

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
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INDIGENOUS HEALTH AND PREVENTION WINNERS IN NSW BUDGET
Time to increase % of spending on prevention

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has praised the NSW Government for announcing significant investments in Indigenous health and prevention initiatives in today's State Budget.

"\$19.1 million will be provided over four years (beginning with \$2.7 million in 2008-09) for the *Building Strong Foundations for Aboriginal Children, Families and Communities Strategy*. This initiative will extend services currently provided to ensure that all Aboriginal families in NSW with young children have access to quality early childhood health services," explained Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer of the Association.

"The NSW Government has also acknowledged the link between access to adequate housing and health outcomes for families. The existing Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative will be enhanced at a cost of \$15 million over four years (starting with \$1 million in 2008-09) to include a more culturally appropriate program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is very positive to see a government considering the impact of housing on health outcomes for Indigenous communities and responding accordingly.

"The NSW Government is also looking to the future, with a number of new preventative health initiatives. \$7.3 million will be provided over three years to help local councils with water fluoridation, which assists in the prevention of dental problems. \$20.2 million will also be provided in 2008-09 for prevention programs developed and coordinated by the Cancer Institute of NSW.

"While funding hospitals and acute services is important, it is vital that we don't forget the fence at the top of the cliff while we are paying for the ambulance at the bottom. Less people will fall if the fence is built higher. Prevention initiatives represent the fence.

"Traditionally prevention health initiatives don't receive a lot of attention and it is worth noting that even with the additional expenditure in these areas, the proportion remains at about 3% of NSW Health's Budget to be spent on population health services in 2008-09. The PHAA welcomes the additional spending on prevention. However, the Association calls on the NSW government to ensure that in budgets to come there is an increase in the *proportion* of money spent on prevention beyond that 3%," said Mr Moore.

For further information/comment:

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