

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS HEALTH EQUALITY COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

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On Target to Halve the Gap in Indigenous Child Mortality

A report card on Indigenous child health, presented to the Rudd government today by its advisory committee on Indigenous health, the National Indigenous Health Equality Council (NIHEC), has shown that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality rates have been improving, particularly for infant mortality and that the gap may halve by 2018 if current trends continue.

“While there have been improvements in antenatal care and child mortality overall, work is still required to reduce smoking during pregnancy and low birth weight rates,” Professor Ian Anderson, Chair of NIHEC, said today.

“NIHEC fully supports the Commonwealth government’s commitment to improve antenatal care for Indigenous women as low birth weight babies are at greater risk of dying during the first year of life and are prone to ill health during childhood and adulthood.”

The NIHEC today presented two important reports on targets for improving Indigenous health and mortality to the Minister for Indigenous Health, Warren Snowdon, at an event at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.

The *National Target Setting Instrument*, which is the culmination of 12 months work by NIHEC, provides a best practice guide to target setting in Indigenous health, in two parts.

- o An overall framework for targets, including the role of targets in policy and a guide to effective target setting; and
- o A series of exemplary analyses to assess how we are tracking against key target areas with key drivers, trends and projections.

The Council of Australian Governments’ target to halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five years within a decade is the focus for the first exemplary analysis to be released.

On presenting the Instrument and *Child Mortality Target: Analysis and Recommendations* to the Minister, Professor Anderson said:

“Improving the quality of Indigenous data is a priority as it is important to be able to accurately measure and monitor targets which will help to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.”

The NIHEC will now undertake further analysis on workforce and chronic disease.

The Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP announced the establishment of the National Indigenous Health Equality Council (NIHEC) in March 2008. NIHEC provides national leadership in responding to the Australian Government's commitment to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

Please refer to the NIHEC website for further information: www.nihec.gov.au

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