

Media statement

13 March 2019

SCHHS taking action to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) is committed to partnering with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to deliver better health, education and employment outcomes, and eliminate the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

SCHHS Chief Executive Adjunct Professor Naomi Dwyer said the annual **Closing the Gap events**, held across SCHHS from **15-29 March**, were important to demonstrate our enduring commitment and act as a reminder to the whole health service of their responsibilities.

“As the region’s leading provider of health services, and with more than 7000 staff, we have both an opportunity and responsibility to play a role in Queensland’s journey to truly close the gap,” Adj Prof Dwyer said.

“We are looking forward to coming together across four of our facilities to explore what else is happening across the country in relation to the framework and recap on what the health service has achieved.”

SCHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Program Manager, Sharon Barry, said there are many successful programs which are already helping to improve the health of our people and producing very positive outcomes for the community.

“For example, we’re proud to report that recent immunisation data shows Indigenous children within the SCHHS had higher vaccination levels compared with non-Indigenous children. For the 12 months ending in September 2018, 92.9% of Indigenous children within the SCHHS region were fully vaccinated compared with 90.8% of non-Indigenous children,” she said.

In the past 12 months, 548 children have been immunised under the Jabba Jabba childhood immunisation program.

Ms Barry said: “Internally, a focus for Closing the Gap this year will be highlighting to staff the importance of asking everyone if they identify as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander. This will improve the patient care and journey and it will also assist clinical and medical staff in investigating a patient’s cause of illness.

“Most importantly it will allow us to truly gauge whether we are closing the gap.

“SCHHS is committed to the Council of Australian Governments’ targets to Close the Gap and it is acknowledged further progress can be made. The practical actions and

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performance measures set in place by SCHHS are moving us in the right direction”, she said.

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Media Opportunity:

Join us for the Closing the Gap ceremonies and an interview/photo opportunity with a representative from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health team. Please contact the media team if you would like to attend.

When: Friday 15th March, Sunshine Coast University Hospital from 9:45am

Wednesday 20th March, Caloundra Hospital from 10:00am

Thursday 21st March, Nambour General Hospital from 9:45am

Friday 29th March, Gympie Hospital from 10:00am