



## ACTING **PRIME MINISTER**

FOR MEDIA

18 DECEMBER 1984

The Acting Prime Minister, Mr Lionel Bowen, announced today new arrangements to provide a single source of funding for the Commonwealth's Aboriginal Health Programs.

In the past, both the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Health had provided funds for community-based Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSs). This dual funding arrangement was introduced in 1979 by the previous Government and had created inequities between AMSs. It had also proved to be administratively cumbersome for the Services. Proposals to introduce "single-source funding" have been under discussion by the Ministers and the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation (NAIHO) in the past year.

The new arrangement provides for all funds to be channelled through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. This means that, except for claims against Medicare, all AMSs will now be financially accountable only to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The Department of Health will retain a policy advising role in Aboriginal health matters.

As a result of a Budget decision, some \$1.5m will now become available to assist in this rationalisation and to enable the establishment of up to 10 new AMSs throughout Australia. This is in addition to a total of \$11.9m already provided for existing AMSs. Funds will also be provided for the next stage in the national program for the eradication of trachoma.

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The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will consult with NAIHO on the allocation of the new funds to AMSs, and on the allocation of funds for the eye health program.