

Current topics

Close the gap - the national Indigenous health equality targets

Posted on: 1 August, 2008

Issue: Vol 8 No 3, July 2008 - September 2008

Related to [Health Policy](#)

The national Indigenous health equality targets were presented to the Federal government and the Opposition by the Close the Gap Coalition in July 2008. The targets were developed by the Close the Gap Coalition and leading organisations with a stake in Aboriginal health, following the inaugural Indigenous health equality summit.

The Close the Gap campaign is based on three recommendations made by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and published in the 2005 *Social justice report*. The first recommendation was that the governments of Australia commit to achieving equality of health status and life expectation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people within 25 years. The second recommendation set out a process for what would need to occur for this commitment to be met. The final recommendation was for the Australian Health Minister's Conference to agree to a national commitment to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality and that bi-partisan support for this commitment be sought in federal Parliament and in all state and territory parliaments.

In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Indigenous communities to achieve the target of 'closing the gap' on Indigenous disadvantage: to close the 17-year gap in life expectancy within a generation, and to halve the mortality rate of Indigenous children within ten years.

The Close the Gap campaign aimed to generate a range of Indigenous health equality targets and provide impetus for Australian governments to revitalise their existing commitments to ending Indigenous health inequality. The targets were developed by 3 working groups of the Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality, each led by a notable Indigenous person with extensive health experience.

The campaign culminated in the national Indigenous health equality summit in Canberra in March, 2008. The Prime Minister, Hon Kevin Rudd MP, the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon MP, the Opposition Leader, Brendan Nelson and the leaders of the Indigenous health peak bodies and the mainstream health peak bodies (the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses, the Indigenous Dentist Association of Australia, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Human Rights and Equal

Opportunity Commission) signed the Close the Gap Statement of Intent in which they agreed to work together to achieve equality in health status and life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by the year 2030. As a part of this effort they agreed to ensuring the primary health care services and health infrastructure for Indigenous Australians were capable of bridging the gap in health standards by 2018. The Statement commits all parties to developing a comprehensive, long-term plan of action that is targeted to need, evidence-based and capable of addressing inequities in health services, in order to achieve the Close the gap goals. Parties are committed to measuring, monitoring, and reporting on their joint efforts in accordance with a range of supporting sub-targets and benchmarks.

Tom Calma, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Chair of the Steering Committee for the Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality, has acknowledged the recent commitments of the Australian government as an unprecedented opportunity to change historical practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy. He has said that the targets build on the positive steps already undertaken with the Government through the Indigenous health equality summit, the signing of the Statement of Intent, and the launch of the National Indigenous Health Equality Council, which includes a number of health experts from the Close the Gap coalition. He urged for the programs and services delivery to be adequately resourced and supported to render the stated goals of the government achievable.

- For further information:
 - Close the gap: national Indigenous health targets
 - [View report: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission \(HTML\)](#)
 - [View report: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission \(PDF - 2.7MB - large file warning!\)](#)
 - Indigenous health campaign
 - [View information: Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission](#)
 - The issue
 - [View campaign presentation: Oxfam website](#)
 - Aboriginal coalition gives Govt health target petition
 - [View media release: ABC news \(28 July 2008\)](#)
 - Close the gap
 - [View powerpoint presentation for secondary schools: Caritas](#)
 - [View powerpoint presentation for general audience: Caritas](#)