



Fact Sheet – Review of Aboriginal Health Programs

Background to the Review of Aboriginal Health Programs

- An external review of Western Australia's State funded Aboriginal Health Programs was undertaken in 2014. This review, commissioned by the Department of Health at the request of the State Government was conducted by Winthrop Professor D'Arcy Holman – Professor of Public Health at the University of Western Australia and an independent, pre-eminent expert in health services.
- Professor Holman's Review evaluated the effectiveness of Aboriginal health programs, focusing on the measurement and achievement of clinical health outcomes.
- The review of each project included site visits, contractual analyses, scientific evidence reviews and evaluation of health impact and value for money.

Key Findings of the Review of Aboriginal Health

- In terms of the value for money delivered by each of the 184 projects evaluated by Professor Holman, an overwhelming majority of projects (91.3% representing 88.1% of funds) delivered good, excellent or outstanding value for money.
- The review noted that 19.6% of the 184 evaluated projects had been recognised by a competitive WA State or national award and in the case of those rated outstanding value for money, 36% had been similarly recognised.
- Systematic evidence reviews revealed that the 173 intervention projects were underpinned by high standards of scientific evidence, but the original structured proposals submitted for funding did not properly document the cost-effectiveness of the proposed intervention.
- The Pilbara and Wheatbelt regions were found to be relatively underfunded compared with other regions.
- Primary prevention programs were underfunded relative to their significance in closing the gap on Aboriginal disadvantage, with nutrition, education and food security and alcohol education and rehabilitation particularly neglected.
- Fragmentation of service delivery at the regional level was a major issue. Many Aboriginal health programs were found to be lacking sufficient integrated systems for regional governance, region-wide operational plans, joint service ventures, clinical registers, quality improvement systems and workforce reform.

Recommendations of the Review of Aboriginal Health

Professor Holman made five overarching recommendations:

1. An Aboriginal Health Guarantee - That in return for a stronger commitment to a results-based performance framework, the WA Government guarantees that the minimum term of a service agreement within the WA Aboriginal health sector is three years with an automatic extension for a further three months if the WA Government does not offer in writing a renewal of funding prior to the end of the agreement.
2. Investment Where Money Counts - That the Department re-allocates resources to the WA Aboriginal health sector so as to better reflect the objective needs of the different regions and health programs.
3. Strong Governance, Strong Evidence, Strong Culture - That the Department elevates the standards of governance, evidence translation and cultural security.
4. De-Fragmentation in the Regions - That the Department engages with the WA Aboriginal health sector to achieve integration of funding inputs and service outputs and results at the regional level.
5. A Focus on Results - That the Department works with the WA Aboriginal health sector to move from the historical focus on measurement of service activity outputs towards a focus on results, including the implementation of a results-based performance framework.

WA Health response to the Review of Aboriginal Health

- WA Health accepts the key recommendations of the Aboriginal Health Review, and is committed to implementing them.
- The State Government has committed an additional \$49.4 million over the next three years to continue programs funded under the 'Footprints to Better Health' initiative. Further funding has also been identified by WA Health to ensure the range of 'outstanding', 'very good' and 'good' Aboriginal health programs identified in the Holman Review will continue. These changes will result in a total allocation of \$88.7 million over three years for Aboriginal Health programs funded through the 'Footprints to Better Health' initiative.
- Programs that will not continue to be funded will receive a two month contract extension to end August 2015 reflecting the need to transition programs.