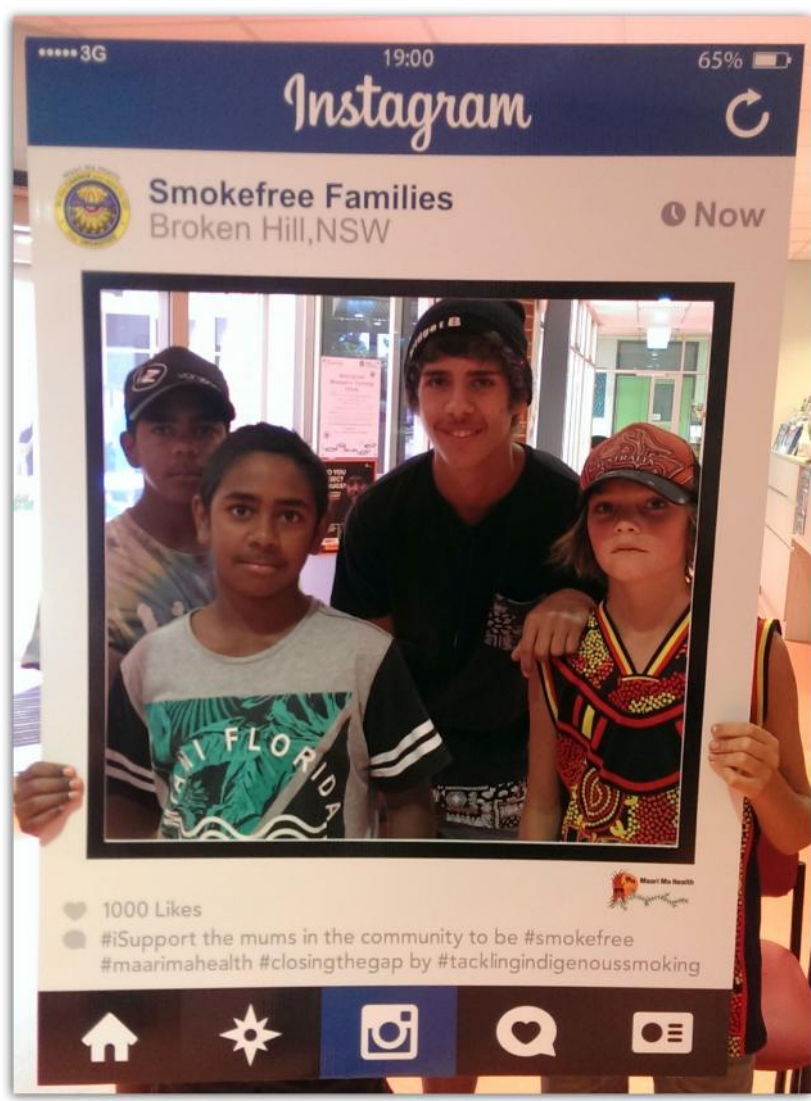


## CLOSE THE GAP DAY



National Close the Gap Day on March 16<sup>th</sup> was marked at Maari Ma by bringing attention to the problem of low life expectancy among Indigenous people and raising awareness of its programs aiming to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Maari Ma has been integrating a number of the Close the Gap indicators into its programs over many years. These include implementing a Chronic Disease Strategy, providing more GP services and visiting specialists, improving medication management and targeting smoking. Maari Ma has also been embedding literacy into its Early Years program and working hard with kids aged 0 to five years through programs such as Playgroup and Little Kids and Books, working with youth, and employing and training more Aboriginal staff in health, administration and business management.

*"Life expectancy is a human rights issue and poverty, education and employment levels - not just health - all have a long lasting impact on the health and well being of Indigenous communities"* Bob Davis, CEO.

The Tackling Indigenous Smoking team was very active at the Primary Health Care Service waiting room on Close the Gap Day with a social media campaign – taking photos of staff and community members with 'Insta frame' for Maari Ma's Facebook page. 'Insta frame' proved very popular and at the same time as framing subjects for photos it helped to get the smoke free message across to mums and expectant mums. CO screening was also conducted and clinic staff were in the waiting room talking to clients, and conducting blood pressure and blood glucose level checks.

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# MARRABINYA—MAKING A DIFFERENCE



*Marrabinya is now fully staffed and workers recently received a three day orientation in Dubbo by Maari Ma's Manager Western Region Health Services and Partnerships, Donna Jeffries (who manages the Marrabinya service) and other Maari Ma staff. Pictured left to right: The Marrabinya team—Leah (Cowra), Sandra (Condobolin), Rochelle (Bathurst), Pam (Wellington), Kym (Coonamble), Cheryl (Bourke), Nina (Dubbo), Stephen (Wentworth), Donna (Manager), Heather (Orange).*

Maari Ma's partnership with Bila Muuji Aboriginal Health Services to implement the Commonwealth's Integrated Team Care (ITC) program is proving very successful. Since the service commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> November, Marrabinya (Indigenous Health Support Service) has responded to more than 600 requests, doubled its client numbers from 600 to more than 1200, established the required internal systems, and established and trained a full team of staff. Marrabinya is assisting Aboriginal people across the Western Region of NSW to access and attend the care, services or aids they require as recommended by their GP. Staff are employed as Local Chronic Care Link Workers and each position has been assigned to service a group of towns arranged into a specific cluster.

## YOUTH HEALTH

Maari Ma Community Paediatrician, Dr Garth Alperstein is working with the Youth Health Program team to implement a new assessment tool looking at social and health issues specific to adolescents. It's been a year since the Youth Health clinics opened and they are proving very popular with their early intervention focus addressing physical, emotional and social wellbeing issues. The assessment tool will be used by adolescents in the clinic setting to reflect on their health status and behaviours, and share their reflections with the Youth Health team in a personalised and safe way.

*Pictured right: Registered Nurse, Megan Chesterfield and Aboriginal Health Worker, Tarissa Staker work in the Youth Health Program with a Maari Ma GP. 300 ATSI Health Checks have been completed since the clinic opened which demonstrates young people are actively engaging in their health.*





# USING SOCIAL MEDIA



Using social media tools has been found to be an effective way to foster engagement, expand reach and increase access to health messages which is why Maari Ma has an active Facebook page. Maari Ma used Facebook to increase its community engagement and connection on World Cancer Day, held on February 4<sup>th</sup> as part of an overall awareness raising event at the Primary Health Care Service. It was a great success with many clients in the waiting room agreeing to have their photos taken with a rugby ball or basketball with the hashtags #I Can We Can and #StayQuitStayFit, which were then posted on Facebook. Check out Maari Ma's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/maarimahealth/](http://www.facebook.com/maarimahealth/)

## EXTRA DENTAL SERVICES FOR MAARI MA CLIENTS

Maari Ma clients are benefitting from a new dental agreement which has seen the number of dental clinic days at Maari Ma increase by 80 a year. The RFDS Dental Enhancement Program started on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February and is enhancing access and opportunity for our community needing dental services. Maari Ma has two dental clinic rooms at its Primary Health Care Service.

*RFDS dentist, Dr Minh-Thu Cao Xuan (left) is pictured working with Maari Ma Dental Assistant, Penny Billings. Thank you to Maari Ma Administration Assistant, Tamara Brache, for sitting in the chair.*



# CLOSE THE GAP DAY WILCANNIA



In Wilcannia, Close the Gap Day was recognised with the start of a new cooking program involving children, their families and staff at Wilcannia Preschool, working with Maari Ma's Dietitian, Elsie Patterson. The program is being held once a fortnight and includes a lunchtime cooking session with family members followed by a food preparation activity with the kids and staff. The first cooking session was a great success with three family members making spinach and cheese filo pastries and pumpkin salad for lunch. After lunch the kids started their activity with pre-school staff – making lion faces out of rice cakes, cream cheese, vegetable sticks and blueberries.

## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

As part of Maari Ma's QIC (Quality Improvement Council ) accreditation, the organisation is required to work on quality improvement projects through-out the year. The Primary Health Care Service has now started a quality improvement cycle on Fleet Management for Maari Ma, and the first workshop was recently held with Western NSW PHN Far West Councils and Integrated Care Manager, Michelle Pitt, pictured third from the left.



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