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MEDIA RELEASE



ASTHMA FOUNDATION NT STRUGGLING TO BREATHE

Since 2018 The Asthma Foundation of Northern Territory (AFNT) has received diminishing Commonwealth funding. It is set to receive only \$42,000 this year – 28% of what was previously provided.

This has resulted from the Federal Government channelling money for its Asthma Management Program (AMP) exclusively through Asthma Australia (AA). The AMP is aimed at improving the management of asthma across the country. Allocations used to go directly to all States and Territories to implement programs to meet local needs and circumstances. Distribution is now determined by AA – an organisation created from Foundations on the east coast and SA. AFNT and the Asthma Foundation of WA are not part of AA.

AA has been unwilling to fund the AFNT service model that has been successfully delivering for decades. Funding has only been offered for a model reliant on telephone access, web-based interactions and an extensive health infrastructure.

"That model shows little understanding that the conditions for service delivery in the NT need more intense investment if people are to be properly engaged. For some of the most vulnerable peoples in the NT engagement demands personal connection and regular follow-up. The AA approach limits the cultivation of culturally appropriate ways to embed good asthma control practices." said Dr Ian Crundall, Chair of AFNT

Evaluation of the AMP notes that clients are seeking a service which is "less formal, more personalised and flexible so as to suit their personal circumstances". This is precisely what Asthma NT has been providing for decades and yet AA has steadily reduced funds.

"We have drawn heavily on our reserves and curtailed programs to maintain the service components that Commonwealth funds used to support. The current level of service provided by AFNT is no longer sustainable. Our focus on delivering meaningful services to remote and regional areas is certainly at risk. AFNT will continue to operate but its ability to cover the breadth of the Territory will be severely limited." said Dr Ian Crundall

"For the sake of \$150,000 from the annual AMP budget of \$2.1M, the future of AFNT is looking dire. AFNT has not been asking for more money, only what it used to be granted. We are about to lose capacity and compromise service because of the priorities set by AA. It has nothing to do with the effectiveness of AFNT.



Helping Territorians Breathe Better

AFNT acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we meet and conduct our services, respecting language and culture and Elders past and present. "This has been happening as demands on AFNT have been growing. This year has seen a 64% increase in new consults and 31% increase in referrals for spirometry tests. Our services are of the highest standard and widely recognised as among the best in the country. There is clear evidence of reduced hospital presentations in the NT." says Leanne Elliott- Holmes, AFNT CEO.

"It is unfortunate that the Federal Government has chosen to rely solely on AA to determine how funds are spent. The AMP is a national program and yet it feels like the NT has been side-lined. This is especially disappointing given we are now celebrating 40 years of successful service to Territorians," said Leanne Elliott- Holmes.

AFNT is grateful for the ongoing and consistent support of the NT Government and the contributions made from its other long-term partners. All monies coming into AFNT are totally dedicated to helping Territorians breathe better.

While AFNT will continue to do its very best to meet the needs and wants of people affected by asthma and other respiratory conditions in the Northern Territory, the lack of Federal funds means delivering the best suite of services for the NT is now questionable.

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Background information can be found at: asthmant.org.au/news



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