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New report identifies investment into Indigenous Health research paying off

A new report which has evaluated the economic contribution of Australia's leading Aboriginal health research institute shows it made a significant contribution to the Australian economy.

Released on the eve of Close The Gap Day, the report by Deloitte Access Economics revealed the Menzies School of Health Research made a social and economic contribution of \$393 million to Australia and the Asia Pacific — \$87 million to the Northern Territory alone — from 2002 to 2010.

As Lynne Pezzullo, Lead Partner of Deloitte's Health Economics and Social Policy group said, "The total benefit cost ratio was 3:12, demonstrating high returns on investing in Menzies' health research activities."

Menzies' Director, Professor Jonathan Carapetis further explained, "This means every dollar invested in Menzies returns \$3.12 in net direct and indirect economic and health benefits. This figure is 44% higher than the return on investment for Australia's health research and development as a whole (\$2.17)."

Ms Pezzullo said, "Menzies not only contributes economically, it also contributes to addressing one of our nation's most important equity issues*, as the majority of Menzies efforts are focused on improving the health of Indigenous Australians."

Deloitte's publication *Economic and social contribution of Menzies School of Health Research to the NT, Australia and the Asia Pacific* also concluded that Menzies contributed:

- \$91m directly, and \$37m indirectly to the Northern Territory economy from 2002-10
- 120 full-time jobs to the Northern Territory in 2010
- 45 candidates for Masters and PhD qualifications from 2002 to 2010

Chief Minister Paul Henderson said Menzies School of Health Research played a key role in informing Territory Government policy, "We're investing to Close the Gap in Indigenous health issues and Territory focused research is key to helping us tackle this challenge. It's why we invested more than \$1.5 million to help Menzies collect much needed research to support Government's work in this area."

Social contribution highlights

The report emphasised the following signature achievements in regional health.

- **85% less deaths from the bacterial disease, melioidosis**
A joint Menzies and Royal Darwin Hospital team saw the antibiotic G-CSF added to drug options for septic shock in melioidosis sufferers. After this discovery, mortality rates dropped from 95% to 10%.
- **35% fewer severe malaria deaths thanks to new drug treatment**
Menzies helped identify that the drug artesunate reduces the mortality of severe malaria by 35% compared with conventional intravenous drug quinine. This finding helped trigger changes in the WHO's Global Malaria Treatment Guidelines.
- **1 in 10 extra lives saved from Rheumatic Heart Disease in NT Aboriginal men**
The NT Rheumatic Heart Disease Control Program, instigated largely as a result of Menzies research, identified pre-existing RHD-cases so as to improve clinical care. As a result, RHD-related mortality rates in NT Aboriginal males dropped from 25.5 per 1,000 in 1987-1996 to 14.8 per 1,000 in 1997-2005.

“These scientific breakthroughs, as well as the economic outcomes Menzies has produced, strongly reveal the imperative for continued funding for our work into Indigenous and Tropical health,” said Prof Carapetis

Chief Minister Paul Henderson said “We have made some progress in key Indigenous health outcomes but there is more to be done and we are committed to continuing working in partnership with Menzies to get access to the most up-to-date research in this field.”

Chief Minister Paul Henderson said the Territory Government’s key Indigenous outcomes over the last decade included:

- 4 ½ year improvement in life expectancy for Aboriginal women
- Indigenous infant mortality rate have fallen by 37%
- Anaemia rates for Aboriginal children have fallen by 20%
- Cervical cancer rates have fallen by 61%
- Dramatic decline in mortality from cervical cancer, falling by 64% in non-Aboriginal women and by 92% for Aboriginal women between 1991 and 2003
- The survival rates of Patients on Renal dialysis are now equivalent to the rest of Australia - an improvement of 7 years in their life expectancy

To access the full report visit <http://www.menzies.edu.au/news-and-events/deloitte-report>

Background

Menzies School of Health Research is the national leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research. It is the only medical research institute in the NT and the only one in Australia with a major focus on Indigenous health. Menzies has more than 300 staff working in over 60 communities in Central and Northern Australia, as well as developing countries in the region. Menzies is also a significant contributor to health education and research training. Its major research programs include infectious diseases, chronic diseases, environmental health, health services research, social determinants of health, mental health, and international health. Menzies is largely funded through competitive research grants provided by the Australian Government’s National Health and Medical Research Council, in addition to funding from the Northern Territory Government.

Media Contacts:

Menzies School of Health Research

Alice Plate, National Manager of Communications and Media M: 0400 045 999

Northern Territory Government

Claire March, media adviser to the Chief Minister M: 0403 937 849

Deloitte Access Economics:

Simon Rushton, Deloitte Corporate Affairs M: 0450 530 748

** The report stated that Indigenous Australians experience the worst health of any one identifiable cultural group in the nation. Their burden of disease is 2.5 times higher than that experienced by the total Australian population.*

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