



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER AFFAIRS

**MEDIA ALERT**

Issued: 26 May 2009

Chair – Mr Richard Marles MP  
Deputy – Mr Andrew Laming MP

## Remote community stores: in the market for good health

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will hold a public meeting with the Department of Health and Ageing for the second time during its inquiry into remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait community stores in Canberra this week.

The Department of Health and Ageing has portfolio responsibilities to safeguard and improve the health and well being of all Australians. In this context, the Department provides national leadership and coordination in the promotion of good nutrition and healthy eating among Indigenous Australians.

At hearings in March, Department officers explained the connection between poor nutrition and the 17 year life expectancy gap for Indigenous people.

The Committee was told that about five percent of the chronic disease burden among Indigenous people can be attributed to low fruit and vegetable consumption, with 15 percent of those living in remote communities having no daily vegetable intake. This compares with one percent for non indigenous Australians.

While other health risks contribute more to the incidence of chronic disease, maternal malnutrition has an intergenerational impact. Malnourished mothers have sickly babies who, if they survive, are vulnerable to infection and, later in adulthood, to early death from cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes and chronic renal failure.

The Chairman of the Committee Mr Richard Marles MP advised:

“The Committee’s inspections in remote Australia revealed that availability and price are major obstacles to healthy eating in remote communities. Some families live on damper most of the week, with fruit and vegetables only on the menu when pay day coincides with delivery day.

The Department of Health and Ageing will advise the Committee on its strategies to assist remote store owners to promote and supply healthy foods and to help Indigenous people make the healthiest dietary choices possible.”

**Public hearing: Thursday 28 May 2009      Venue: Committee Room 1R2**

**12.15 pm      The Department of Health and Ageing**

**1.45 pm      Adjourn**

**For media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair Mr Richard Marles on (02) 62774330.

**For background information**, contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 62774559 or [atsia.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:atsia.reps@aph.gov.au)