New program offers local Aboriginal families and babies home-based care

A new home visiting program offering Aboriginal children and families living in Sydney’s central and inner west vital health and paediatric support was launched today by Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) in Marrickville.

The New Directions Program Yana Muru is a home visiting program combined with paediatric assessments for local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families and non-Aboriginal women expecting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander babies living within the SLHD catchment.

As part of the program, a paediatrician offers regular, comprehensive health assessments until the child is five years of age. Up to 20 home visits are provided by Child and Family Health nurses, supported by Aboriginal Health Workers, until the child is two years old. Early Childhood Social Work services are also available.

SLHD General Manager, Community Health, Kerry Plumer, said early intervention was vital to ensure an equal start in life for Indigenous children.

“Indigenous children have been identified as the most vulnerable group of children in Australia and disparities with non-Indigenous children in some outcomes had widened in recent years,” Ms Plumer said.

“The program, funded by the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal babies, mothers and families, and reduce the morbidity and mortality rate among Indigenous children.

“Sustained home visiting models have been shown to have positive effects on a child’s development.

“This approach works in partnership with mothers, families and the community and builds on their strengths to support their children to have the best outcomes,” she said.

Through Yana Muru, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mums and bubs are offered antenatal care, information about baby care, practical advice and assistance with breastfeeding, nutrition and parenting, along with the monitoring of developmental milestones, and support for immunisations.

Yana Muru is an Aboriginal name from the Eora people of NSW, meaning ‘to walk on pathways/directions’.

SLHD covers Marrickville, Canterbury, Ashfield, Strathfield, Burwood, Leichhardt, and Canada Bay-Drummoyne local government areas.
• For more information, interested families are invited to ask their midwife or staff member at their local hospital or to contact the Camperdown Child and Family Health Nursing team and ask to speak to the Nurse Unit Manager on 9516 3232.

The Yana Muru program was officially launched at a community event held at Jarvie Park, Marrickville, and featured a traditional Aboriginal smoking ceremony by Uncle Max, cultural performance by Aboriginal dance group Jannawi Dance, children’s entertainment, health promotion giveaways and a barbecue lunch.