

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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## Mercy Health and Apunipima unite to help close the health gap

Mercy Health is formalising its partnership with Apunipima Cape York Health Council to improve the health outcomes of people living in far north Queensland.

Mercy Health and Apunipima have been working together over the past six months towards a landmark memorandum of understanding (MOU) that was signed at the Catholic Health Australia conference in Sydney.

Apunipima is the largest community controlled health organisation in Queensland, delivering comprehensive primary healthcare to 11 Cape York communities. Founded by the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Health is a Catholic organisation providing acute and subacute hospital care, aged care, mental health programs, maternity and specialist women's health services, early parenting services, home care services and health worker training and development.

Mercy Health and Apunipima were introduced by John Mero, Director of Vision Method Outcome, who has worked with both organisations and recognised the opportunities and benefits that a partnership could provide.

Mercy Health Group Chief Executive Officer Stephen Cornelissen said Mercy Health was committed to helping close the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, including through the recent unveiling of the organisation's comprehensive Reconciliation Action Plan.

"This year's *Closing the Gap* report revealed that while Indigenous infant mortality has fallen, progress towards most other targets had stalled," Adjunct Professor Cornelissen explained.

"Of these failures, probably the most damning is the continuing gap in life expectancy: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are likely to die 10 years earlier than other Australians. We are extremely hopeful that by partnering with Apunipima we can make a positive difference to the lives of Indigenous Australians."

The collaborative partnership between Mercy Health and Apunipima may involve the establishment of health scholarships, the exchanging of skills, providing clinical advice and support and participating in a Cape York aged care review.

Apunipima Chief Executive Officer Cleveland Fagan welcomed the partnership with Mercy Health and the opportunity to combine the organisations' skills and experience.

"We are delighted to be entering into a partnership of this calibre," Mr Fagan said. "With shared values and a common aim, I am really looking forward to seeing this partnership flourish and grow

well into the future.”

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