

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
MEDIA RELEASE

www.phaa.net.au



3 June 2008

FOCUS ON DENTAL AND INDIGENOUS HEALTH IN QLD BUDGET
Time to increase % of spending on prevention

The Public Health Association of Australia has congratulated the QLD Government for prioritising dental and Indigenous health in today's State Budget.

"Together with oral hygiene and good nutrition, water fluoridation has been proven to reduce tooth decay by up to 40%. \$28.6 million is provided over five years for the fluoridation of public water supplies outside South East Queensland. This is part of the implementation of water fluoridation across the State, which will reduce dental problems across the board," explained Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer of the Association.

"\$4.4 million has been allocated to target high rates of ear diseases among Indigenous children (\$1.4 million recurrent funding over three years plus \$200,000 capital in 2008-09). The funding will be used to develop the *Deadly Ears, Deadly Kids, Deadly Communities program*, which provides hearing health services for children aged up to twelve years at high risk of developing chronic otitis media (commonly known as 'glue ear').

"Indigenous children are currently ten times more likely than non-Indigenous children to suffer from glue ear. The condition is linked to delayed language development, reduced literacy and behavioural issues for children. The funding will be used to improve screening services, increase awareness and enhance worker training.

"The QLD Government is also investing \$66.4 million over four years to introduce a number of initiatives designed to reduce inappropriate and harmful alcohol use in Indigenous communities.

"Traditionally, initiatives designed to prevent health problems don't receive a lot of attention and there is still a strong focus on the provision of acute health services in this year's budget. The Public Health Association of Australia is hopeful that additional spending in 2008-09 on the prevention initiatives outlined above represents a growing emphasis on the fence at the top of the cliff, rather than the ambulance at the bottom," said Mr Moore.

For further information/comment:

Michael Moore, CEO, Public Health Association of Australia

0417 249 731