Health District celebrates NAIDOC Week

Increased Aboriginal employment opportunities and Aboriginal cultural training for staff were highlighted at Sydney Local Health District’s (SLHD) NAIDOC Week celebrations at Balmain Hospital today.

Speaking at the event, SLHD Chief Executive, Dr Teresa Anderson, said NAIDOC Week represented an excellent opportunity for the District to demonstrate its commitment to Aboriginal health equity.

“As an organisation, we are aware of the pivotal role we play within central and inner west Sydney in delivering accessible, culturally appropriate health services to its local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community – one of the largest urban Aboriginal populations in NSW,” Dr Anderson said.

“Currently we are working on implementing our Aboriginal Workforce Strategy, which includes a commitment to increase Aboriginal employment within the District to 2.6 per cent - by focusing on recruitment, education and training.

“We are also looking to increase Aboriginal representation as medical and primary health practitioners, nurses, midwives, managers and in administration and leadership roles,” she said.

Dr Anderson said another key workforce initiative was the local implementation of the Respecting the Difference: An Aboriginal Cultural Training Framework for NSW Health.

“Aboriginal cultural training will be rolled out across the District - to senior executive, program and service managers, administrative and clinical staff and other corporate and administrative staff," she said.

“Through this, staff will come to understand the disparities in health status and outcomes of Aboriginal people, which is essential for creating positive change.

“They will understand and demonstrate sensitivity to contemporary Aboriginal culture and issues and be more responsive to the needs of the Aboriginal community in terms of access and cultural appropriateness.”

The Balmain Hospital event also featured special guest speakers, Aboriginal performances and an afternoon tea

The theme for NAIDOC Week 2012 is Sprit of the Tent Embassy: 40 years on, selected to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy and acknowledge the key contributors to its long history.

NAIDOC Week is held every year as a way of promoting a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture, celebrating the survival of Indigenous culture and the Indigenous contribution to modern Australia.