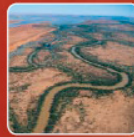
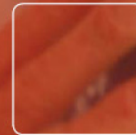


# Snapshot

of Australian  
primary health  
care research



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*This snapshot of recent Australian research projects demonstrates the potential for primary health care research to improve the health of Australians.*

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The views expressed in the publication do not necessarily represent the position of the Australian Government.

## Foreword



I am pleased to introduce this publication showcasing some fine examples of primary health care research in Australia.

Primary care is a key priority for the Australian Government. The Government recognises the importance of an effective, accessible and affordable primary care system in keeping Australians healthy and out of hospital.

We are committed to quality improvement in the health system, and measures such as the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the development of a National Primary Health Care Strategy will inform and shape the future direction of health policy in this country.

Research into primary care can play an important role in supporting

improved care by building an evidence base that addresses not just the immediate, but also the emerging needs of the community.

Conducting research is also beneficial for the health workforce as it engages practitioners in exploring key questions that can lead to improvements in patient care and encourages an inquiring approach to the delivery of health care.

And research evidence that is relevant to policy makers can make an important contribution to the development of options which can shape the future of Australia's health system.

This is why the Government is investing in the Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy.

The strategy funds research to produce evidence that can underpin health care services and help to reduce the burden of chronic disease and improve quality of life.

'Snapshot' provides a glimpse into the diversity of Australian primary health care research and the impact that research projects can have on local communities.

The publication includes studies on: improving children's health in remote Indigenous communities and better understanding Indigenous suicide; the impact of care plans on diabetes care; health assessments for older Australians; and improving end-of-life care.

The work provides an insight into the tangible benefits across the health system and among different population groups that are possible from primary health care research.

I look forward to the ongoing contribution of primary health care research to the health policy debate in Australia.

*Nicola Roxon  
Minister for Health and Ageing  
Canberra*

# 5 Understanding suicide



## Project:

Leonore Hanssens, Nurse Researcher PhD Candidate, Centre for Remote Health - a joint centre of Flinders University and Charles Darwin University

## Funding:

Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy Grant

Indigenous suicide has escalated rapidly in the Northern Territory – by 800% among Indigenous men in the past two decades – but there has been little evidence as to what has triggered this public health tragedy or what might help reverse it.

This primary health care research examined the effect of suicide clusters in the NT, a unique and discrete phenomenon in which a single suicide seems to precipitate a series of other suicides and, in some cases, further ‘echo’ clusters.

Using data from 1996 to 2005 collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the National Coroner’s Information System, the research analysis revealed 77% of Indigenous suicides occurred in clusters, far exceeding rates across the population, which are around 5-10%.

It also showed that people vulnerable to suicide tended to group together well before the occurrence of any overt suicidal stimulus. It appears rapid social change is affecting a subgroup of young, male, married, unemployed Indigenous men.

With this new insight, researcher Leonore Hanssens concluded that half of the total Indigenous suicides in the Northern Territory were potentially preventable with culturally appropriate and timely responses to the cluster phenomenon.

This important research has shed light onto the escalating physical, social and economic effects suicide is having on communities. Its evidence has already contributed to suicide prevention and capacity building workshops initiated by Suicide Prevention Australia and partnered by the Commonwealth Government.

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