



Health  
South Eastern Sydney  
Local Health District

## **ABORIGINAL HEALTHY LIFESTYLE GRANT**

### **INITIATIVE FINAL REPORT | SEPTEMBER 2021**



# Contents

- 3 Background .....
- 4 Evaluation .....
- 5 Outcomes .....
- 6 Case Study #1 .....
- 8 Case Study #2 .....
- 10 Conclusion .....
- 11 Appendix .....

**Acknowledgement of Country**

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians on whose land we stand, and the lands our facilities are located on; the lands of the Dharawal, Gadigal, Wangal, Gweagal and Bidjigal peoples.

We would like to pay our respects to the Elders past, present and those of the future.

# Background

8,724 people living in South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) identify as Aboriginal. Aboriginal people continue to experience a higher prevalence of chronic health conditions, including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer <sup>(1)</sup>.

Thirty four percent of Aboriginal children living in urban areas are above healthy weight <sup>(2)</sup>. Early intervention programs that assist children to establish patterns of healthy eating and exercise can reduce the likelihood of preventable chronic disease in adulthood <sup>(3)</sup>.

The Health Promotion Service, SESLHD implemented a community grants initiative in 2019–2020. This initiative recognised that local Aboriginal Community organisations and groups are best placed to identify and meet the needs of their communities.

## Strategic Direction

The initiative aligned with:

- The NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013–2023; Strategic Direction 1: Building trust through partnerships and Strategic Direction 3: Ensuring integrated planning and service delivery <sup>(4)</sup>
- The SESLHD Journey to Excellence Strategy 2018–2021; Strategic Priority: Community wellbeing and health equity <sup>(5)</sup>
- The SESLHD Childhood Obesity Prevention Framework; Stream 2: Community partnership development <sup>(6)</sup>

## Objectives

1. Improve the Aboriginal community's awareness of healthy eating and the importance of physical activities for children and youth aged 0–17 years.
2. Increase the number of culturally appropriate healthy lifestyle programs for children and youth aged 0–17 years available across SESLHD.
3. Increase the number Aboriginal children and youth aged 0–17 years participating in healthy lifestyle programs across SESLHD.

## Focus Areas

Community organisations and groups could apply for grants of up to \$5,000 for projects that aim to enable children and youth (0–17 years) to be healthy and active. Grant recipients had 12 months to deliver their projects.

Projects needed to address at least one or more of the key focus areas:



Healthy Eating



Physical Activity



Reduced Screen Time

# Promotion and a Selection Process

The Health Promotion Service, SESLHD developed a grant application kit and promotional materials that featured culturally appropriate artwork. Grants were promoted to relevant community organisations and groups and information forums were held to promote understanding of the initiative.

After submitting their applications, short-listed applicants were invited to attend a 'pitch-your-project' session where the panel could hear more about the proposed projects directly from applicants. All applications were assessed against the selection criteria.

# Evaluation

Grant recipients completed mid-term and final reporting to demonstrate impact of their projects. The reports collected information about the number of participants in the project, key successes and challenges, impact of the project and a financial acquittal.

A number of projects were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and grant recipients had to large modified their implementation strategies. The outcomes were not negatively impacted by these adaptations.



# Outcomes

- 7 projects funded across SESLHD (see Appendix 1)
- 455 children, youth, and families participated in the funded activities
- All grant recipients reported that the participants in their projects are more aware of healthy lifestyle behaviors as a result of the Aboriginal Healthy Lifestyle Grant Initiative
- 5 out of 6 grant recipients formed new partnerships

## Improving Healthy Eating

Three projects specifically focused on healthy eating and provided children and their families the opportunity to learn about fresh ingredients, bush tucker, and growing and harvesting vegetables.

At Bundeena Public School, students were responsible for the upkeep of the school garden and then taught how to cook healthy recipes with ingredients they grew. Two hundred students participated in this program, with participants having reported feeling a deep sense of pride in their new cooking skills.

“

**We saw students who are often disengaged from school and involved in misbehaviour actively involved and enjoying lessons focused on sustainability and food choices**

**– Bundeena Public School**

”

Children participating in Weave Youth & Community Services' Fun & Food – Healthy Me! project learnt practical skills about how to prepare healthy recipes. At the end of term, children were given a recipe book to share with their family.

Families were also invited to attend the sessions, which provided an opportunity for Aboriginal parents to share recipes from their culture, exchange stories, and create new connections.

Overall, 17 students participated in cooking classes and 13 families contributed recipes to the community cookbook.

# Case Study #1

## Aboriginal Children's Service Bidy's Joy Healthy Living Program

- The parents and children (8 families) who attended the Aboriginal Children's Service Bidy's Joy Healthy Living Program were invited to participate in the cooking classes and take home the meals they cooked together. Families were also provided with take home cooking utensils to practice the new skills.
- Prior to the cooking classes, parents reported feeling apprehensive and hesitant to participate because they thought the meals would be hard to make or time-consuming.
- Post-program feedback indicated that the cooking classes were very well received, with parents reporting they felt more confident in the kitchen after learning new skills and how to cook nutritious and inexpensive meals in under an hour.
- As parents continued to build their confidence, they were less reliant on takeaway meals and reported that they were more likely to cook a healthy meal at home with their children.



## Improving Physical Activity

Four projects focused on increasing physical activity by encouraging children to try new activities, removing financial barriers to participation in sport activities.

Chifley Public School's Little Warriors Kids Mobile Gym provided 80 students with the opportunity to try gymnastics and practice their skills in an obstacle course. As a result of this project, 88% of students engaged in physical activity for greater than 15 minutes during recess (as opposed to 42% pre-project) and 92% of students engaged in physical activity for a period greater than 20 minutes at lunchtime.

Projects also sought to improve mental health through physical activity. Children attending Weave Kool Kids Morning Social would cook breakfast and then go for a walk at the local beach before school. Children practiced intention-setting, were taught about mindfulness, and practiced deep breathing exercises and techniques to reduce stress and anxiety.

Physical activity to support mental health was also integrated into the Aboriginal Children's Service Bidy's Joy Healthy Living Program. Six children and families participated in Tai Chi lessons. These lessons helped to reduce feelings of stress and anxiety, particularly among parents, with participants reporting feeling a sense of relaxation and calm after participating in the lessons.

Narrangy-Booris Service's Keeping Track of your Boori project focused on screening and providing information and tools to parents/carers to encourage learning through play and supporting the optimal development of their children's gross and fine motor skills. Packs were provided to eight families and three children were assessed and identified as needing targeted interventions and referral to a Pediatrician.



# Case Study #2

## The Settlement Neighbourhood Centre - Kids School Holiday Program

- The Kids School Holiday Program is designed for children aged 5 – 12 years and operated during the school holidays. A different activity or excursion was provided each day with the aim to enhance social and emotional development and encourage relationship building, while also keeping children active and enabling them to have new experiences.
- Cost was frequently cited as a barrier to children participating in school holiday programs. The Aboriginal Healthy Lifestyle Grant Initiative reduced this barrier by covering the full cost of participation in activities (swimming lessons, bike riding, and rock climbing) for 48 children.
- At the end of the school holidays, children reported that they preferred participating in these activities as opposed to 'just staying at home watching TV', because it enabled them to be physically active and social, and to try new things.

### Settlement Kids School Holiday Program 2020 – 2021

**URL LINK:** <https://youtu.be/HGonnvIVqqY>





## New Connections & Partnerships

The Aboriginal Healthy Lifestyle Grant Initiative also provided an opportunity for grant recipients to establish new connections and partnerships which will assist in sustainability of the projects beyond the funding period.

The Aboriginal Children's Service developed a partnership with Aunty Beryl, a well-respected Elder in the Aboriginal Community, who visited the playgroup and assisted teaching children and families to cook healthy and nutritious foods. This also enabled the Aboriginal Children's Service to establish a culturally sensitive and safe space for Aboriginal parents to engage in conversation and forge new friendships with other Aboriginal families. By doing so, it is more likely that Aboriginal families will participate in future healthy eating and physical activity programs run by the Aboriginal Children's Service.

Chiefly Public School formed a relationship with Little Warriors and hope to partner with them in the future.

WEAVE developed new relationships with students, families, young people and other community members who were not previously engaged with WEAVE. This opened up new opportunities for community members to be aware of and feel comfortable to attend other programs. They also built better connections with existing partners including Matraville Sports High School, and engaged young people who are struggling with school and need extra support.

The Settlement Neighbourhood Centre developed a partnership with Belgravia Leisure, which now provides access to public pools at a discounted rate for children attending the Settlement's holiday programs. For children unable to swim, Belgravia Leisure also provides free swimming lessons for children unable to afford the cost, thereby reducing financial barrier to participation in physical activity.

The Narrangy-Booris Service presented on their project at the relevant state wide and local forums and received many enquiries about the project and opportunities for adaptation by other Aboriginal Child Health Services.

**Narangy-Booris**  
Aboriginal Child & Family Health Service



**BIDDY'S JOY**



**WEAVE**  
YOUTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Sydney University  
**Settlement**  
Neighbourhood Centre

 **PLUNKETT STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL**



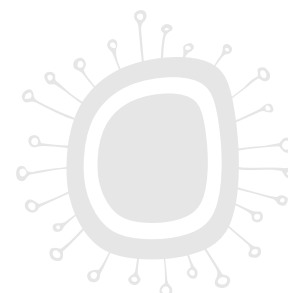
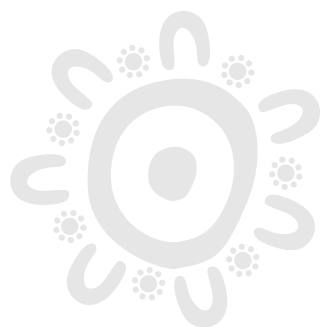
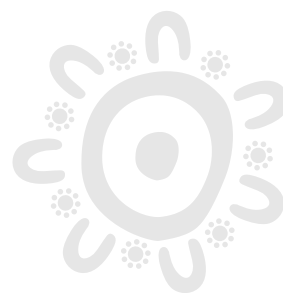
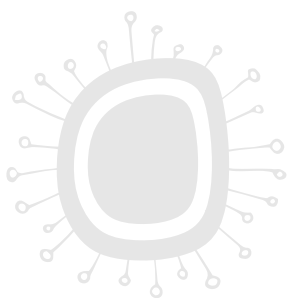


# Conclusion

The Aboriginal Healthy Lifestyle Grants Initiative reached a significant number of Aboriginal families through a range of funded projects. The projects were delivered on time and achieved positive outcomes for the local community despite challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Priority Populations Unit. Population Profile: Vulnerable and priority populations in South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. Taren Point: South Eastern Local Health District, 2018.
- <sup>2</sup> Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence. Aboriginal kids –A healthy start to life: Report of the Chief Health Officer 2018. Sydney : NSW Ministry of Health, 2018
- <sup>3</sup> NSW Ministry of Health. NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2013–2018. Sydney : NSW Ministry of Health, 2013
- <sup>4</sup> NSW Ministry of Health. NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013–2023. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health, 2012
- <sup>5</sup> South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. Journey to Excellence Strategy 2018–2021.
- <sup>6</sup> South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. Framework to prevent and address childhood obesity.





# Appendix

## Summary of Projects

### **Aboriginal Children's Service: Bidy's Joy Playgroup**

Aboriginal Children's Service provides a culturally safe early childhood space. The project aimed to help Bidy's Joy Playgroup establish a vegetable garden, cooking classes for nutrition workshops and to provide wellbeing sessions to families. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a limited number of families could participate in the project.

### **Bundeena Public School: Garden to Plate**

Bundeena Public School is a Government school is the centre of a unique community situated in the heart of the Royal National Park. This project introduced cooking lessons and education on nutrition for K-6 kids to promote healthy eating and to understand the process of growing fruit and vegetables in the school garden. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parents were unable to participate in the project.

### **Chifley Public School: Physical Activity Within Our Community**

Chifley Public School is a Government school situated at Malabar with a big population of Aboriginal children. The project engaged Little Warriors Kids Mobile Gym instructors to implement their program with students to increase students' engagement in physical activity. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parents were unable to participate in the project.

### **Narrangy Booris: Keeping Track of your Boori**

Narrangy- Booris is based at Menai and is a free Aboriginal Child & Family Health Service for 0-5 year olds. The project aimed to provide culturally appropriate information to families to educate families about the importance of early intervention. The project was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a limited number of families able to participate in the project.

### **Plunkett Street Public School (Weave): Fun & Food - Healthy Me**

WEAVE is a non-for-profit organisation based at Woolloomooloo that provides services for families and children. Plunkett Street Public School is a small school with 33% of Aboriginal students. This project aimed to provide education on healthy eating and food preparation at community events and lunch time activities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activities were unable to be delivered as initially planned. The project was adapted and focused on running cooking classes with students and developing a community cookbook.

### **Settlement (Darlington): Settlement Swimmers**

The Settlement is a non-for-profit community organisation based at Darlington, the Settlement provides a range of programs to children, young people and families. The project aimed to provide swimming lessons for 5- 12 year old children to increase physical activity and reduce screen time. Due to the COVID-19, this was not possible and funding was redirected to the Kid's School Holiday Program to expand and provide new experiences to more children.

### **Weave Youth and Community Services Kool Kids Club: Switch Social**

Switch Social is based within Kool Kids Club Maroubra/La Perouse area and work with teens aged 12-18 years. The project aimed to support the leaders to have their own space and keep fit and healthy.

