



FACT SHEET

Increasing specialist and allied health follow up care

What the Australian Government is doing

The Government is enabling Indigenous Australians with, or at risk of, chronic disease to have better access to specialist, GP and allied health services.

This will include increasing the number of medical specialists, GPs and allied health professionals providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in rural and remote Australia, and increasing access to specialist services provided in urban areas.

How this will work

- The Government will provide specialist outreach services in urban areas, and expand the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP) to provide outreach services by multidisciplinary health teams in rural and remote Indigenous communities.

How this will help Indigenous Australians

- Indigenous Australians will have increased access to medical specialist and general practitioner services and allied health professionals in urban, rural and remote areas.
- Highly skilled and equipped health workers will mean better outcomes for patients.
- Visiting professionals will provide knowledge and upskilling to local health professionals enabling better ongoing care.

For urban locations

- This initiative will increase access to medical specialist services in urban areas by providing funding to support outreach services focusing on chronic disease to Indigenous patients in urban areas.

Who will implement the new approach

- Fund-holding arrangements for urban specialist outreach will be determined following consultations with stakeholders, including relevant specialist medical colleges.
- A technical reference group has been established to provide expert advice on the implementation of the program. Further consultations with stakeholders will take place over the coming months.
- The program will commence in May 2010.

For rural and remote locations

- To increase access to services in rural and remote areas, the Government will expand the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP) to introduce multidisciplinary teams, comprising medical specialists, GPs and/or allied health professionals. MSOAP currently complements medical specialist services provided by state and Northern Territory governments by funding medical specialist outreach services in rural and remote communities.
- The Government is expanding the MSOAP to specifically increase access for people in rural and remote Indigenous communities and to support services delivered by multidisciplinary teams.
- This will contribute to the better management of complex and chronic health conditions by increasing the range of services offered by visiting health professionals.

Who will implement the new rural and remote approach

- In all states and the Northern Territory, the MSOAP is administered on behalf of the Australian Government by nine auspicing agencies. These agencies will be engaged to plan services and recruit appropriate health professionals to deliver services.
- It is anticipated that this program will start in May 2010 with a small number of sites in the first year and will increase over the next three years.
- To assist with the recommendations about the location of services to Indigenous communities, the existing MSOAP advisory forums in all states and the Northern Territory will be expanded.
- Members of advisory forums are drawn from the Commonwealth and state and the Northern Territory health departments, health and medical professional organisations, as well as community-based groups who provide expert advice on the suitability of services under the MSOAP. Membership will be expanded to include Indigenous peak bodies and allied health professional organisations.