



# Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Co-operative Limited



## WAMS Strategic Plan 2011 to 2014

(including Brewarrina Aboriginal Health Service Limited)

Department of Human Services - Aboriginal Affairs FAMILY DAY  
Celebrating Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Co-operative Limited's 25 years of service

# Values

We recognise and value the importance of Aboriginal community controlled health services that provide culturally appropriate holistic care.

We are committed to promoting positive images of Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS)/Brewarrina Aboriginal Health Service (BAHSL), Walgett, Brewarrina and surrounding communities.

We recognise, promote and value the skills, experience and qualifications of the staff and Directors in their own right, as equal to or more than, their counterparts.

We are committed to communicating in a way that empowers our clients to make informed decisions about their health and social needs.

We are committed to achieving effective organisational and operational management.

We respect, encourage and strengthen the heritage and the cultural values/needs of our clients and community.

We are committed to respecting and maintaining confidentiality within the community, clients and each other within the legislative framework that we are required to work within.

We will ensure that the rights and responsibilities of all clients are upheld.

We will provide a non judgmental service that does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, disability, appearance or personal circumstances.

We are committed to developing the skills of the staff and Directors to ensure the provision of a professional service.

# Vision

WAMS/BAHSL are Aboriginal community controlled organisations committed to providing accessible and confidential services in Walgett, Brewarrina and surrounding communities.

# Goals

1. WAMS/BAHSL will have staff who are trained to meet the needs of the client population that they serve.
2. WAMS/BAHSL will have a permanent GP service.
3. WAMS/BAHSL will have strong, formal relationships and equal partnerships with other service agencies.
4. WAMS/BAHSL will review their facilities to ensure that they are able to meet current needs.
5. WAMS/BAHSL will have effective recruitment and retention processes.
6. WAMS/BAHSL will have planned regular outreach services that include visits to Gingie and Namoi as well as a home visiting service.
7. WAMS/BAHSL will review the effectiveness of all of their existing services and ensure that these are relevant for the community that they serve.
8. WAMS/BAHSL will become a leading primary health care service.
9. WAMS/BAHSL will continue to be a committed and available health care service.
10. WAMS/BAHSL will expand on existing programs.
11. WAMS/BAHSL will lead the way in cultural awareness training.

# History

The National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party (1989) defined health as:

*“Not just the physical well-being of the individual but the social, emotional, and cultural well-being of the whole community. This is a whole-of-life view and it also includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life”.*

WAMS was established in June 1986 after many years of lobbying to provide a service to the Aboriginal community and the general population for health and social issues including:

- ◆ People who were being turned away from hospitals
- ◆ Difficulty in accessing doctors (general practitioners and specialists)
- ◆ Financial restrictions to travel long distances to see health specialists
- ◆ Advocacy, referral and patient support
- ◆ Any other health needs not being addressed

It is a non-profit Aboriginal community controlled organisation where members vote for the nine Directors annually. Membership is open to all people over 18 years of age. Under the WAMS Constitution, non-Aboriginal people have voting rights but are not eligible to stand for a position of Board of Director.

WAMS is actively involved in community and cultural development, and works where it can with other organisations in Walgett and surrounding areas to improve the cultural and economic situation of the region.

During 2005, the Office of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) requested WAMS to auspice the Brewarrina Aboriginal Health Service. This will be an ongoing arrangement for the provision of Primary Health Care Services to Aboriginal people living in Brewarrina.

# The Health and Wellbeing of Walgett/Brewarrina

Aboriginal people living in Walgett, Brewarrina and surrounding communities suffer a significant disadvantage that is related to isolation, poverty and previous Government reforms which have impacted on their communities. These include removing children from their families and relocating large numbers of people away from their homes to larger urban and rural centres. The intergenerational repercussion of these previous reforms is significant and has had marked consequences on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people living in Walgett and Brewarrina. This has led to Aboriginal people who live in these towns facing significant disadvantage across all spheres of their life.

Areas that have been affected include:

- ◆ A gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians within the same age group
- ◆ Higher mortality levels between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and other Australians within the same age group
- ◆ Wide gaps in literacy and numeracy achievements between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students within the same age group
- ◆ Wide gaps in employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians within the same age group
- ◆ A significant gap in participation in the workplace of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Walgett and Brewarrina

This poverty and isolation, combined with powerlessness, has led to significant levels of alcohol and substance abuse amongst Aboriginal people in Walgett and Brewarrina which, in turn, has led to high levels of family and other violence in each of these communities.

During December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) established the National Indigenous Reform Agreement to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage by linking National Agreements and National Partnership agreements to support the Closing the Gap strategy across a number of communities in Australia. Walgett has been selected as one of the two communities in NSW to take part in the NSW Strategy for Remote Service Delivery (RSD) to close the gap in indigenous disadvantage.

The seven building blocks for the Walgett Local Implementation Plan (LIP) are around:

1. Early childhood
2. Schooling
3. Economic participation
4. Health
5. Healthy homes
6. Safe communities
7. Governance and leadership

WAMS is an integral player in this process through the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party and a range of existing partnerships within Walgett. Through this involvement, WAMS continues to demonstrate its commitment to working to improve the health and welfare of Aboriginal people living in Walgett.

Although Brewarrina has not been chosen as a RSD site, it is expected that improvements made in service provision to Aboriginal people living in Walgett and surrounding communities through the RSD will flow through to Aboriginal people living in Brewarrina.

# What WAMS/BAHSL will do to achieve each goal

**Goal 1 - WAMS/BAHSL will have staff who are qualified, trained and/or registered to provide primary health care services in a culturally confident and appropriate manner to all people living in Walgett, Brewarrina and surrounding communities.**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Having learning and development plans for all staff
- ◆ Identifying a clear annual training budget
- ◆ Basing all staff training on four to six weekly supervision and annual staff performance appraisals
- ◆ Developing agreed learning pathways for the education of all staff
- ◆ Ensuring all job descriptions reflect training requirements
- ◆ Working to develop a hub and spoke Registered Training Organisation (RTO) with the NSW Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH & MRC)

**Goal 2 – WAMS/BAHSL will have five general practitioners by 2014**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Recruiting to fill the existing 2.5 EST GP positions
- ◆ Identifying funding sources to increase GP establishment to five
- ◆ Developing attractive housing and incentive packages for GPs
- ◆ Ensuring that GPs recruitment packages consider the education and child care needs of GPs under recruitment
- ◆ Offering GPs professional development opportunities that meet their requirements and WAMS/BAHSL's needs
- ◆ Targeting recruitment to include local, overseas and partnership arrangements for GP recruitment

- ◆ Identifying one senior staff member to take charge of the GP recruitment process
- ◆ Developing a very strong welcoming process to WAMS/BAHSL, Walgett, Brewarrina and the surrounding communities

**Goal 3 – WAMS/BAHSL will develop strong, consistent formal and equal relationships with community partners**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Developing memorandums of understanding with local community partners
- ◆ Developing partnership agreements at regional, state and national level
- ◆ Developing partnerships for sharing information about services, case management and services to the community
- ◆ Developing best practice benchmarks for client care
- ◆ Developing a firm and equal partnership with divisions of general practice for Super Primary Health Care Clinics and Medicare Locals

**Goal 4- WAMS/BAHSL will review their facilities to ensure that they are able to meet current needs**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Developing and maintaining strong review processes around current and projected future health needs of Aboriginal people living in Walgett, Brewarrina and surrounding communities
- ◆ Identifying sources for possible funding for maintenance, renewal or new projects for buildings or services

**Goal 5 – WAMS/BAHSL will have effective recruitment and retention processes**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Working to ensure that all positions are filled within eight weeks of them becoming vacant
- ◆ Conducting formal exit interviews with staff who leave the service, identifying reasons that they have left and considering any improvement to the services that they recommend

**Goal 6 –WAMS/BAHSL will have planned regular outreach services that include visits to Gingie and Namoi as well as a Home Visiting Service**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Offering a home visiting service to all clients who are unable to attend the clinic because of health reasons
- ◆ Ensuring that all programs offer site visits to Gingie and Namoi on a regular basis

**Goal 7 – WAMS/BAHSL will review the effectiveness of all their existing services and ensure that these are relevant to the community they serve**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Conducting regular client surveys of program effectiveness and implementing any changes that come from this source
- ◆ Conducting annual client file audits, evaluating the data from these and implementing any changes that come from this source

**Goal 8- WAMS/BAHSL will become a leading Primary Health Care Service**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Working to meet clinical and quality benchmarks across all spheres of their operations
- ◆ Continuing to meet clinic and whole of service accreditation requirements

- ◆ Ensuring all staff who work in this service understand the requirements of working in a Continuous Quality Improvement environment
- ◆ Ensuring all staff have the educational requirements to fill the position that they are in

**Goal 9 -WAMS/BAHSL will continue to be a committed and available health care service**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Working to close the gap in the lifespan for Aboriginal people living in Walgett, Brewarrina and surrounding communities
- ◆ Continuing to play a strong leadership role in Aboriginal health at the local, regional, state and national level

**Goal 10- WAMS/BAHSL will expand on existing programs**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Identifying gaps in service provision for Aboriginal people and working to fill these by either reshaping service provisions or seeking further funding
- ◆ Examining ways in which the current service provision can be modified and improved to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people living in Walgett, Brewarrina and surrounding communities
- ◆ Approaching the AH&MRC to become a rural /remote outreach campus of the Aboriginal Health College Registered Training Organisation(RTO)

**Goal 11-WAMS/BAHSL will lead the way in cultural awareness training**

WAMS/BAHSL will obtain this goal by:

- ◆ Continuing to work with other service providers in Walgett, Brewarrina and surrounding communities to ensure all staff in those services understand the current health and welfare needs of Aboriginal people and the impact that history since colonisation has had on their families and communities

# WAMS/BAHSL Organisational Structure



