



Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia

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.....MEDIA RELEASE.....

ABORIGINAL HEALTH COUNCIL OF WA

AHCWA welcomes Federal Government program for Narrogin Aboriginal Community

The Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA) has welcomed the Federal Government's investment into the Narrogin Aboriginal Community, through the Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMS) program.

Commonwealth Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, The Honourable Jenny Macklin, announced the program yesterday.

"Aboriginal people, families and organisations in Narrogin, and surrounding townships, have been appealing for assistance from the State and Commonwealth with funding and resourcing to continue their Community specific model for some time," AHCWA Chief Executive Officer Darryl Kickett said.

"This Community model sees Aboriginal Community members support and mentor individuals, families and groups through spiritual, cultural, mental, social and physical healing. The new funding for Narrogin has the potential to build on the Commonwealth Government's current support to the South West Aboriginal Medical Service operations in Narrogin.

"This will further the Government's acknowledgement of the validity of the Aboriginal Community Controlled model, and the importance of its sustainability in Narrogin."

AHCWA member Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSs) operating in Nyungar Country have united to form the Nyungar Health Council (NHC). The South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS), Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service (DYHS) and the NHC look forward to continuing work with the Narrogin Aboriginal Community, and all Narrogin Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, to ensure this PHaMS program investment is Narrogin Aboriginal Community based.

"Nyungar people have to be in control of the solutions and investments aimed at working to heal Nyungar people," DYHS Chairperson Professor Edward Wilkes said.

"The Nyungar AMSs will work together through the NHC to restore Aboriginal Community ownership of health and healing service programs for Aboriginal people."

Aboriginal suicide and associated social and emotional wellbeing issues in Narrogin, as in Aboriginal Communities across the State, are at a crisis level. The number of suicides and attempts, risk taking behaviour and self harm episodes continue at high rates on a daily basis.

AHCWA Chairperson Vicki O'Donnell said the response and investment from the Commonwealth Government was greatly appreciated.

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“The AHCWA board are 100 per cent supportive of the Nyungar Health Council goals and will continue to back the Narrogin Aboriginal Community in endeavours towards Aboriginal Community Controlled services,” Ms O’Donnell said.

“We must remember that Aboriginal people are only a small portion of mainstream practice’s total clients, and mainstream services have admitted to struggling to provide culturally appropriate service to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people facing social and emotional wellbeing difficulties or living with mental health issues do not access mainstream services at levels equivalent to their very high levels of need.

“This new funding for the Narrogin Aboriginal Community could be a new start in the right direction.”

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