

New Centre for Research Excellence to address remote healthcare needs

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A multiagency partnership commencing today is working together to help solve Australia's urgent remote healthcare needs.

Centres of Research Excellence (CRE) bring together teams of researchers to collaborate on issues of national priority. The work of this CRE is driven by the needs and priorities of the remote Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services involved.

The **CRE** for **Strengthening Health Systems in Remote Australia** (CRESTRA) will be led by Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies).

The team of partners includes the [Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory](#) (AMSANT), the [Central Australian Aboriginal Congress](#) (CAAC), the [Katherine West Health Board Aboriginal Corporation](#), the [Ngaanyatjarra Health Service](#), the [Pintupi Homelands Health Service Aboriginal Corporation](#) (PHHSAC) and the Torres Health Indigenous Corporation (Torres Health).

The [Healthy Communities Foundation Australia](#), the [Northern Territory Primary Health Network](#) (NT PHN), the Northern Territory Government's [NT Health](#), [Macquarie University](#) and [Monash University](#) are also collaborating on the Australian Government's [National Health and Medical Research Council](#) (NHMRC) funded work.

The Menzies-led partnership will spend the next 5 years working on 4 main research areas to tackle poor health and difficulty accessing primary healthcare in regional Australia. By seeking to solve problems caused by inequitable funding, skills and workforce shortages, and a lack of access to services, it's hoped CRESTRA will address an urgent need to fix problems with the care system in remote Australia.

The centre's research themes will look at how to:

1. improve workforce retention through multiple evidence-based strategies,
2. address the current inequitable funding of remote health services,
3. improve service integration and co-ordination to provide an efficient, seamless pathway to care for remote residents, and
4. build remote area research capacity.

Find out more about the CRESTRA's work on the [Menzies School of Health Research website](#).

Quotes from Menzies School of Health Research Professor of Remote and Rural Health Services Research and Chief Investigator, Professor John Wakerman:

“Remote residents experience the heaviest burden of ill health, preventable hospital admissions and potentially avoidable deaths. Despite this, it’s hard to access optimal primary health care because of persistent workforce shortages, under-funding, high staff turnover, fragmented care, and large distances from health services.

“This Centre for Research Excellence is a collaboration of remote health services, researchers and other key stakeholders which will generate and apply new knowledge to address 3 key questions of how to achieve a stable and sustainable remote health workforce; how to efficiently and equitably fund the true costs of remote health service delivery; and how to achieve service integration and coordination for the many people living in remote areas with complex chronic disease.

“I’m confident that over the next 5 years, CRESTRA will address how to sustain an appropriately trained, clinically, and culturally competent workforce; outline the true funding needed to adequately address remote primary health care; and better co-ordinate primary and hospital-based services.”

Quotes from Central Australian Aboriginal Congress CEO, Donna Ah Chee:

“We are currently experiencing the biggest workforce crisis in my twenty plus years in primary health care. This is leading to a large decline in access to primary health care and threatens the major gains we have made in Life Expectancy and premature death for Aboriginal people in the last twenty years here in Central Australia.

“It is therefore very timely that we have this new centre as we need research that both exposes the extent of the challenges we are facing and supports and strengthens our proposed evidence-based solutions.

“We must stop the decline in the remote primary health care system.”

Quotes from Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory Acting CEO, Erin Lew Fatt:

“AMSANT welcomes the collaboration, through this research partnership, to continue to build evidence and understanding of strategies that improve remote health outcomes, particularly in relation to the remote workforce.

“Several of our staff are involved in working with, and leading, parts of this research in collaboration with Menzies and our other partners.

“We see this as a further opportunity to incorporate the voices, and recognise the extraordinary efforts of local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and communities in the NT.”

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