

# NCNS NEWSLETTER

**CLOSING THE GAP TEAM ACTIVE CLIENTS HAS HAD AN 81% INCREASE SINCE 2020 AND TEAM STRIVES TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT SERVICE DESPITE NO FUNDING INCREASE.**



The Closing the Gap Integrated Team Care (ITC) program is an extremely important program for Aboriginal people with chronic health issues, a program and team that Nepean Community and Neighbourhood Services are proud of.

Closing the Gap (ITC) is a program that helps Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in three ways:

1. Providing financial and physical support to ensure timely access to the medical needs of a person
2. Cultural support to access mainstream services in a culturally safe and appropriate way
3. Dedicated Care Coordinators and Outreach workers to assist people in their health journey

The Aboriginal community, and the number of people we support, are increasing dramatically each year. In 2020 Closing the Gap (ITC) had 224 active clients. In 2023 we currently have 405 active clients on our patient register, an increase of 81%. Approximately 300 of our 405 clients are over the age of 50.

To be eligible for this program you must:

·Have one of the following:

- 1.Heart disease
- 2.Kidney disease
- 3.Respiratory disease
- 4.Diabetes
- 5.Cancer

Be recommended by your GP and have a current GP management plan (dated and signed).

In the 2023 financial year, Care Coordinators from our Closing the Gap team have provided a staggering 31,485 Occasions of Service (e.g., coordinating appointments, purchasing medical aids, paying 336 specialist bills in that year), and our Outreach Workers have performed 4854 Occasions of Service (e.g.. Transport to appointments, home visits, supporting clients at appointments).

With the increasing Aboriginal population in Penrith, as well as the increasing cost of living, the biggest challenge for the team is meeting the financial requirements of the program. The funding provided to pay for specialist appointments, medical aids, transport, allied health appointments, assisted breathing equipment and more, is no longer sufficient to service our clients to the best level, meaning our team need to triage our clients and their needs, to determine the best use of the funds we have.



Funding is essential to make sure we can take the best care of our clients however we are limited with the current funding and ever-growing client list.

Our work makes a big impact on the lives of our clients. I think it is important to hear the stories of our clients who need these often life changing support services.

Paddy Te Tau, Care Coordinator, Closing the Gap talks about the ways the Closing the Gap program has helped her client who suffers from heart disease.

*“My client has been on the Closing the Gap books since 2015. He has struggled for most of his life with heart disease and finally had a heart transplant in 2023.*

*Before he was able to have the heart transplant, he needed to lose a substantial amount of weight. He achieved this through a lot of hard work and diet changes. His weight went down from 140kg to 86kg. Amazing work! He continues to work hard at exercising but does tire quickly. He is also adhering to the new eating regimen. This client has had minor issues with rejection of the new heart, but this has been minimised due to drugs administered to prevent this. Recovery from this has been long and arduous as the client*


*keeps having fluid build-up in his lungs and has had several admissions to hospital to alleviate this.*

*To assist with this problem the CTG team is supporting payment to Ripples St Marys for a six-week course of hydrotherapy, which he attends two times per week. At the end of the six weeks, the client will be reassessed to see if he requires further therapy. This exercise therapy will greatly assist the client with his overall recovery while not placing too much strain on his new heart.*

*The client goes back to St Vincent’s Hospital to see his Cardiologist every fortnight.*

*Our CTG team covers the cost for transport to get the client to and from his appointments as he is too weak to use public transport and is very susceptible to infections that could cause major issues to his health.”*

*Belinda Shipley, Aboriginal Health Outreach Worker, Closing the Gap shares a story about a client who was on the heart transplant list but with support managed to get off the transplant list and improve her life quality drastically. “I have worked with a client over a 2-year period who initially lived with her parents and grandparents in a hostile environment.*



This client was diagnosed with heart disease, had high levels of anxiety, suffered from incontinence, and a poor diet that led to her being overweight. She was put on the heart transplant list.

In a joint approach with Community Health, we were able to reduce her weight, help her achieve independence, gain full time employment and a huge improvement in her health. She is now living on her own and no longer having issues with incontinence. She is now at minimum risk of a heart attack, is off the heart transplant list and has just got engaged!”

Ben Nelson, Aboriginal Health Outreach Worker shares a heart-warming story of a client who received treatment for cervical cancer.

“Early in the year one of my clients was diagnosed with cervical cancer.

*She jumped into treatment straight away, completed chemotherapy and was undergoing radiation to finish off the treatment.*

*During chemotherapy, she lost her hair, a side effect of this treatment. This caused her a great loss in her self- confidence, and she went into a bout of depression. I briefly suggested the idea of a wig to cover her hair loss until her hair grew back, and she seemed interested. spoke with NCNS Program Manager, Rodney Matthews and organised a surprise visit to the Penrith Wig Library. he thought she was going to a regular appointment but to her amazement she was provided a wig that day and could*

*not be happier. She told me the other day that people are stopping to have a chat and complimenting her smile and her joy of life. She has now reconnected and begun repairing relationships with family members that she had not spoken to in several years which has in turn improved her depression.*

*On the 2nd of November, she had her final radiation session, and all things are looking very positive for this client and her future health.”*

*These are just a few of our client stories, with many more who have had their health issues supported and lives improved by the Closing the Gap Program. The number of clients is ever increasing, and we will struggle to provide the much-needed support services without review of the current funding.*

*Our team take pride in the work they do and are passionate about being there to support their clients through their difficult health journeys.*

*Would you like to know more about this program?*

*Contact our Closing the Gap team on:*

*02 4706 0299*

*or*

*ctg@nepeancommunity.org.au*

*Click here to see our Closing the Gap Brochure.*

# FAMILY GETAWAYS: NAVIGATING HOLIDAYS WITH KIDS THROUGH ROUTINE, PLANNING, AND PLAYFUL ADVENTURES



As the holiday season approaches, one thing is certain – keeping the kids entertained is a top priority. So, how do you ensure a smooth holiday experience? It's all about planning, being flexible, maintaining some routine and some good fun for the little ones.

## **Planning:**

The first step is to sort out your leave and budget. If you haven't locked in your leave dates, do it now. Check out travel and accommodation options, including online deals and vouchers. Consider family-friendly destinations with onsite activities. Involve your children as much as possible to plan a holiday with activities that everyone will enjoy. When booking accommodation, consider if you need extra cots or cooking facilities and how close you are to the sites you wish to see.

Consider budget-friendly alternatives like camping trips, road adventures, or day trips to the beach, mountains, parks, and pools. Pack your snacks and occasionally treat the kids to a special lunch or ice cream – budget-friendly and delightful!

## **The Importance of Routines:**

Holidays are a break from the norm, a time for fun and relaxation. Yet, maintaining some routine is key. Start adjusting meal and sleep times a week before your departure to ease the transition. Children tend to sleep later and sleep in on holidays. Consider creating a holiday schedule that balances planned and spontaneous activities. It can be a fun task for creative kids to take charge of. Let them craft it with paints and markers or on a whiteboard, detailing the day's adventures.

## **Staying Active:**

Whether you're staying local or going away, planning healthy activities like swimming, bushwalking, outdoor games, skating, biking, and other sports is a good idea. Staying active is key to both physical and mental health, especially during holidays, as it helps release excess energy and aids bedtime. Plan outdoor activities either early in the morning or late afternoon to avoid the intense midday heat. When outdoors, remember to Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, and Slide.

## \$3000 WORTH OF AVENTE 4-IN-1 BABY FOOD MAKERS DONATED TO YOUNG MUMS IN NCNS NYPS GROUP THANKS TO WESTCARE & GOOD360 AUSTRALIA



Andrew from [WestCare Penrith](#) came to visit our Nepean Young Pregnancy Support group last Tuesday. He had sourced \$3000 worth of these amazing Avente 4-in-1 Baby Food Makers from [Good360 Australia](#) and gave them to our young mums to be and young mums for when their babies are ready for solids.

These two gorgeous bubs mums attended our NYPS group throughout their whole pregnancy and have come back to engage in our Rhyme Time Play Space where NCNS Early Childhood Worker, Leanne shares her beautiful singing voice and expertise! We love this!

NYPS runs on Tuesdays during school term between 9am - 12pm at the Womens Health Centre in Penrith. This group is for pregnant mums under 25 years of age.

For more information or to book an appointment with Sandra (midwife) please contact Amy on 02 4729 0442 or 0477 004 773.

## GREAT OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES PARTICIPATING IN OUR FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY - CHILD WELFARE (FFT-CW) PROGRAM



Our Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare (FFT-CW) team engaged a family recently with referral behaviour associated to Family Domestic Violence (FDV) i.e., allegations of punitive physical parenting, and child mental health needs.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) had assessed this family risk to be high. The family are a blended family who were also amidst family law court proceedings. Through FFT-CW engagement we were able to navigate adult/family blame and introduced the narrative of adult/child ‘behaviour patterns’ within the family home.

Through their journey Dad and Mum demonstrated reflective practice and motivation to create change for their children. Dad and mum demonstrated the ability to use more effective authoritative parenting skills, which also supported the implementation of holistic family skills and behavioural responsibilities.

Dad and mum implemented a less reactive style of parenting and therefore were able to work together to make their family behavioural change.

The family stated at the end of therapy that all physical punitive parenting actions had ceased, and that there had been a positive shift in child behaviour and mental health wellbeing.

The children stated that when conflict did arise it wasn’t as frequent and better managed, and that both dad & mum were less angry. DCJ had reassessed family risk to be low and closed the family case midway through FFT-CW therapy.

Please contact:

[fft-cw@nepeancommunity.org.au](mailto:fft-cw@nepeancommunity.org.au)

for more information about this program.

## VISIT FROM JESSY AT KOOLY PLAYGROUP GETS KIDS INVOLVED IN DIDGE, DANCE AND CULTURE

We have had the absolute pleasure of Jessy from Nulungu Dreaming who facilitates our Deadly Kids Dance Group and Didge Class join the NCNS team to help run our Koolyangarra Aboriginal Family Centre.

Jessy joined us for our Kooly Aboriginal Supported Playgroup on Friday teaching the boys the basic sounds to make with the Didge and other names for the Didgeridoo such as Yidaki.

The children requested Jessy to sing the Lyre Bird and the children danced with the parents and sang along.

Our little girl danced while the boys played the didge and sang. The children also played the clap sticks.



[Watch video](#)



[Watch video](#)

Jesse painted the children with ochre and explained the storyline each part of the ochre represented.

The lines on their legs represent the storm is coming, the ochre line across their nose represents the sunrise and the dots across the forehead represent the stars.



The kids enjoyed the day so much that the parents have now taken the young boys to join our Monday Didge class with Jessy. The boys were able to take home a didge for the weekend so they could practice before the class on Monday.



One of the mums' from playgroup messaged NCNS Aboriginal Child & Family Worker, Zoe saying that, "It was a Phenomenal day and would love to see more days like this at playgroup."

If you would like to know more information about our Kooly Aboriginal Supported Playgroup, please call 0406 986 121 and for more information about Didge Class please call 02 4706 0280.



