Territory Tops Spending On Indigenous Health

A new report shows the NT invests 60 per cent of the total health budget on improving the health of Indigenous Territorians.

The independent report, *Expenditure on Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People 2006-07*, issued by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, shows that while the national average spending on Indigenous health is only 22 per cent more than that spent on non-Indigenous Australians, the Northern Territory is clearly ahead of the rest of the country with expenditure significantly higher than the rest of Australia.

"30 per cent of the Territory’s population is Indigenous, and the increased spending on health reflects issues unique to the Territory, including the number of people who live in remote areas," Health Minister Kon Vatskalis said.

"Almost 80 per cent of Indigenous Territorians live in remote or very remote areas, and the cost of delivering health services to these areas is significantly higher than in urban settings," Minister Vatskalis said.

"The NT Government is more committed than ever to improving the health of all Territorians, especially those living with chronic disease," the Minister said.

"There is a higher incidence of chronic disease amongst Indigenous Territorians, and Government has dedicated funding to manage these conditions, and to help prevent the development of chronic conditions in healthy people.

"The Henderson Government has increased health services in remote areas for people of all ages, such as putting health checks in place for young Territorians from birth to school age, and throughout school years.

"Other recent initiatives include the building or refurbishment of a number of health and wellbeing centres in remote communities, and mobile health clinics such as the Women’s Health on Wheels bus, which travels to remote areas so nurses can perform health checks on women in communities," the Minister said.

The report’s findings confirm the Henderson Governments *2006-2007 Indigenous Expenditure Review*, released in September 2008 as it also indicated a 60 per cent share of the health budget committed towards Indigenous health.

This year, with the Territory’s first ever billion dollar health budget, an estimated $600 million will be spent exclusively on improving Indigenous health.

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