MEDIA RELEASE

30 July 2015

RENEWED AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Australian Government, Northern Territory Government and Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of NT (AMSANT) have re-committed to a framework agreement aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Meeting in Darwin today, the Federal Assistant Minister for Health, Fiona Nash, said the agreement is the start of a national approach that is expected to see every state and territory signing similar agreements by the end of this year.

“The renewed five-year agreement, from 2015 to 2020, promotes shared responsibility and the need for genuine ongoing partnerships between Aboriginal community controlled health services and both levels of government,” Minister Nash said.

“This renewal is both a symbol of the three partners' willingness to work together, and a mechanism to make things happen in practice.

“The agreement commits us all to share information, and identify key priorities for action.”

Northern Territory Minister for Health John Elferink said the partners working together to focus on improving the health system and the collection of health data to inform planning and program implementation had demonstrated success in the Northern Territory.

“Through this framework agreement, we will continue to work together and with other key stakeholders to build on the solid foundations that will improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” he said.

Marion Scrymgour, Chairperson of AMSANT, said: "AMSANT welcomes the ongoing commitment and constructive partnership between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government to work with the Aboriginal community controlled
sector to address the health and wellbeing issues of Aboriginal Territorians.”

Minister Nash said the Australian Government was committed to improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and closing the gap in health disparity.

“This is an ongoing challenge, and by working in partnership with Aboriginal people and organisations, we have already had some successes notably, improvements in the life expectancy gap, and in reducing child mortality,” she said.

“All partners agree that improving outcomes in the early years is critical to achieving long term gains for Aboriginal people.”

“For example, the Australian Government, the NT Department of Health together with AMSANT have undertaken considerable work to understand the causes, treatments and prevention strategies of childhood anaemia and growth faltering,” Minister Nash said.

“As a result the NT is the only jurisdiction with Aboriginal Health Key Performance Indicators on childhood anaemia and growth faltering that allow for progress to be tracked across the territory.

“However a significant gap in life expectancy still exists. Coordination and collaboration between the health sectors and effective community engagement are vital to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and this framework agreement will help to underpin this approach,” Minister Nash said.

Media contact: Kay McNiece, Minister Nash’s Office, 0412 132 585
Dimitra Grehl, Minister Elferink’s Office, 0439 640 895