

Good morning and welcome to the City of Cockburn and today's 'National Close The Gap Day' morning tea where we can take the opportunity to discuss the real opportunities available to us to make a difference to improving the health and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The theme for National Close the Gap Day for 2012 is:

Campaigning for Indigenous health equality – Power through partnership

I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land that we stand on today, the Noongar people.

I pay respect to the elders both past and present of the Noongar nation and extend that respect too all indigenous Australians who are present here today.

I welcome:

- Members of the City of Cockburn Aboriginal Reference Committee;
- Ms Samantha Mourish, Ms Barbara Freeman and Cllr Val Oliver who are the support members of the Aboriginal Reference Committee;
- Councillor Val Oliver;
- Our guest speaker today, Ms Tracy Endersby, Aboriginal Health Care Co-ordinator, Fremantle GP Network;
- Mr Dean Wynne one of the City's Co-Health Champions;
- Mr Clem Riley and Claire Woolfit, Fremantle GP Network;
- Mr Don Green, Director Administration & Community Services and other members of staff;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Campaigning for Indigenous health equality – Power through partnership

A very important theme for 2012!

As we know, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are still dying 10 to 17 years younger than other Australians.

Our Government has recognised that the only way to close the gap in indigenous health equality within a generation is to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

National Close the Gap Day is a way for all Australians to join together and remind our political leaders of their commitments to close the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.

The focus for 2012 is on the need for genuine, meaningful partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations at all stages of health planning and delivery.

According to Tom Calma, former co-chair and founding chair of the 'Close the Gap' two things are needed for success. First, government, non-government and community need to be involved – together.

And second, all the social determinants of health like improving housing, education and employment need to be brought into the mix.

'Close the Gap' is an important step towards increasing community awareness and education.

He went on to say; "Our biggest challenge is getting community on board to understand they now have a big role to play and have the opportunity to be part of the solution, because they haven't been actively engaged in the past," he said. "Confidence is building, and we're seeing more and more people get on board as the campaign rolls out."

"Some communities have been doing this for a long time. Other communities may know what they want but don't know the most efficient way to get there. Governments can't make us healthy. Governments' role is to facilitate the process by providing funding support and access to services. We need to make ourselves healthy by going to a doctor or health worker before we get sick, and modifying our lifestyle for better health outcomes."

Tom' Calma message is very clear and re-enforces the 2012 theme:

Campaigning for Indigenous health equality – Power through partnership

I am pleased to say that the City of Cockburn has a very strong partnership with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and that it is actively working with our community to bring about positive change in the health and well being of our community.

The launch of our Co-Health Program, funded by the federal government is aimed specifically at improving the health and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and others in our community and a prime example of how we can assist to 'Close the Gap'.

My fellow Co Health Champions in Dean Wynne and Alison Loo have been actively out there encouraging people to make their health a priority and results to date are encouraging.

Gillian Street, the Healthy Communities Co-ordinator and Carlie Robinson, Healthy Communities Project co-ordinator together with Co-Health committee members are overseeing this important community initiative.

I thank each and every one of them for their contributions and the City's staff for their work in so many disciplines across our community.

As we look around our community it is children who represent our future. While they are full of energy, enthusiasm, laughter and excitement it remains for all of us to ensure that they have every opportunity to grow up in a safe and loving environment and that their health and well being is kept to the forefront.

In closing, I thank Barbara Freeman, Samantha Mourish and other staff for their planning and organising of today's event.

I thank Councillor Oliver for being here today. The Elected Members and staff of our City look forward to working collaboratively with our Indigenous community as we continue our journey down the path of implementing initiatives aimed at improving the health and well being of our community and in support of the 2012 'Close the Gap' theme:

Campaigning for Indigenous health equality – Power through partnership

Thank you for being here today in support of this important community initiative!