

## Media Release

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### Aboriginal cardiac clinic improving heart health

An outpatient cardiac clinic at Budyari Aboriginal Community Health Centre in Miller is improving the heart health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

The need to ensure patients were attending their essential cardiac follow up appointments prompted South Western Sydney Local Health District to develop a community centre-based clinic as an alternative to hospital-based appointments.

Cardiovascular staff worked with the Budyari Aboriginal Community Health Centre staff to create a culturally appropriate environment for the patients and employed Indigenous staff.

Aboriginal Health Service Manager, Leslie Jenkins, said the existing reputation of the community health centre helped patients feel more comfortable and welcome than the strange environment of a hospital clinic.

“The centre itself has always had an open door policy,” he said.

“The staff from the hospital have been fantastic and the patients feel comfortable with them.”

Cardiovascular Stream Clinical Director, Associate Professor Rohan Rajaratnam, said the atmosphere of the community centre-based clinic helped staff to better relate to their Aboriginal patients.

“We made sure we had the same staff working every week to help the patients build a rapport and build trust in their doctors,” he said.

“We made sure the resources and materials we were giving them were culturally appropriate and we worked closely with the community centre to ensure patients could get to and from their appointments.”

Associate Professor Rajaratnam said the results from the new clinic were staggering.

“Previously, the attendance rate for the hospital-based outpatient clinics was as low as 20 per cent for Aboriginal patients in the year after suffering a cardiac event,” he said.

“Now that figure has risen to 92 per cent attendance and is going so well we have added another cardiologist to the staff.”

There is also hope the program could be adapted for Pacific Islander and refugee groups across the District.