



THE HON WARREN SNOWDON MP
Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health
and Regional Services Delivery

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aboriginal Health Workers Get a Peak National Body

The Minister for Indigenous Health, Warren Snowdon, today travelled to Ceduna in South Australia to launch a peak national body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers.

Speaking at the Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service, Mr Snowdon said the Rudd Government is providing \$1.2 million over three years to establish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association.

He said the nation's 1,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers are a key part of the health workforce.

“They provide front line services in urban, rural and remote Indigenous communities, promote health awareness, set an example for their communities and help bridge cultural gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

“On a practical level, they assist doctors and nurses and allied health professionals on a day-to-day basis, and do everything from bandaging and taking temperatures and blood pressures through to taking blood samples.”

Mr Snowdon said the association will help build workforce capacity by bringing together Indigenous health workers and providing them with a strong professional voice.

“Until now the Northern Territory has been the only jurisdiction with a registration board for clinical health workers.

“The Association will look at national registration and accreditation strategies for the next two years, and help establish upskilling and training support to ensure there's consistency nationally,” Mr Snowdon said.

The association will provide advocacy, mentoring and support for indigenous health workers and will provide information through a new website at www.natsihwa.org.au.

The body will be governed by board members elected from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers across Australia through State and Territory processes, with an

inaugural AGM to be held in mid 2010. An interim board is currently operating, with an office in Canberra.

During his time in Ceduna, Mr Snowdon also visited the Ceduna Hospital to conduct a National Health and Hospital Reform Consultation and met staff from the Tullawon Health Service.

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