

Funds to close gap



ABORIGINAL Victorians in Melbourne's northern and western suburbs are set to get better access to vital health services as a result of a \$7.6 million State Government plan. Visiting the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy last Wednesday, Health Minister Daniel Andrews launched the North and West Metropolitan Region Closing the Health Gap Plan, as well as 12 new physical activity and nutrition tips sheets for Aboriginal health workers.

"The four-year plan was developed with local Aboriginal communities and services, and is another step forward in boosting access to high-quality health care and prevention programs for Aboriginal people in Melbourne's northern and western suburbs," Mr Andrews said.

He said the Brumby Government had allocated \$57.97 million to deliver 'the largest and most significant package of health programs to overcome Aboriginal health disadvantage in Victoria's history'.

"The new plan I am launching is part of that and focuses on improving health outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians by tackling chronic disease and unhealthy activities that lead to poor health and reduce length of life," Mr Andrews said.

"It will bring Aboriginal community controlled organisations and local health services together to tackle a range of health problems and develop initiatives which promote healthy living through early identification, engagement and support to navigate the region's health system.

"Key local objectives include tackling high smoking rates and reversing the trend for Aboriginal people to only access health services when they are very, very sick."

Among the programs being funded in Melbourne's north and west region are:

- \$300,000 towards promoting health and culture in young children led by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Association;
- \$300,000 towards youth health promotion and health screening led by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association;

- \$617,000 to establish an adult healing place in the west and the redevelopment of the healing place in the north;

- \$300,000 to support the elderly and enable responsibility in response to chronic disease;

- \$15,000 for the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service to provide increased health screening and monitoring for Fitzroy Stars Football Club players; and

- \$200,000 towards the refurbishment costs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Males in Darebin.

Member for Brunswick Carlo Carli said the plan was a great example of how the Government was committed to deliver programs that improved Aboriginal health and reduced the life-expectancy gap.

The new plan covers 14 local government areas – Banyule, Brimbank, Darebin, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Melton, Moreland, Moonee Valley, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra.

Business award for Hawkesbury service



THE Hawkesbury District Health Service

(HDHS) has received an Australian business award in the community contribution category at the 2010 awards.

The award recognised the service's Bridging Cultural Divides project, which seeks to address the need for health provision to be accessible to all.

HDHS General Manager David Maher said the award reinforced the service's commitment to caring for its community with excellence and innovation.

"The HDHS Bridging Cultural Divides project recognises the need for health provision to be accessible to all, encourages understanding of health services and contributes to the evolution of Indigenous language and culture," he said.

"These are all vital components in bridging the gap in health outcomes in Australia."



HDHS Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Vicki Thom and HDHS General Manager David Maher with the award.

HDHS was one of 105 Australian Business Award recipients for 2010. A total of 1849 separate entries from 962 organisations were received this year.

The Australian Business Awards honour organisations that

demonstrate the core values of business excellence, product excellence, sustainability and commercial success in their respective industries through an established series of business and product award categories.



Phyllis Tighe, left, with AHMRC chair and Walgett AMS CEO Christine Corby.

For Phyllis, the eyes have it!



PHYLLIS TIGHE loves helping people to see. And for that passion, she recently received the 2010 Director General's Award for Aboriginal Health.

Ms Tighe works as an Aboriginal Regional Eye Health Coordinator at the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Co-operative (WAMS) in western NSW.

She has held the position for seven years, and looks after Aboriginal people in 10 communities, making sure they have access to regular eye-care services.

"There is nothing more rewarding than to see a patient with limited vision, be able to see clearly," Ms Tighe said.

"I feel that all Aboriginal people are entitled to excellent, culturally appropriate eye health services and my program ensures that."

Established in 2004, the Director General's Award for Aboriginal Health acknowledges the contribution of individuals, teams and organisations to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW.

Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AHMRC) Chief Executive Sandra Bailey said Ms Tighe had been an invaluable Aboriginal health worker whose efforts had ensured communities under her care had regular, reliable eye-care services.

"Phyllis is very well deserving of this award," she said.

"She, with support from the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service, has made a truly remarkable impact on the accessibility of eye services for Aboriginal people in her region.

"Aboriginal health workers like Phyllis help to bridge cultural gaps that limit access to health services for Aboriginal people, ultimately delivering better quality health care."

Ms Tighe said she was extremely proud to receive the award.

'I love what I do'

"The ongoing support from directors and staff at WAMS, the International Centre for Eye Education (ICEE) and all the optometrists and communities that I work with make my job enjoyable – I love what I do," she said.

Professor Brian Layland, ICEE Director of Aboriginal Eyecare Programs, has worked closely with Ms Tighe for six years. "In my knowledge, Phyllis is the longest serving NSW regional eye health co-ordinator," he said. "She has been one of the most successful in that she is responsible for such a large geographical area but has never failed to make herself available."

"I don't think anyone can do the job better than Phyllis. She does all the things that we need eye health co-ordinators to do and is an outstanding example of why co-ordinators should be given the freedom to organise programs in their area."