

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Push for health equity could save \$170 million in South Australia**

Thousands of South Australians could avoid hospital admissions, saving the state government as much as \$170 million annually, if efforts to address health inequity in the state were ramped up even further, a forum in Adelaide will be told today.

The Social Determinants of Health Alliance (SDoHA), representing more than 50 health, social service and public policy organisations, will gather today to consider how work on health equity being carried out in South Australia can be strengthened and become the template for meaningful action on the social determinants of health around the country.

SDoHA chair Martin Laverty said a 2012 report carried out by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling proved grim reading for those who want to see a levelling of the health playing field.

“That research shows us that nationally, there could be tens of thousands fewer hospital admissions annually, saving more than \$2.3 billion, if governments around the country were to adopt the recommendations of the 2008 World Health Organisation (WHO) report *Closing the gap in a generation*,” he explained.

“In South Australia alone, we’re talking about \$170 million saved in the health budget each year when you think about the cost of unnecessary hospital admissions, not to mention the increased revenue from having more people in the workforce – rather than in hospital or sick at home – and the huge social benefits of a healthier community.”

Professor Fran Baum, director of Flinders University’s Southgate Institute of Health, Society and Equity and a former member of the WHO’s Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, says the South Australian Government’s implementation of a “health in all policies” approach to its work provides a model for other states and territories.

“South Australia has been the leading light, but there are still battles to be waged – and won – to persuade government leaders here and around the country that the social determinants agenda is making a difference around the world and applying it in Australia will improve overall health and reduce inequities,” Professor Baum said.

South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) executive director Ross Womersley said SACOSS’ member organisations see first-hand the effects of health inequity in the lives of the people they assist on a daily basis.

“Whether it’s deficits in education or housing or employment or a range of other social factors, our agencies are acutely aware of how disadvantage in its many forms has a profound impact on the future health outcomes of people,” Mr Womersley said.

Mr Laverty said Thursday’s forum will examine how the lessons learned in South Australia could be used to ensure that other states and territories, and the Commonwealth, can craft even more effective ways of addressing health inequity.

“We hear a lot of talk about Australia being the nation of the fair go, but in this respect, too many Australians aren’t being given a fair go. The Social Determinants of Health Alliance will continue to agitate for action as long as people are suffering needlessly because of idle governments,” Mr Laverty said.