

MEDIA STATEMENT
24 April 2025



Aboriginal Medical Services
Alliance Northern Territory
ICN 8253 | ABN 26 263 401 676

AMSANT calls for national commitment to Closing the Health Gap ahead of Federal Election

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) is calling for on all political parties to reaffirm their commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and to support better health outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians ahead of the Federal Election.

AMSANT CEO, Dr John Paterson, said the peak body is seeking meetings with all parties to discuss ways to uphold the Closing the Gap targets on First Nations-led service delivery and improving health outcomes.

Recent Productivity Commission data shows many key targets in the NT are off track, including declines in female life expectancy, birth weight, early childhood education, child development, youth engagement, employment, and both youth and adult incarceration rates. “Stronger healthcare builds stronger communities,” Dr Paterson said. “Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) have been central to improving the health of Aboriginal communities in the NT, but progress is too slow – held back by deep inequities in housing, education, poverty and other social determinants of health.”

“We need a government that is willing to face these health gaps and meaningfully support the ACCHS sector, where they need it. The upcoming Federal Election provides an opportunity for all parties to recommit to the National Agreement and to act on the recommendations of the Productivity Commission’s Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2024).”

AMSANT last week welcomed the Albanese Government’s Health and Aged Care Plan for the Territory, which presents a significant opportunity for meaningful progress and builds on previous initiatives such as the National Strategy to address food insecurity and the implementation of eight Urgent Care Clinics across the NT that have already had more than 50,000 visits.

“The record investment in health and aged care demonstrates a genuine willingness to act— particularly in critical areas such as aged care and youth mental health, which are vital to improving long-term outcomes for Territorians,” Dr Paterson said.

“The Urgent Care Clinics are easing pressure on hospitals, reducing medevac arrangements, and strengthening the capacity of overstretched primary care services. The more care we can provide within local communities, the better the outcomes. Initiatives like these support culturally safe, community-based care that keeps people closer to home and their families.”

“We commend the Albanese Government for its commitment to health in the Northern Territory and are seeking meetings with all parties ahead of the upcoming election to discuss ways to uphold the Closing the Gap targets for First Peoples-led service delivery and support better health outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians.”

“Collaboration of this kind is never easy, but we must continue working together outside political cycles to ensure meaningful action — whether in health, education, housing, or other critical areas — from all governments for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

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