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Birthing space provides comfort

A special space has been created at Campbelltown Hospital to help Aboriginal mothers feel more comfortable and relaxed when giving birth.

The culturally inspired birthing room features wall hangings and a series of paintings by Aboriginal Elder Aunty Jenny Shillingsworth.

South Western Sydney Local Health District Director of Aboriginal Health Nathan Jones said the idea for the birthing room was suggested by the Bulla Bulla Mums and Bubs program, which runs at Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation.

“Campbelltown Hospital is committed to providing services where Aboriginal people feel safe and respected,” Mr Jones said.

“Hospital staff, in consultation with the community, designed the new birthing room to provide Aboriginal families with a comfortable, culturally safe space which enhances their birthing experience.

“On arrival at the birthing unit, Aboriginal families can let staff know if they’d like to use the culturally designed room,” he said.

Mr Jones said he hoped the room would encourage Aboriginal women, or women with Aboriginal babies to identify as Aboriginal to midwives.

“We know that when it comes to maternity services, outcomes for Aboriginal mothers and babies are not as good as other Australians. There is more chance Aboriginal women will go into early labour and there is a higher proportion of babies born with a low birth weight,” Mr Jones said.

“We understand that some Aboriginal patients might be uncomfortable accessing hospital services because of past experiences. But we are committed to closing the health gap for Aboriginal people - starting from birth.

“We hope the new room will help us to provide more respectful, responsive and culturally sensitive services, and will help women feel comfortable to identify as Aboriginal,” he said.

There are a number of services that provide support for Aboriginal mothers and babies, including the dedicated Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) who provides support while patients are in hospital. The ALO can also link patients with community based Aboriginal Child and Family Programs, the Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service which provides antenatal support and the Bulundidi Gudaga Sustained Home Visiting Team which engages with families up until baby reaches two years of age.