

5th April 2024

Dr Mike Freeland MP

Chair, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport

Dear Chair,

RE: Requested additional documents and answers to questions on notice – Diabetes across the Lifecourse: Northern Australia Partnership (Submission 66)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence at the public hearing in Darwin on 7th March 2024. Please find attached additional documents that were discussed during the hearing. I have provided a brief summary of the key points of each on this page:

1. Evidence of racial macroaggressions in healthcare – Wicks et al. *Int J Equity in Health* 2023

- Dr Wicks is PhD Candidate at Menzies and Specialist Physician based in Alice Springs
- A discourse analysis was undertaken with data from 14 in-depth interviews with health care workers from two primary care services in very remote Central Australia.
- Racial macroaggressions were found to be common in the discourse of remote health care workers. Key themes identified included racial categorisation and sameness, assumptions about intelligence and competence, perceptions of criminality or dangerousness, treatment as second-class citizens, and pathologising Aboriginal culture.

2. Statistics on uptake of annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health checks in the NT Aboriginal Health Key Performance Indicators report (published 2023)

- Screening for diabetes (outside of pregnancy) should be occurring as a part of routine health checks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (eg. MBS Item 715).
- KPI 1.10 (page 50) in this report relates to health checks. Between 2010 and 2021, there was a threefold improvement in adult health checks from 17.4% to 52.5%.
- The NT Aboriginal Health KPI system is overseen by the NT Aboriginal Health Forum with data contributed by NT Health and Aboriginal Community Controlled Primary Health Care services. This service population has 85% coverage of the entire Aboriginal population of the NT.

3. Burden of diabetes in pregnancy in the NT – Hare et al. *Lancet Reg Health West Pac* 2020

- This study included data from essentially all births in the NT between 1987 and 2016.
- Key findings included a ten-fold increase in the prevalence of type 2 diabetes in pregnancy among Aboriginal women over three decades. The contemporary rates of pre-existing type 2 diabetes in pregnancy are among the highest ever reported globally, affecting 5.7% of pregnant Aboriginal women NT-wide and as high as 8.4% of pregnant Aboriginal women in the Central Australia region.

4. *Burden of diabetes across remote NT communities – Hare et al. BMJ Open 2022*

- This study included data on >20,000 Aboriginal people across 51 remote NT communities
- Over seven years, the prevalence of diabetes increased from 14% to 17% across all age groups. The adult prevalence of diabetes in 2018/19 was 29% NT-wide, being highest in the Central Australia region where the adult prevalence was 40%.
- Median age of people with new onset type 2 diabetes was 38 years, which is decades younger than the national population. In the 20-29 year-old age group, the incidence of type 2 diabetes in this cohort was 26-times greater than is observed in the national Australian population.

5. *Health workforce turnover – Russell et al. Human Resource for Health 2017*

- This study examined workforce turnover and retention across 53 remote clinics in the NT between 2013-15.
- Workforce stability rates were low with only 20% of nurses and Aboriginal Health Practitioners remaining working at a specific remote clinic after 12 months. Half left within 4 months. Overall, there was 128% turnover in the nursing and Aboriginal Health Practitioner workforce each year.

Please let us know if we can provide any further information that might assist the Committee. Thank you again for your dedication and generous service in undertaking this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Matthew Hare

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On behalf of the Diabetes across the Lifecourse: Northern Australia Partnership