

Malabar Midwives set the standard



COMMUNITY members, Aboriginal Elders, health care professionals and families came together earlier this month to celebrate 18 years of service by the Malabar Midwifery Group Practice in providing culturally respectful pregnancy, birth, and postnatal care to Aboriginal families.

Affectionately known as 'Malabar Midwives', the service has supported the births of more than 1,500 babies since it was established in 2006.

Aboriginal Health Worker, Malabar Midwifery Group Practice, Trudy Allende paid tribute to the incredibly dedicated team.

"We know the women and families in this community and are able to support their voice within the health system," she said.

"I believe the team at Malabar Midwives gives our local Aboriginal community the service and care it deserves to support best outcomes for mothers and babies."

The service provides pregnancy, birth and postnatal care to Aboriginal women, and women with an Aboriginal partner, who choose to give birth at the Royal Hospital for Women.

Malabar Midwives has a unique way of working that promotes flexible and culturally respectful midwifery care, and is available to Aboriginal women and families from anywhere in NSW who seek out the service.

The midwives work alongside an



Aboriginal Healthcare Worker, Sharon Brown, who got into the health industry after having her second child at Malabar 15 years ago. She also works there one day a week as well.

Aboriginal Health Education Officer in a continuity of midwifery model of care, which supports women getting to know the midwives during their pregnancy



Breanna Weldon, the first Aboriginal baby born with the Malabar Midwives team, holds the newest arrival via the Malabar Midwives Midwifery Group Practice.

journey.

Four midwives work on a rotating 24-hour roster so women have a known midwife to provide care around the clock.

Two midwives in the team are proud Aboriginal women.

State and local politicians were also full of praise for the work of the Malabar Midwives.

NSW Minister for Health, Ryan Park, said the Royal Hospital for Women's Malabar Midwifery Group Practice was an exceptional model of care from which other services seeking to establish pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care for Aboriginal women and families could learn.

"The service is an outstanding example of the success that can be achieved when health professionals work collaboratively with communities to find the best solutions for their health care needs," he said.

NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, David Harris, also singled out the Midwives as an example of how working alongside community can help close the gap to improved health outcomes for Aboriginal people.

"This successful model of maternal and infant health care for Aboriginal families sets the standard for Aboriginal midwifery initiatives," he said.

Member for Maroubra, Michael Daley, said the Malabar Midwives had developed a solid reputation across Aboriginal communities.

"Women from all over NSW travel to Sydney to attend Malabar Midwives, and I look forward to them continuing their outstanding service for many years to come."

Top End campaign targets health during pregnancy



SEE, STOP, SCAN – a pioneering new campaign designed to empower First Nations mothers was launched at the recent 2024 Australian College of Midwives Conference NT Conference.

Delivered by Menzies School of Health Research and Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, the campaign promotes engagement between health care providers and pregnant Top End women.

Rolled out at antenatal clinics and GP clinics the campaign advises mothers to:

See: See your midwife early to make sure both you and baby stay strong and healthy.

Stop: Smoking can cause harm to your baby, increasing the risk of being born too early or not growing properly.

Scan: Having a scan of your baby in the second trimester to provide very important information about you and your baby.

First Nations women in the Northern Territory experience some of the highest rates of preterm birth in the world – currently double that of non-Indigenous populations. Preterm birth is birth before 37 weeks of pregnancy. It remains the single greatest cause of childhood death and disability in Australia.



See, Scan, Stop team with Fidelia Tipiloura, who is from Wurrumiyanga (Tiwi Islands), currently 21 weeks pregnant and has participated in shaping this public health campaign. From left to right are: Jess Murray, Marisa Smiler-Cairns, Fidelia Tipiloura and Dr Kiarna Brown.

Menzies Senior Research Fellow and Top End Alliance Lead, Dr Kiarna Brown said that as part of their yarning with women from across the Top End, many had

mentioned that existing public pregnancy education was often unrelatable and inaccessible due to language and cultural barriers. "Many reported having very

limited knowledge about preterm birth and strategies for its prevention," she said. "Women want to know more about how to grow strong and healthy babies. By enabling this, we will have the opportunity to positively impact the health of future generations.

"The 'See, Stop, Scan' campaign has been informed by the Alliance's key strategies to prevent early birth and will emphasise the role Aboriginal mothers and their healthcare workers can play in ensuring the healthiest pregnancies for themselves and their babies and building strong communities."

Dr Brown pointed to complex interactions between maternal and perinatal health outcomes and the determinants of health as key factors influencing the poorer health outcomes First Nations mothers and babies continue to experience.

"Despite significant successes in reducing the rates of preterm birth in a number of our states and territories, Aboriginal mothers still remain disproportionately affected by preterm birth," she said.

Chair of the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, Professor John Newnham, said the challenge has always been to ensure all pregnant women, no matter where they live or which hospital they attend, are assessed for risk of

preterm birth and offered appropriate care to minimise that risk.

"The hope is that the Top End 'See, Stop, Scan' campaign will provide a roadmap for improved outcomes for all First Nations women and their children across the country," he said.

"The Alliance is proud to work in true partnership with First Nations healthcare professionals, researchers, academics, organisations and women to ensure the next generation of First Nations Australians are given the best possible start to life."

The See, Stop, Scan' campaign is a result of the work the Alliance completed throughout the Every Week Counts National Preterm Birth Prevention Collaborative – a recently completed three-year Commonwealth funded program that has been working to reduce early births and pre-term births before week 37.

The Menzies School of Health Research is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and a leader in global and tropical health research. Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.