

NSW Health's Declaration on Aboriginal Health

The theme for this year's National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) is about valuing the vision of the Yirrkala Bark Petitions-the 50th Year Anniversary.

In August 1963, these bark petitions sent a strong message to the Australian Government concerning the rights of the traditional Yolngu peoples' ownership of their land in considering the granting of mining rights. These petitions represent a significant milestone in the history of Aboriginal affairs and were seen as a catalyst for policy changes about Aboriginal issues particularly in relation to land rights.

This week is a time to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and, is a moment for us to reflect on our efforts. It calls on NSW Health to look to the future, particularly as we embark on implementing the *NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013-2023*.

This Plan has as its vision *'Health equity for Aboriginal people, with strong, respected Aboriginal communities in NSW, whose families and individuals enjoy good health and wellbeing'*.

It commits NSW Health *'to work in partnership with Aboriginal people to achieve the highest level of health possible for individuals, families and communities'*. It challenges us to take a systems approach by embedding a consideration of the health needs of Aboriginal people in all plans, policies, programs and health service delivery.

It identifies the need to

- *build trust through partnerships*
- *implement what we know works and build the evidence*
- *ensure integrated planning and service delivery occurs across the sector*
- *strengthen the Aboriginal workforce*
- *provide culturally safe work environments and health services; and,*
- *strengthen performance monitoring, management and accountability*

We must build on the work already underway and strive for a health system that is culturally capable, safe, competent and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people in NSW. To do this, all health services and organisations in NSW Health will commit to implementing strategies aimed at improving the health and service delivery disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in NSW.

We will do this by setting accountabilities across NSW Health and, by leading through example to ensure that our systems and processes, from policy development to service delivery, are organised in a way that understands and responds to the needs of Aboriginal people.



Dr Mary Foley
Director General
NSW Health