

# Close the Gap: National Indigenous Health Equality Council

*Guiding policy to end Indigenous health disadvantage*

The National Indigenous Health Equality Council (NIHEC; <http://www.nihec.gov.au/>) was established in July 2008 to advise the Australian Government Minister for Health and Ageing. Most of its members are Indigenous Australians, with expertise drawn from across the Aboriginal and mainstream health sectors and Australian Government. The Council's terms of reference focus on:

- Its role in the development and monitoring of progress towards a set of health-related goals and targets to support the government's commitments to Indigenous life expectancy and child mortality.
- Providing national leadership in responding to the government's commitment to closing the gap of Indigenous disadvantage by advising the government on working towards the provision of equitable and sustainable health outcomes for Indigenous Australians.
- Providing strategic advice on:
  - the commitments made under the March 2008 Statement of Intent on achieving Indigenous health equality;
  - the development and monitoring of health-related goals and targets to support the government's commitments to life expectancy and child mortality;
  - priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, including strategies for meeting targets agreed upon by the



Australian Government and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG);

- monitoring progress towards closing the gap of Indigenous disadvantage; and
- any specific matters referred to it by the government and the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council.

As a first priority, NIHEC was asked to make recommendations on workforce development and sustainability, including advice on pathways to increase Indigenous workforce representation.

Recent NIHEC initiatives include projects to:

- Map workforce development initiatives (the "Helicopter Project");
- Articulate the parameters of a forward-looking workforce agenda in Indigenous health (the "Visions/Futures" Project); and
- Develop a national instrument for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health goals and targets.

NIHEC has also agreed to provide strategic advice supporting the implementation of COAG's 2008 \$1.5 billion investment in Indigenous health.

Ian Anderson, Chair  
National Indigenous Health Equality Council, Canberra, ACT

