



The Hon Kevin Humphries MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Healthy Lifestyles

Minister for Western NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 22nd March, 2012

CLOSING THE GAP: NSW GOVERNMENT TO INCREASE ABORIGINAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

The NSW Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries, today launched a major initiative to encourage recruitment of Aboriginal health workers to the mental health sector.

Speaking at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence in Redfern, Mr Humphries said the *Aboriginal Careers in Mental Health Initiative* would ensure more Aboriginal people were working for mental health support services in the community.

“The NSW Government has made a commitment to closing the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage in NSW that we are proud to say we are delivering on,” Mr Humphries said.

“There is still a long way to go, however. To keep closing the gap we must make changes in the way that health services work with Aboriginal people.

“People with mental health issues are overrepresented in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, yet they are significantly underrepresented in the community’s mental health workforce.

“The *Aboriginal Careers in Mental Health Initiative* will increase the number of Aboriginal people accessing mental health services and promote the value and importance of employing Aboriginal people in the mental health sector.”

The initiative, led by the Mental Health Coordinating Council and the Department of Education and Communities, will see greater engagement with community mental health organisations to support 50 Aboriginal trainees and cadets in the next 18 months.

“The aim of the program is to develop the ability of the community mental health sector to effectively support and increase Aboriginal participation in the workforce, as well as increase the level of culturally appropriate services available to Aboriginal people in community managed services located throughout NSW,” Mr Humphries said.

Organisations interested in developing an Aboriginal mental health workforce can submit expressions of interest via <http://www.mhcc.org.au/home/>

Applications close on 27 April 2012 with submissions to close on 22 June 2012.