

Getting the message right: making the social determinants of health matter in the Northern Territory

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Background: The Northern Territory has the highest burden of disease of all jurisdictions with high rates of chronic conditions in the Aboriginal population. Health data indicates a strong link between the Social Determinant of Health (SDoH) and the likelihood of developing a chronic condition. Addressing poor social determinants is one of eight key action areas in the NT Chronic Conditions Prevention and Management Strategy (NT CCPMS) 2010-2020.

Methods: Throughout the development of the 2014-2016 Implementation Plan for the NT CCPMS, it was recognised that there was a need to develop a coordinated approach to how the SDoH are communicated across the Northern Territory including how to communicate the SDoH to the non-health sector so that they understand the a SDoH approach can and should be used to progress their core business.

Results/discussion: While it is evident that action on the SDoH is everyone's business, converting a theoretical framework into a concept that is understood and accepted by a broader audience has been difficult. It appears that there is a lack of understanding across the Northern Territory regarding the SDoH and what it means at both a strategic and operational level. It also appears that there is not one consistent message that is being conveyed. These factors contribute to the inability to communicate a clear and consistent message regarding the importance of the SDoH across all sectors in the Northern Territory.

The project aims to develop a communication framework that describes the SDoH in a format that is relevant to the Northern Territory. *The Northern Territory Communication Framework for the Social Determinants of Health* will provide individuals, programs and government departments with a consistent understanding of the SDoH

Conclusion/implication: The extensive consultation process will result in a Framework that improves the awareness of SDoH, promote an understanding of working within a SDoH approach, and provide guidance to frame health messages addressing the SDoH for the health and non-health sector. It is expect that the Framework will promote and encourage future actions across the Northern Territory which will address the SDoH and improve the prevention and management of chronic conditions.