



## Media Release – Despite ongoing challenges, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s health shows some improvements

31 March 2021

The most recent indicators of the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are documented in the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet’s new annual publication, the [Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2020](#).

Improvements were noted in several areas. In 2018, 44% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers reported smoking during pregnancy which is a decrease from 52% in 2009. The proportion of expectant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers attending antenatal care in the first trimester has increased from 50% in 2012 to 66% in 2018.

In September 2020, 97% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 5 year old children were fully immunised against the recommended vaccine-preventable diseases.

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people drink less alcohol than non-Indigenous people, those who do are more likely to at harmful levels. Evidence suggests better health outcomes are seen when there are adequately resourced and culturally safe alcohol and other drug services provided by community controlled organisations.

HealthInfoNet Director, Professor Neil Drew, said ‘The 2020 Overview was written in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and I want express our admiration for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led response to COVID-19 that has lessened the impact and protected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. This exemplifies what can be achieved with strong and authoritative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership. With their ongoing support we continue to strive to develop our capacity to accurately and authentically represent the data and statistics to support the efforts of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector workforce’.

As part of the HealthInfoNet’s commitment to knowledge exchange, [a plain language infographic Summary version of the Overview’s key topics](#) has been produced and [a PowerPoint from the Summary](#).

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**About the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet:** A comprehensive web resource <https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au> that helps to close the gap by informing practice and policy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health by making up-to-date research and other knowledge readily accessible. For over 23 years, working in the area of knowledge exchange with a population health focus, the HealthInfoNet makes research and other information freely available in a form that has immediate, practical utility for practitioners and policy-makers, enabling them to make decisions based on the best available evidence.