



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS  
OF HEALTH ALLIANCE

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **One year on from key health report and still no action in Australia**

On 20 March 2013, the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs tabled its inquiry report into Australia's domestic response to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of Health report *Closing the gap within a generation*. A year on from the release of the inquiry report, no action has been taken to address the recommendations.

"The one-year anniversary of the Senate report coincides with National Close the Gap Day today. Last month, the Prime Minister, Opposition leader and Australian Greens leader reiterated their support for closing the unacceptable health and life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians by 2030. The evidence-based recommendations from the WHO's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health Report have reaped benefits around the world, but we have yet to see Australian governments commit to their implementation. If we are to Close the Gap, then implementing the WHO's recommendations would be a great place to start," explained Martin Lavery, Chair of the Social Determinants of Health Alliance (SDOHA).

The Coalition/Labor/Greens Senators made five recommendations that the Australian Government:

1. Adopt the WHO Report and commit to addressing the social determinants of health relevant to the Australian context.
2. Adopt administrative practices that ensure consideration of the social determinants of health in all relevant policy development activities, particularly in relation to education, employment, housing, family and social security policy.
3. Place responsibility for addressing social determinants of health within one agency, with a mandate to address issues across portfolios.
4. Give greater emphasis in National Health and Medical Research Council grant allocation priorities to research on public health and social determinants research.
5. Make annual progress reports to Parliament a key requirement of the body tasked with responsibility for addressing the social determinants of health.

The recommendations of the tripartisan inquiry were endorsed by all of the participating Senators, including Senators Siewert, Moore, Boswell, Boyce, Brown, McKenzie, Smith, Thorp, Fierravanti-Wells and Di Natale.

The report clearly states that:

*Good health involves improving access to education, reducing insecurity and unemployment, improving housing standards, and increasing the opportunities for social engagement available for all citizens. Addressing the discrepancies of health outcomes resulting from the prevailing social determinants means addressing the causes of those social determinants.*

"It's vital that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments work together if Australia is to address those factors that are holding us back in seeking to achieve better health outcomes for the Australian community," said Mr Lavery.

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