



MAARI MA HEALTH ROUNDS

CHILD HEALTH STRATEGY

A strategy to help Aboriginal children in Far Western New South Wales was recently launched in Broken Hill with more than 50 representatives from all relevant groups attending.

The Aboriginal Child Development and Well Being Strategic Framework is the result of work undertaken by the Far West Aboriginal Child Development and Well-Being Group formed last year which has representation from non-government and government organisations across child education, welfare and health.

Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation has been the principal driver of the Strategy and its goal is to optimise the

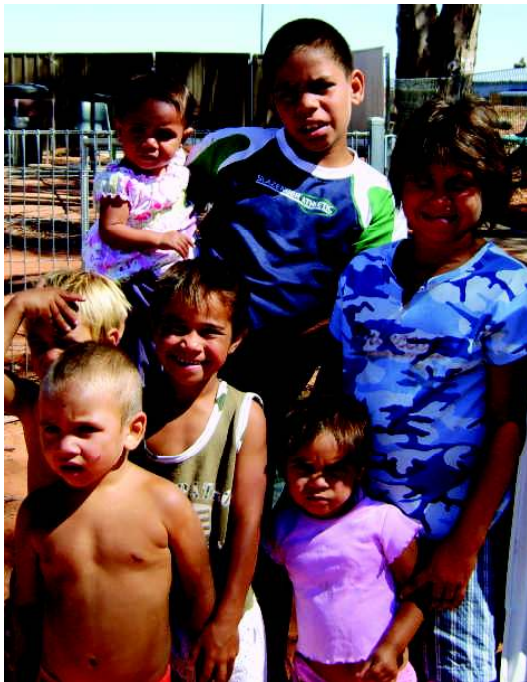
development of Aboriginal children and their families from pregnancy to school entry in Broken Hill, Central Darling, Wentworth and Balranald Shires, and the Unincorporated Far West.

It maps out what all organisations need to do to improve child development and well being through effective prevention, promotion of health and well-being, and early intervention. As well as commitment from local service providers the rate of progress will be dependent on more equitable Commonwealth and State funding for primary level health services and funding for services in the remote communities of far western NSW.

The launch of the Strategy means work can now begin at the local level in each community to improve collaboration on the Strategy's 'best buys' which are early literacy, parenting programs, early childhood education and community development.

“There is documented evidence that investment in promoting child development and well-being in the early years is more cost effective than addressing ill-health, poor social outcomes and educational deficits later in life”.

Far West Aboriginal Child Development and Well-Being Group



Wilcannia children

THIS MONTH

Launch of the Aboriginal Child Development and Well Being Strategy 1

All of staff Workforce Development Planning Day 2

Regional Director moves to Queensland and other changes in senior management 3

Wilcannia Drop-In Centre renovations and name change 3

Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training 4

YEAH Talent Night 4

MAARI MA HEALTH
ABORIGINAL
CORPORATION REGION OF
SERVICE



PLANNING OUR WORKFORCE

In March, Maari Ma conducted an all of staff Workforce Development Planning day with the aim of finding out where staff wanted to see the organisation heading with regard to its workforce and importantly the type of workforce needed to progress the Chronic Disease Strategy and Social & Community Programs. Maari Ma has a relatively young workforce which is good because, hopefully, it will mean they will still be working for Maari Ma in the next ten to twenty years. It will be these employees who will be implementing the Strategy into the future and so we need to determine what their roles and skills will need to be to enable them to deliver the types of programs and services required. Some key points raised at the Planning Day were:

- more Aboriginal people needed in management and in the workforce generally
- a multi skilled workforce
- a need for good training opportunities
- the importance of a workforce that feels valued
- greater access to IT resources

A session for Indigenous staff was also held with a key point being the need to develop a structured approach to cultural safety and sensitivity in the way we do our work. The session felt this would add great benefit to the quality of our services as well as providing non-Indigenous staff with more skills in dealing with Aboriginal people. It would also formalise the value that Maari Ma places on the existing cultural skills that our Aboriginal workforce possesses.



While they've spoken on the phone many times Debra King (left) and Shannon Hinton met for the first time at the Planning Day. Debra is an Aboriginal Health Worker with the Keeping Well team working at Menindee. She was in the first group of Aboriginal Health Workers to be trained, and acts as a role model and mentor to young Health Workers. Shannon job shares as an Administration Assistant in the Regional Office in Broken Hill and is studying a Certificate 2 in Business Studies. Shannon says she'd like to study nutrition in the future.



Workforce Development Plan

Baseline data—numbers

	06/2008	06/2007
Number of employees (headcount)	78	70
Indigenous employees	67%	63%
FTE	52	47
Indigenous employees	55%	57%



Tiffany Cattermole (left) and Christine Polanski have not long joined Maari Ma. Tiffany job shares with Shannon as an Administration Assistant in the Regional Office. She says she'd like to do registered nursing and become a midwife. Christine is an Administration Assistant at the Primary Health Care Service and would like to become an Aboriginal Health Worker in the future.

MANAGEMENT CHANGES



After more than ten years at the helm of the multi award winning Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation, Richard Weston has accepted a position in Queensland as Chief Executive Officer of the Brisbane Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service. Richard has presided over directional change and innovation which has seen the organisation go from strength to strength and gain national recognition as a leader in Aboriginal health and wellbeing. Fundamental to his management and focus has been an unswerving dedication to see health outcomes for Aboriginal people improve. The Board of Directors and all staff at Maari Ma wish him well in his future. We have been privileged to have worked under his guidance, dedication and good humour. Nola Whyman will be responsible for the day to day operations of Maari Ma until the appointment of a new Regional Director.

On the left, Richard is pictured (centre) at the NSW Aboriginal Health Awards 2007 with Bernie Kemp and Dr Denise Robinson where Maari Ma was a winner in four of the eleven categories.

It was also with great regret that Maari Ma farewelled Manager Health Services, Steve DeBono, at the Christmas function last year. After working at Maari Ma since its inception Steve has relocated to Adelaide with his family. His in depth corporate knowledge of the organisation and region, and sound advice is missed by all. Taking over from Steve is Lesley Woolf who was the Health Service Manager at Wadeye—the largest Aboriginal community in Australia situated 420 kilometres south west of Darwin. Prior to working at Wadeye Lesley was the Director of Nursing, Top End Remote Health, Darwin which includes the old East Arnhem, Katherine and Darwin Rural Regions. Lesley is a nurse and midwife and did her training in Queensland. Pictured right are Leslie, Steve and Nola.



DROP IN CENTRE

A service at Wilcannia which runs programs for young people has re-opened its doors after a major renovation. The Drop In Centre, which has been providing a safe environment for young people to enjoy a variety of activities since the late 1980's, was closed for most of last year for the renovations. It was officially re-opened recently and was renamed the Gloria King Memorial Drop in Centre in recognition of the late Wilcannia Elder and Maari Ma Board Director, Gloria King, and her inspiration to the development of the Centre and her many contributions to the Wilcannia community. The renovations include a new office area,

new toilets, showers, air conditioning, a divided room with pay-TV and a DVD as well as computers, arcade games, pool table, sound system, and disco lights and accessories. There's a fully fenced outdoor area with landscaped gardens, lawns and a basketball court. The Centre caters for young people aged from 5 to 17 years. During the school term it's open from 3pm to 8pm on school nights with school holiday programs operating. The Centre is run by Maari Ma with the support of several organisations, including the NSW Department of Community Services and Central Darling Shire Council.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID



Senior Aboriginal Mental Health Worker, Justin Files, conducted an Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training course recently for workers in Maari Ma's youth programs. There were eleven participants from YEAH, Wings and Night Patrol. The course provided them with awareness about mental health issues and confidence to deal with mental health crises until professional help is available. Later in the year Justin will run a Youth Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training Course. Justin is pictured far right with the group. YEAH, Wings and Night Patrol are activities in our social and community programs which is a joint initiative between Maari Ma and the Fred Hollows Foundation.

THE TALENTED YEAH TEAM

Throughout 2008 the YEAH team once again delivered a great program to students - teaching circus skills, arts & crafts, traditional games and many other exciting activities. Each year the program hosts an end of year show to the families of the students and the general public. However the team decided to take on a new way of showcasing the young talent last year, not only within the program but also in the wider community. The YEAH team came up with the idea of a Talent Night and

extended invitations to not only the students in the program but also the children at Wilcannia and the Broken Hill community. The night was hosted at Theatre 44 with 22 kids participating and performing a variety of acts. There were also special guest judges to give the kids feedback on their performances. Some of the acts included male modelling, contemporary/ traditional dance and spectacular singing performances. The result was a huge success.



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