



The Hon Jillian Skinner
Minister for Health
Minister for Medical Research

The Hon Victor Dominello
Minister for Citizenship and Communities
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

26 April, 2012

PLAN TO IMPROVE HEALTH OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

A plan to improve the health of people from culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds was launched today by the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, and the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Victor Dominello.

NSW Health's response to addressing the needs of patients from diverse backgrounds includes multicultural health units in Local Health Districts and statewide services such as the:

- NSW Refugee Health Service;
- Transcultural Mental Health Centre;
- Diversity Health Institute;
- Multicultural Health Communication Service;
- Multicultural HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Service; and
- Service for the treatment and rehabilitation of torture and trauma survivors.

Minister Skinner said that these local and statewide services were supported by designated multicultural and bilingual staff.

"The NSW Government is committed to its goal of keeping the people of NSW healthy and reducing unnecessary hospitalisations, and I am delighted to see that this policy will aid the Government in achieving this goal," Mrs Skinner said.

"The policy and plan will serve as NSW Health's multicultural forward plan, and it importantly addresses research that shows language barriers have a negative effect on the utilisation and acceptance of health care," she said.

NSW Health has a proud history in providing innovative programs to maintain and improve the health needs of NSW's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Over 30 years ago it was one of the first governments to launch a health care interpreter service.

"The NSW health care interpreter service, which is largest NSW public sector interpreter provider, delivers interpreter coverage across the entire NSW health system 24 hours a day seven days a week," Minister Skinner said.

"The importance of this service is highlighted by it's frequency of use - more than 475,000 times last year."

Minister Dominello said that NSW was recognised internationally as one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse states in the world.

“With people from over 200 nations and some 200 languages spoken, multiculturalism is a great asset for NSW and we improve that asset through this plan which aims for improvements in the health of our diverse communities,” Minister Dominello said.

“While the overall picture of migrant health is a good one, the plan recognises that there are specific needs in specific communities that need to be addressed, including through prevention strategies, and that is very welcome.

“NSW Health’s new plan follows the O’Farrell Government’s improvements to the Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP) which seeks to help Government agencies deliver appropriate services for the diverse community of NSW, as well as it’s the O’Farrell Government’s Multicultural Advantage Action Plan which seeks to maximise the benefits of our cultural diversity,” Minister Dominello said.

“I commend Minister Skinner and her departmental team on now moving to directly meet the performance standards of the MPSP, as no coordinated plan was regularly developed under Labor. It shows our Government’s commitment to delivering for our ethnic communities, as we do for all our citizens,” Minister Dominello said.

The NSW Health Policy and Implementation Plan for Health Culturally Diverse Communities uses evidence about multicultural health amassed over the last decade and establishes NSW Health’s direction for the next five years.