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Indigenous health spending will improve access to health care

The Federal Government's Budget investment of more than \$200 million in Indigenous health services has been welcomed by Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) CEO Mr David Butt.

"A commitment of this size will have a significant impact on the health of the Indigenous population of Australia. AGPN is pleased to note our repeated calls for action on Indigenous health have been heard," he said.

In its Budget submission AGPN identified Indigenous health as vital for continued health investment and called for the development of roles attached to the Divisions Network across the country to help Indigenous people access culturally appropriate health care.

As part of the Council of Australian Governments initiative in Indigenous health this Budget will fund 80 Indigenous outreach workers and 80 project officers will be set up in divisions across the network to assist Indigenous people to access medical services.

Along with this the Government announced more than \$130 million will be spent on improving primary health care services in the Northern Territory, \$58 million for eye and ear health and \$11 million on dental care.

Several other division programs have also received further funding, an endorsement of the difference the Network is making in local communities and their health.

The extension of the Drought Initiative means Community Support Workers who were some of the first mental health workforce to assist their communities when the Black Saturday fires struck Victoria will be able to continue their important outreach work.

"The drought continues to be a burden to our rural communities. AGPN has advocated for the continuation of this important program to support those who are most vulnerable in these communities. We are very pleased to see this outcome," Mr Butt said.

Divisions funding also had a boost with more than \$7.5 million invested in maintaining the services of the Network with a new funding formula that considers population shift around the country, but continues the considerable amount of work being done by divisions of all size and shape around the country.

"AGPN argued for a 'no losers' policy with the funding changes, the government has listened to that call and the Network's contribution has been endorsed by this investment," Mr Butt said.

For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190