

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **'CLOSING THE GAP' A KEY FOCUS IN NT BUDGET**

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has congratulated the Northern Territory (NT) Government for its strong focus on 'closing the gap' in Indigenous disadvantage in this year's budget.

"Key measures designed to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Territorians in this year's NT Budget include: \$3.6 million for child protection, therapeutic and residential care unit workers; \$2 million to employ teams of midwives and Aboriginal health workers to support women leaving remote communities to give birth; and \$1.3 million to expand programs targeting preventable chronic disease," said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the PHAA.

"We are pleased to note a broad increase in the health budget overall, with the Health and Community Services budget exceeding \$1 billion for the first time. While a large proportion of the additional money will go into the provision of doctors, nurses and hospital services, the additional investment of \$1.5 million in the provision of dental services is also particularly welcome. Oral health services are a key preventive health measure as dental health is linked to other health outcomes and overall wellbeing.

"Additional expenditure in 2009-10 on alcohol and other drug treatment and prevention measures is also welcomed. In 2009-10, \$2.5 million is provided to operate sobering-up shelters in all 5 regional centres to provide a safe environment for people who are intoxicated and may be at risk of harm. Continued funding of \$2 million per year is also provided for assessment, clinical case management and community-based treatment and residential services designed specifically to address petrol sniffing.

"However, PHAA does note that the lion's share of health expenditure still does seem to be going to hospitals and measures designed to treat illness. Traditionally measures to improve public health and prevent illness over the longer term don't receive much attention, usually receiving under 2% of recurrent expenditure for health as a whole. It would be great to see the NT Government build on its investments in next year's budget by providing a greater proportion of spending for prevention activities," said Mr Moore.

**For further information/comment:**

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