



# FIRST PHN IN AUSTRALIA TO ESTABLISH AN ABORIGINAL HEALTH COUNCIL



Chairman of the Western Primary Health Network Board, Tim Smyth and newly appointed Chairman of its Aboriginal Health Council, William 'Smiley' Johnstone, pictured at the Council's inaugural meeting held in Dubbo. Photo: Belinda Soole.

The Western NSW Primary Health Network (WNSWPHN) has become the first PHN in Australia to establish an Aboriginal Health Council and Maari Ma's founding CEO, William 'Smiley' Johnstone has been appointed Chairman. Maari Ma has been very much in the forefront of promoting the need for an Aboriginal Health Council on the WNSWPHN and is confident that it will be the start of a unique partnership to address the primary health care needs in the region. The Aboriginal Health Council held its first meeting in March and will meet four times a year reporting directly to the WNSWPHN Board of Directors - one of whom is Maari Ma CEO, Bob Davis. Members on the Aboriginal Health Council include Maari Ma's Director of Medical Services, Dr Hugh Burke and Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Chairman, Sam Jeffries.

## NEW LEAD PROGRAM

Maari Ma has entered into a partnership with the Broken Hill Environmental Lead Program to deliver Aboriginal specific lead programs and has received funding for two years. Thadd Nagas and Lavinia Henderson have been employed to undertake education and home assessments to help address the issue of lead contamination and elevated blood lead levels in Aboriginal children so that they have an environmentally safe place to grow up. They will be auditing homes and offering personalised advice to households, including working with Maari Ma dietitians to improve children's diets and identifying highly contaminated areas of the home or property that require remediation.

Pictured right: Lead Community Worker, Lavinia Henderson and Field Officer Thadd Nagas.





# 'CLOSE THE GAP' COMMUNITY EVENT

Maari Ma's annual "Close the Gap" event on March 17<sup>th</sup> was an opportunity for staff to chat to the community over a BBQ while at the same time offer health screening checks in an informal setting. There was a good turn out and plenty of people were getting their blood pressure and pulse rates checked, as well as blood sugar testing and carbon monoxide screening. Maari Ma's Aboriginal Health

Worker trainees were actively involved both with screening, cooking the BBQ and on hand to yarn with the community members while enjoying the shared lunch of sausages, Johnny Cakes, and quandong with yoghurt and muesli. Resources were also provided ensuring the community had information to take home.



Left to right: Transport Officer, Stanley 'Teddy' Hart ensured community members without transport were able to attend the 'Close the Gap' event while Lead Program Field Officer, Thadd Nagas, took the opportunity to talk to the community about ways of reducing lead exposure in children. The event was held in the courtyard at the Primary Health Care Service, and included a BBQ and take home resources.

## FURTHER EDUCATION AT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

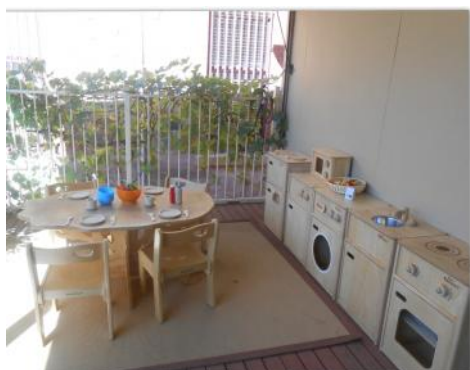
Former HIPPY Tutor and now HIPPY Educator, Latesha Adams, is undertaking further education and has started a Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education 0 – 5 Years) through Macquarie University in Sydney. The course is a three year part time scholarship and Latesha's first two subjects are Play and Inquiry in Early Childhood, and Academic Communication in the Social Sciences and Humanities. As HIPPY Educator Latesha has a core focus on engagement and child development within the family, and community context.



# NEW SITE FOR PLAYGROUP PROVING POPULAR



Participation rates at Maari Ma's Playgroup continue to grow and families are enjoying the new location from TAFE to Maari Ma's former Child and Family building next to the Regional Office which has been transformed. There are many different colourful spaces for play and lots of props to support children's activities, toys to encourage children to use their hands, larger equipment for gross motor play, and resources such as books and musical instruments. Playgroup is held each Friday from 10.30 am to 1.00 pm during school terms.



## 'GOT MY CHECK JUST FOR THE HEALTH OF IT'

Maari Ma has introduced Youth Health promotional wear - "Got my check, just for the health of it!" with kids receiving either a cap or leggings when they complete their health checks. The Youth Health program, which was established last year, engages with 9 – 18 year olds. Primary Health Nurse, Regan Chesterfield and Primary Health Worker, Tarissa Staker coordinate and deliver ATSI health checks in conjunction with Maari Ma's GPs, conduct youth clinics, provide vaccinations and are available to talk about any issues with children and young people.



**Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation Regional Office 428 Argent Street**  
PO Box 339 BROKEN HILL NSW 2880 Phone: 08 8082 9888 Fax: 08 8082 9889 / 08 8082 9890

[www.maarima.com.au](http://www.maarima.com.au)