MEDIA STATEMENT
1 December 2020

NACCHO recognises the importance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIV Awareness Week and 2020 World AIDS Day

NACCHO supports the theme ‘Now more than ever’ on World Aids Day

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) supports the theme of World Aids Day 2020 and highlights that ‘now, more than ever’ is the time to close the gap on rates of HIV notifications amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in Australia.

New HIV data released today by the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney for World AIDS Day states that among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the number of HIV diagnoses have fluctuated over the past five years. However, diagnoses rates are still between 1.3-1.9 times higher than other Australians, each year. Source: Kirby Institute

NACCHO believes as per the National Agreement on Closing the Gap that there is a real opportunity to take Aboriginal-led approaches and partnerships to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes.

NACCHO Deputy CEO, Dr Dawn Casey said, “Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face unique issues and social determinants that affect health outcomes, including overcrowded housing.

“We have demonstrated that a partnership and commitment from the Australian Government’s Departments of Health with NACCHO and direct funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to address the syphilis outbreak has produced some positive outcomes.

“More recently, our role in leading the COVID-19 response exemplifies why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led responses to health issues needs to remain in our hands and on the ground by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers.

“We know our Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) are best placed to design and deliver these services.

“We will continue to advocate for appropriate funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions to addressing the increasing rates of STIs, BBVs and HIV/AIDS,” said Dr Casey.

Professor James Ward from University of Queensland and South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) Head, Aboriginal Health Equity – Sexual Health and Wellbeing said, “The take home message is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to be diagnosed more often with HIV when compared to non-Indigenous Australians. To reduce this unacceptable gap, there needs to be sustained investment in targeted, culturally appropriate, community focused campaigns.”

There is no better way to provide health care than through the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), who deliver holistic, culturally safe, comprehensive primary healthcare across Australia, including those living in very remote areas.

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NACCHO is the national peak body representing more than 140 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across the country on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing issues. NACCHO represents about 7,000 ACCHO staff – of whom 3,700 are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ACCHOs have almost 50 years of experience in the delivery of comprehensive primary health care. Services are delivered through fixed, outreach and mobile clinics operating in urban, rural and remote settings across Australia.