



Aboriginal Health Council
of South Australia Inc.

'Our health, our choice, our way'

MEDIA RELEASE

29 May 2009

New ABS Data on Indigenous Life Expectancy NOT APPLICABLE TO SA

The Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Inc. (AHCSA) not only questions the basis of new ABS data on Indigenous life expectancy but also highlights that it is not relevant to South Australia.

AHCSA Chairperson Yvonne Buza said, "In its release of the 'experimental' data reporting that the life expectancy of Indigenous men is 11.5 years lower than for non-Indigenous men and for Indigenous women 9.7 years lower than non-Indigenous women, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) also stated that estimates could only be compiled for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Northern Territory. Therefore, this new data cannot be applied to South Australia nor the other states for which no data was available. And it certainly cannot be used to calculate a national average.

"The AHCSA Board is also concerned about the one-year period over which the new ABS data was collected, saying this is not long enough to substantiate any change in Indigenous life expectancy.

"We recognise that Australian Statistician Brian Pink noted "that these figures should not be interpreted as changes in Indigenous life expectancy over time", however, believe that any public announcement of changes in Indigenous life expectancy should have been based on solid long-term data for ALL states of at least 5 years.

"The Board welcomes the Australian Government's continuing commitment to close the gap, however, will strongly oppose any use of this new ABS data as a basis for future service delivery.

"AHCSA Board Members and staff continue to attend funerals almost weekly. For example, CEO Mary Buckskin has in recent weeks experienced four deaths in her extended family – two were in their 60's, one late 40's, and one late 20's. There is certainly no evidence in South Australia to support this new ABS data.

"In an effort to restore factuality on Indigenous life expectancy, AHCSA is gathering its own statistics from members about deaths in South Australia. This information will be communicated on a regular basis via the media, newsletters and quarterly meetings with Minister Hill.

"We also call on the Australian Government to ensure that people counted as Aboriginal are in fact Aboriginal to ensure that future data is not skewed. Any person being counted as Aboriginal in any service or hospital, mainstream or Indigenous, should have the appropriate Confirmation of Aboriginality Certificate." Ms Buza said.

AHCSA is South Australia's peak body for Aboriginal health. As an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, AHCSA is managed and governed by an Aboriginal Board comprising members from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Substance Misuse Services and Aboriginal Health Advisory Committees who represent the interests of the communities through AHCSA at a state and national level.

ENDS

For more information contact Mary Buckskin, CEO Aboriginal Health Council of SA Inc., tel (08) 8273 7200.

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