

13 March 2014

Projects aim to help Close the Gap

Liverpool Hospital marked National Close the Gap Day early, with a community celebration including the opening of a new Aboriginal Garden called *The Quiet Dreaming Place*, Aboriginal dancing, information stalls and a BBQ lunch on Thursday 13 March.

The Hospital's focus this year is on improving the identification of Aboriginal patients who present to the Emergency Department.

Aboriginal Liaison Officer George Bloomfield said Liverpool Hospital was participating in an Aboriginal Identification in Hospitals Quality Improvement Project run by the Centre for Aboriginal Health.

"The project aims to encourage hospital staff to ask patients if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin and to help patients feel comfortable identifying.

"My role as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer is to meet with Aboriginal patients, and find out whether they have any chronic diseases and provide information and referrals to Aboriginal and non Aboriginal services in the community.

"I also provide support to patients and their families and address any concerns they may have while in hospital.

"We understand that Aboriginal patients might be uncomfortable visiting hospital because of past experiences. But Liverpool Hospital is committed to improving the health of Aboriginal people and we are working on a number of different programs to help staff provide more respectful, responsive and culturally sensitive services," he said.

Mr Bloomfield said *The Quiet Dreaming Place* was an outdoor space specific to Aboriginal patients and their families that supports healing and provides a quiet, outdoor space to reflect away from the Hospital environment.

"The Garden includes artwork contributed by local Aboriginal artist Susan Grant."

"The Garden is an important part of Liverpool Hospital's efforts in being responsive to the specific needs of Aboriginal patients." Mr Bloomfield said.

Another project the Hospital is undertaking is Respecting the Difference Aboriginal Cultural Training. Around 3,221 Liverpool Hospital staff have undertaken the online training and are now participating in face to face workshops, which is helping them improve their knowledge and understanding of the diverse culture, customs, heritage and protocols in Aboriginal families and communities in NSW.

National Close the Gap Day 2014 will be held on Thursday 20 March. Close the Gap Day is Australia's largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health campaign which aims to close the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and other Australians.