

Press Release

24th November, 2016

Malabar Community Midwifery Link Service Celebrates 10 Years with Mums and Bubs community event Monday November 28, 2016

The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation and Malabar Midwifery Link Service are celebrating 10 years of innovative maternity care within the Aboriginal community.

Historically Indigenous women haven't engaged with health services for both cultural and political reasons. The legacy of the Stolen Generation has created innate distrust around mainstream services with the view that they are not equitable, appropriate or flexible with the cultural needs of Indigenous women.

The Royal Hospital for Women founded the "Malabar Midwives" service in 2006 with a vision to offer culturally appropriate care in order to address the inequities in health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Establishment of the Malabar Midwives recognised the need for long-term investment in Indigenous health, to assist with redressing the poor national figures surrounding infant mortality, low-birth weight and life expectancy.

Working with an Aboriginal Health Worker, the Malabar team has without a doubt improved the outcomes in maternal and infant health within the community as well as building lifelong bonds with both mother and child.

The service works hard to build trust with Indigenous women to create safe and comfortable environments for these women to give birth.

Ten years on the Malabar Midwives team know they are making a difference in their community. The service is widely considered a Gold Standard for other services wanting to replicate the model, nationally. In 2008 Malabar Midwives received two NSW Aboriginal Health Awards: the Director General's Award and the award for excellence in program and service delivery.

Malabar Midwives Aboriginal Health worker, Trudy Allende says:

"We still have a long way to go in addressing issues around Indigenous health, but I know we are making a difference. Malabar Midwives understands that Aboriginal health services need to be holistic. When we meet a mother, we look at the big picture, we get to the "why" and work around it as opposed to just ticking a box and never seeing the woman again."

Every day at The Royal, a baby's life begins, a baby's life is saved, a woman's life is saved and new research creates miracles.

Malabar Midwives is more than just having babies. For many women Malabar Midwives is the first positive contact they have with the health system. The trust the midwives build during the birthing process allows them to link clients with other health services, ensuring they continue to have a positive relationship that makes them feel comfortable enough to seek out care for the rest of their lives.

Malabar isn't just about mothers and babies but also about empowering Indigenous health workers within the system.

CEO of The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation, Catherine Oates Smith believes the work of Malabar Midwives needs to be preserved;

"At The Foundation we recognised the need for culturally appropriate care in order to save the lives of Indigenous babies. By funding the education of an Indigenous midwife we hope to preserve the knowledge acquired by Malabar Midwives over the last decade so it can be passed on to future generations of Indigenous mothers and babies. I'm thankful to the many people in the community who donate, so we can continue to support this program."

To celebrate the work done by Malabar Midwives over the last decade, The Royal will be celebrating on November 28th with Aboriginal families who have used the service and acknowledging all of the midwives and staff involved in providing this exceptional service to the community.

The celebration will be attended by the NSW Health Minister The Hon Jillian Skinner, Wonnarua woman and Aboriginal Health Worker Trudy Allende and the hospital's midwifery co-director of maternity services Helen Jarman.

The event is made possible by accounting firm KPMG, who have also gifted Maramali baby blankets to all women who have babies within the program during the 10th Anniversary year.

- ENDS -

Available for comment:

- **Catherine Oates Smith**, (Royal Hospital for Women Foundation CEO), can speak about the philanthropy in the community that helps to sustain the program.
- **Photographer** Barbara McGrady – Event photographer and Indigenous Sydney-sider who recognises the value in the service
- **Community Elders** can speak on the first hand impact this service has had on the community
- Mothers who have used the service available upon request

For more information, photographs or comment contact: Anne Lazarakis,
Marketing and Brand Project Manager on 0423 4616 84 or anne@royalwomen.org.au
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