

Wiimali Chronicle

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Sunny, High 36, Low 28

Camps that prevent chronic illness are a winner

The local Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) has been leading the way in preventing chronic illness in their community members. The Director of the local AMS, Dr John Charles, has told the Chronicle that the camps are aimed at preventing the onset of chronic disease and target younger members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Wiimali.

What we do is get a group of our young people together and we take them away for a long camp, usually about a month, Dr Charles said. We camp out from the town, at a site that is culturally important to our mob, and we work with our people to help them to understand what is happening to their bodies and how chronic diseases aren't noticed till it's too late. Many of our elders come and visit and we use community members telling their story so the

young ones can learn from them and see what happens to you life if you leave it too late. The theme is "if only I knew then what I know now". After a few days people at the camp feel safe and they really talk about their own issues and we are able to build individual plans with them to address their health needs. What we are doing is creating a relaxed atmosphere and building strong respectful relationships.



Healthier babies for Wiimali

Ms Dulcie Madden, spokesperson for the Wiimali Hospital, has announced that special funding has been obtained from the State Government to improve the health of newborn babies delivered in the Wiimali Hospital. In her announcement Ms Madden identified that many babies are very underweight and born before their full term, often with serious long term health consequences. Of particular concern were the babies born to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from Wiimali, Ms Madden said.

In a recent hospital report it was revealed that low birth weight was a major cause of post delivery death and this rate was about one and a half times higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from Wiimali. The report also identified smoking and alcohol use, high blood pressure, maternal obesity, urinary tract infection and social disadvantage during pregnancy as factors associated with the birth of low birth weight babies.

The new funding will be used for a major health promotion strategy which targets young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Ms Madden emphasised that, unlike previous programs, this program would be developed and implemented in full collaboration with the Wiimali Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The first meeting to discuss the issues and a way forward will be held with Wiimali Elders, the Wiimali Aboriginal Medical Service and representatives of the Wiimali hospital in the coming weeks.

