

COMMUNIQUE – MEETING NO. 7: 30 - 31 May 2019

I would like to thank the Chief Executive NT Health for attending the meeting to provide her insights into the progress and prior recommendations of the NT Clinical Senate.

Locally and nationally, with the Closing the Gap report recently released, the target for healthy and strong aboriginal babies is that by 2028, 90-92 per cent of babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers are born with a healthy birthweight.

In the NT, we know that health outcomes for mothers and babies have improved since the 1980s. However, there is still much work to be done. In the last NT Mothers and Babies Report, 2015, Aboriginal women were much less likely to access best-practice antenatal care.

Nine per cent of all NT live births are low birthweight (less than 2.5 kg), with one in six babies born to Aboriginal mothers being of low birthweight. In 2015, there were 53 perinatal deaths comprising 38 stillbirths and 15 deaths during the first 28 days of life. Perinatal death rates remain significantly higher for the NT Aboriginal population.

The presentations clearly identified four key issues in the NT context. These were:

- the need for a greater focus on prevention and social determinants
- the need for integrated models of care to identify and manage high priority complex cases consistently
- workforce challenges
- the need to ensure equity of access to antenatal services for women across the NT.

The NT Clinical Senate has made recommendations to support the implementation of the key issues identified in the debates.