



MEDIA STATEMENT

06 July 2026

50 Years of Deadly: AMSANT celebrates five decades of Aboriginal community-controlled health

This NAIDOC Week, the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) is celebrating five decades of Aboriginal community-controlled health services (ACCHSs), reflecting on this year's theme, "50 Years of Deadly."

Since the 1970s, Aboriginal communities across the Northern Territory and the nation have built and run their own effective primary health care services — grounded in the principle of health for the people, by the people and of the people. Today, ACCHSs operate in every region of the Territory, from Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy to remote communities across the Top End and Central Australia, each grown from and proud of the community it serves.

A report by Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, based on rigorous analysis of regional health data by the Menzies School of Health Research and NT Health shows the scale of what this model has achieved in Central Australia alone. Life expectancy for Aboriginal men has increased by 18.3 years and for women by 8.5 years since community-controlled primary health care was established; infant mortality in Alice Springs has nearly halved; and premature death fell by more than half between 1999 and 2010. The health gains track directly with sustained investment in community-controlled primary health care.

AMSANT CEO Donna Ah Chee said the results reflect what community control has always been about.

"Few examples better capture theme of 50 Years of Deadly than the achievements of Aboriginal community-controlled health services," Ms Ah Chee said.

"Across the Territory and the country, our member services have spent 50 years proving that community-controlled solutions work. This NAIDOC Week, we're honouring the founders, leaders and health workers who decided not to wait for governments to fix things, because they knew their people deserved better."

"That legacy is something every one of our member services carries forward every day, in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and communities right across the Top End and Central Australia. This NAIDOC Week is a chance to celebrate what Aboriginal people have built for our own people, and to look forward to the next 50 years with pride."

AMSANT congratulates its member services and the broader Aboriginal community-controlled health sector across Australia on this milestone, and thanks the many staff, Boards and communities whose work over five decades has made it possible.

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