Strengthening Indigenous Communities

Improving Indigenous Access to Health Care Services

Why is it important?
- Access to health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is still too low.
- We need to ensure a level of health care for Indigenous Australians that reflects their health needs.
- We are providing five new health brokerage services that will link Indigenous people with appropriate mainstream health services in urban/regional areas, and up to 40 GPs and/or other health professionals for Indigenous specific health services in rural and remote areas.

Who will benefit?
- The brokerage services will assist GPs and allied health professionals to build their capacity to provide health services to Indigenous people. They will then form the linkage between the clients and the health professionals.
- The services will benefit up to 15,000 Indigenous Australians living in urban/regional areas in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.
- People in these communities will be provided with greater knowledge about what the mainstream health system can do for them, and which mainstream health providers are able to provide culturally and clinically appropriate care.
- Up to 40 additional health professionals will benefit Indigenous Australians living in rural and remote areas across Australia.

What funding is the Government committing to the initiative?
- The Government has committed $39.5 million over four years to these initiatives.

What have we done in the past?
- Since 1996 Indigenous health funding has increased by almost $240 million (a real increase of 144 per cent).
- Increased funding made available since 1999 has been delivered mostly through the Primary Health Care Access Programme (PHCAP). As at 30 June 2005, this programme has provided an additional 41 GPs, 50 Nurses and 103 Aboriginal Health Workers. It has also funded Capital works to improve 23 existing facilities, establish 8 new facilities and provide 45 staff houses in remote areas.

When will the initiative conclude?
- This is an ongoing initiative.