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AIATSIS Research Seminars

12.30pm, Monday 22nd August 2011

The Mabo Room, AIATSIS, Lawson Crescent, Canberra ACT 2601

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Housing infrastructure, crowding and the remote community environment: how can we maximise the benefits for child health?

Professor Ross Bailie

The Housing Improvement and Child Health Study (HICH) examines the impact on child health of housing programs in remote Aboriginal communities in the NT, and explores the factors which mediate or moderate the impact of these programs. The study was conducted in ten communities which had substantial building programs over the period of 2004/2005 – programs similar in scale to the current major investment in the 70 “growth towns” in the NT. The study thus has relevance to current programs in the NT. Key findings included that the building programs resulted in significant improvements in the quality of housing infrastructure, but only marginal reductions in household crowding. While change in the state of household hygiene was strongly related to change in the state of infrastructure of individual houses, the housing programs had no measurable impact on the state of household hygiene at a community level. This latter finding is important in understanding the key finding that the housing programs did not result in any measurable reduction of common childhood illnesses. There are a range of broader socio-environmental factors which need to be addressed in order for remote community housing programs to fulfil their potential to improve child health.

Ross Bailie is a Senior Principal Research Fellow and Scientific Director for the Centre for Primary Health Care Systems Research at Menzies School of Health Research. Ross is also a Program Leader for the Healthy Life, Health Start Program of the Lowitja Institute. He spent several years in general and hospital based medical practice in New Zealand and South Africa before completing a four year public training program. He has been involved in research, evaluation and teaching since moving to Australia in 1995. His work is currently funded through an ARC Future Fellowship. His areas of research and evaluation work have been in the broad area of comprehensive primary health care, including quality of clinical services, evaluation of information systems, primary care workforce, water supply and sanitation, health promotion, food supply, community housing and health related infrastructure. He has contributed to increased recognition, understanding and improvement in information systems, and to the availability of information for policy and service planning for Indigenous health across Australia.

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