 million for Indigenous-specific initiatives such as the implementation of the national strategies for blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections.

The major parties have announced similar approaches to address Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD).

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