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## **Landmark agreement to boost Indigenous health in Cape York**

Indigenous communities on Queensland's Cape York Peninsula will gain control of their own health services following a landmark agreement signed today.

The Cape York Health Deed of Commitment will transfer primary health services from Queensland Health and other mainstream providers to the Apunipima Cape York Health Council. The transfer is expected to occur progressively over the next five years.

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) National Director Gary Highland said the Cape York model has the potential to be extended to other parts of Australia.

"This agreement is one of the first of its kind. It's important because all of the research says that community control is essential to improving Indigenous health," Mr Highland said.

"The Cape York agreement will encourage local Indigenous people to take greater responsibility for their own health. It should also enable greater flexibility so that service delivery better meets the different needs of each unique community," he said.

Mr Highland cautioned against advocating a 'one size fits all' approach to Indigenous health. However, he said there was no doubt that learnings from the development of the Cape York strategy would be able to be adapted to other parts of Australia.

"Innovative work of the kind being undertaken in Cape York will be essential if Australia is to respond to the recent challenge issued by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner to close the Indigenous life expectancy gap within a generation," Mr Highland said.

Mr Highland said the transfer of health services was supported by research from the Cape York Institute and followed the development of a Cape York Regional Health Strategy which identified each community's health and social priorities as well as gaps and opportunities in service provision.

"The Apunipima Cape York Health Council, Queensland Health, the Federal Department of Health and Aging and the other members of the Cape York Regional Health Forum, should be congratulated for all of their work leading up to this agreement. There's no doubt that progress on the health outcomes resulting from the agreement will be watched eagerly around Australia," he said.

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