

# Media Release



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## New phone app to help Close the Gap

This year South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) will support National Close the Gap Day (Thursday 19 March), with the launch of a new phone app that provides health and wellbeing information and advice to Aboriginal families with young children.

SWSLHD Director of Aboriginal Health Nathan Jones said the free *Deadly Tots* phone app was a way to help local Aboriginal families access help and support more conveniently.

“*Deadly* is a word the Aboriginal community use for excellent or amazing, and the *Deadly Tots* app aims to teach families how to help their baby get an excellent start in life,” Mr Jones said.

“The app is based on the *Love, Yarn, Sing, Read, Play* project which is all about ways you can interact with your children to help them learn and grow.

“The app takes this a step further by providing age-specific information, advice and support to parents, reminding them about immunisations and health checks and letting them know about the developmental milestones their bub should be reaching at each age.

“Parents can use the app to contact local services and can even create a memory book for their bub with photos and milestones,” he said.

SWSLHD General Manager of Community Health Justin Duggan said the idea for the app came from staff and was supported by the results of a social media scoping survey and health literacy project run in SWSLHD in 2014.

“Of almost 600 south western Sydney parents surveyed as part of these projects, 98 per cent reported having access to the internet, while up to 95 per cent said they used social media,” Mr Duggan said.

“Up to 80 per cent accessed social media using their smart phone and 93 per cent of parents surveyed thought it would be helpful to get health and parenting information via social media.

“We know that parents want a reduction in paper based resources, preferring to get their information from websites, apps and social media.

“We also know Aboriginal children tend to have lower participation rates in early childhood services, and as a result many are at risk of increased rates of vulnerability before starting school. That’s why programs like this phone app are so important in providing information and support, to help increase participation rates and close the health gap,” he said.

The project was funded by OATSIH and run in partnership with Resourcing Parents, The Families NSW State-wide Parenting project, where Aboriginal parents can access information on local parenting groups and resources in their area.

As part of Close the Gap Day, SWSLHD also launched the *Didja Know* booklet, to help staff improve their knowledge and understanding of the diverse culture, customs, heritage and health needs of Aboriginal communities. The booklet answers commonly asked questions and helps staff provide more respectful, responsive and culturally sensitive services to Aboriginal patients and communities.

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.