



MEDIA RELEASE

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ABORIGINAL HEALTH ON 2014 NAIDOC WEEK AGENDA

Acting NSW Health Minister Jai Rowell has marked the start of NAIDOC Week by highlighting the NSW Government's commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities across the State.

Mr Rowell said NAIDOC Week, held every year in the first full week of July, celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"From Bourke to Brewarrina, Kempsey to Campbelltown and Taree to Tamworth, the NSW Government is working hard in closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health outcomes," Mr Rowell said

"This year's theme *Serving Country: Centenary and Beyond* honours all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have fought in defence of our country.

"We proudly highlight and recognise the role they have played in shaping Australia's identity and pause to reflect on their sacrifice."

Mr Rowell said that more Aboriginal people live in NSW than any other Australian state or territory and improving Aboriginal health is a key focus for the NSW Health system.

"In collaboration with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council – NSW Health released the *NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013-2023*," Mr Rowell said

"This 10 year plan focusses on changing the health system to ensure policies and programs meet the needs of Aboriginal people across the State with a key focus on improving Aboriginal health."

In addition to the plan, there are a number of initiatives already underway which are focused on improving Aboriginal health such as an oral health program that funds scholarships to open pathways to dental study for Aboriginal Australians."

"The project funded by NSW Health provides training for Aboriginal people living in regional and remote areas of NSW to become qualified dental assistants and also assist pathways into higher education studies such as oral health therapy or dentistry.

"The Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service (AMIHS) is another initiative to help improve the health of Aboriginal women during pregnancy and decrease perinatal morbidity and mortality for Aboriginal babies.

"AMIHS provides antenatal and postnatal care from as early as possible after conception up to 8 weeks after birth.

“There are over 45 AMIHS programs in NSW, delivered in over 80 locations and in areas where it has been implemented, AMIHS has been instrumental in reducing the rate of premature births, improving breastfeeding rates, and increasing access to antenatal care early in pregnancy.

“Building on the success of the AMIHS model, is the Building Strong Foundations for Aboriginal Children, Families and Communities.

“These services provide culturally safe and secure early childhood health services that work with parents, carers and the local community to support the health, growth and development of Aboriginal children from 0 to 5 years, so they are healthy and ready to learn when they start school. There are currently 15 programs across NSW.” Mr Rowell said.

For further information on NAIDOC and to find events in your local area, visit:
<http://www.naidoc.org.au/>