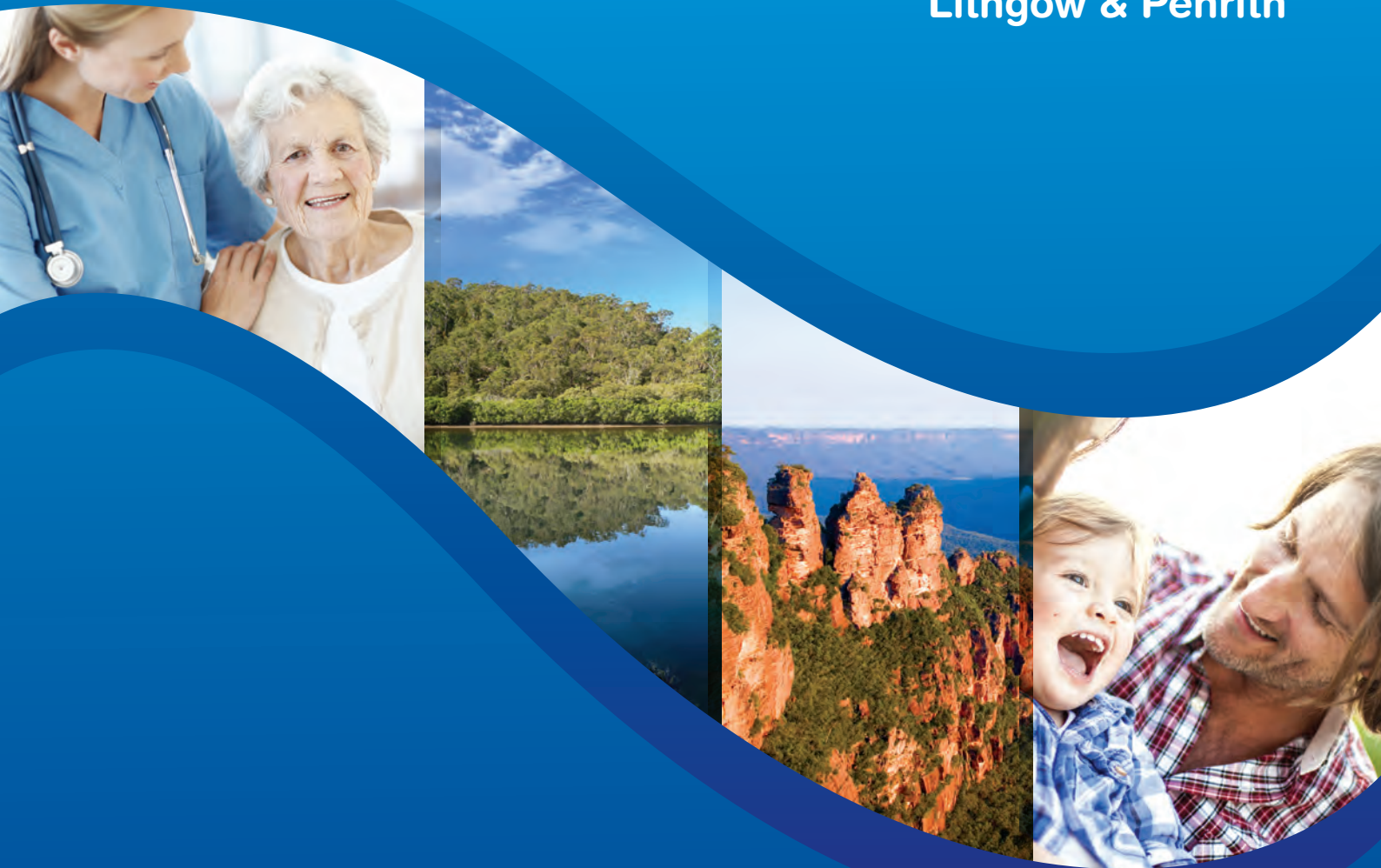


# Highlights 2013

Supporting better health  
for the communities of  
Blue Mountains,  
Hawkesbury,  
Lithgow & Penrith



medicare  
local



NEPEAN-BLUE MOUNTAINS

*Connecting health to meet local needs*



# Who we are

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## Mission

The Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local is a not for profit organisation that works to improve health for the communities of Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith.

We do this by working with and providing support to general practice, other primary health care providers and the many health and non-health stakeholders across the region.

Our role covers population health planning, supporting service providers, integrating and coordinating services, as well as implementing and facilitating primary health care programs.

We also identify and address service gaps in primary health care – essentially supporting all parts of the system to respond to emerging health needs in the community.

## Vision & Values

To improve the health of the region through patient centred health care and primary care integration.

The guiding principles for the work of the Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local are:

- Promoting and facilitating a continuing effective relationship between a patient and their preferred primary care provider.
- A care model that facilitates the patients receiving care from the right level of the health system at the right time.
- Facilitating a smooth, optimal health journey for the community - from primary care to acute care and back to primary care.

### To achieve our vision we are committed to:

- Working in collaboration with local consumer and community groups to ensure their engagement and representation in the provision of primary health care.
- Working closely with the Local Health District to plan and deliver coordinated services.
- Supporting professional education and training to ensure an evidence-based approach to primary care.
- Building on the existing strengths within local primary health care to continue the work that has been successfully undertaken in general practice and expand to other primary health care providers.
- Identify local health issues within the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith communities, and develop local solutions.



“Our vision is, quite simply,  
to improve the health of the region...”

# Our region

Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local (NBMML) supports the primary healthcare needs of 352,000 people across the four Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith.

## Snapshot of our region

- Around half of our population do not get enough physical activity.
- 63% of males and 49% of females are overweight or obese.
- Women in our region are more likely to die from cardiovascular diseases, coronary heart disease, respiratory diseases and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease than other women in NSW.
- 92% of males and 83% of females consume less fruit and vegetables than recommended in national dietary guidelines.
- Around one in ten people report high to very high levels of psychological distress. Suicide in young males is higher than the state average.
- 20% of males and 14% of females in NBMML report that they currently smoke.
- Within the Nepean-Blue Mountains region, there are 138 general practices, 74 community pharmacies and 717 individual allied health professionals.
- Our area includes large areas of social disadvantage and covers regional, rural and outer metro areas across 9,200km<sup>2</sup>.
- The percent of the total population who are Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders is 3.8% in Lithgow, 2.6% in Hawkesbury, 2.4% in Penrith and 1.3% in Blue Mountains Local Government Areas.
- Our needs assessment identified health related issues for our region such as transport to health services, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health, GP shortages, aged care and nursing home bed availability. Eight consumer forums were held across the region last year which confirmed these issues of concern.





# Highlights at a glance

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In the Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local region:

**93%** of patients feel that their **GPs are listening** carefully

**65%** of accredited practices have adopted the new **ehealth record system**

**700+** **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander** people assisted

**500+** **consumer insights** over the last 12 months are shaping the improvements we are making to local health

**800+** **allied health professional** individuals and organisations consulted on AHP needs assessment

**882** **attendances** by primary health care providers at NBMML educational events

**11,825** **consultations** at Nepean & Hawkesbury After Hours GP clinics

**8,428** **mental health consultations** for local community members

**5,000+** **community members** created their own ehealth records

**1,090** **support visits** to primary healthcare providers

**5,000** **patient visits** to Nepean After Hours Clinic in the last 12 months



# The year in review

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NBMML plays an important role in planning, coordinating and delivering primary health care services across the region.

We do this by working with the local community, clinicians, health and other services to identify gaps and develop solutions that will work in our region.

While our effort to improve the health of our region is an ongoing commitment, it is important to recognise the activity and achievements of our organisation during the last 12 months.

Following are just some of the highlights from July 2012 to June 2013.



# 1. Program and Service Delivery

## After Hours GP Clinic

The Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local has a mandate to improve access to effective General Practice after hours services. During 2012/13, mapping of current after hours services and consultations with local GPs on after hours service provision was conducted in each LGA to assist in planning for system improvements where needed.

The Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local **supports the Hawkesbury GP After Hours Service and manages the Nepean After Hours GP Clinic**. These clinics are designed to treat patients when their regular GP is not available. The Nepean After Hours GP clinic, which is staffed by a roster of local GPs, saw nearly 5,000 patients last year, while over 6,800 patients were treated at the Hawkesbury After Hours clinic.

NBMML developed a model and contract to **ensure funding will be maintained at the same level for the 2013-14 financial year to General Practices** who were receiving the Medicare After Hours Practice Incentive Payment which ceased in July 2013. This allows time for quality criteria and future models of after hours General Practice care to be developed in consultation with General Practice and other stakeholders.

## eHealth

eHealth is **re-shaping the way health services are delivered in our community**, with benefits for both patients and health care professionals.

With around 72% of accredited general practices in our region signed onto the eHealth system, NBMML eHealth staff are now forging ahead with linking other health care providers such as pharmacists and allied health into the eHealth landscape.

Presently, patients with a personally controlled electronic health record (PCeHR) can ask their eHealth ready GP to upload a shared health summary to their eHealth record. Locally, **over 5,000 consumers have created a personally controlled electronic health record**, and much of this is due to the efforts of NBMML working in the community.

NBMML will be trialling a telehealth project in conjunction with the CSIRO later in the year.

## Healthy Lifestyle Services

NBMML provides a range of healthy lifestyle and nutrition services, including:

- **Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Program (HELP)**
  - a Medicare funded group health program for people with type 2 diabetes, to support the implementation of positive diet and lifestyle habits. This program has helped over 140 patients in the last 12 months.
- **Healthy Supermarket shopping tours**
  - providing education on healthy food labels. Tours are conducted in areas of known disadvantage with participants drawn from an association with a local pharmacy. Twenty eight participants attended tours over the last 12 months.
- **'Healthy Lifestyle Dietetic Service'**
  - enabling people to access individual consultations with dietitians, either from a clinic, general practice or, in some cases, home visits. Five hundred and fifteen individual consultations were provided this year.

Our dietitian services engage closely with local general practice and support the continuum of patient care.

## Mental Health Services

NBMML runs a range of mental health programs.

The Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) program enables **GPs to refer patients with mild to moderate mental health issues for subsidised psychological intervention**. Approximately 7,000 counselling sessions were delivered to patients from either the NBMML psychologist clinic or 85 contracted private practitioners across the region. The program targets specific population groups such as those on low income, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australians, women with depression and anxiety or related mental health issues during the perinatal period and those at low to moderate risk of suicide.

As part of its ATAPS program and in successful partnership with the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District (NBMLHD) and Family Counselling Service and the Child and Youth Mental Health Service, **NBMML ran five 8-week Cool Kids group programs**. These evidence based groups are for children 8-11 years of age with anxiety issues, and their parents.

NBMML employs Mental Health nurses to provide clinical services under the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program (MHNIP). **The Mental Health nurses support GPs in managing patients with severe mental health disorders** that are affecting multiple areas of their lives. Approximately 1,500 Mental Health nurse consultations were conducted over the last 12 months.

NBMML is the lead agency in a Consortium of key players in mental health across the region that was successful in its tender for the **Partners in Recovery (PIR) initiative**. This Consortium includes Aftercare, Ageing Disability and Home Care – Department of Family and Community Services, Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District Drug and Alcohol Service, Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District Mental Health Services, Richmond PRA and UnitingCare Mental Health, and will work to **redesign the system to provide more coordinated care to those with severe and persistent mental illness with complex needs**. This is coupled with the targeted approach to identify clients in the region who will be provided with care coordination assistance to support their navigation of the system and ensure they are linked to appropriate services. PIR is funded until June 2016. As part of this work, mapping of mental health services and providers within the NBMML boundaries has been undertaken.

NBMML is also a consortium member of the recently opened headspace centre in Penrith led by UnitingCare Mental Health. NBMML provides access to funds for psychological support through the ATAPS program and also provides a youth GP clinic from the centre.

NBMML is a member of a stakeholder group focussed on the physical health needs of consumers with mental illness, seeking opportunities for health education and promotion. We also organise **Mental Health Networking forums**. Stakeholders included GPs, allied health providers, LHD mental health and community

health staff, school counsellors, other government and not for profit community organisations.

## Chronic Disease Initiatives

We work in partnership with the Local Health District to **support people with chronic health conditions to better coordinate the care they need and manage their conditions**, reducing unnecessary hospital admissions and improving quality of life.

As part of the Connecting Care program, **Care Coordinators worked with 85 GPs from 44 practices, health care providers and other service providers** to better coordinate the care provided for 82 patients registered in the program. This included home visits and electronic sharing of information between NBMML and NBMLHD which has accelerated communication pathways around patient care.

NBMML has commenced the roll out of culturally-tailored versions of the Moving On Program, an **evidenced-based program for self-management of chronic disease** developed by Arthritis NSW, **for the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities**. An Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander program was run in May 2013. The first of the four planned CALD versions of Moving On programs, which will engage bilingual/bicultural leaders, will target the Greek and Maltese-speaking communities and commence from October 2013. Program partners include NBMML, the Multicultural Health Unit of the NBMLHD and Arthritis NSW.

NBMML is a **member of the HealthOne Steering Committee** established as a joint governance forum to progress the development and implementation of a HealthOne in Cranebrook. Progress on the model of care has resulted in a review of models in other areas of NSW with the result of initial focus upon diabetes and vulnerable Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families.

**76%** of the NBMML workforce is involved in clinical service delivery or support.

This includes GPs, registered nurses, mental health nurses, dietitians, psychologists, clinical psychologists, social workers, youth workers, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander outreach workers, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health workers, pharmacists, care coordinators, and diabetes educators.

Preliminary work is in progress to map health pathways for diabetes involving the Diabetes Association, local GPs, practice nurses, consumer representative, NBMLHD diabetes unit and community health.

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health

NBMML is proud to offer **a range of services supporting and working with the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities for better health.** The Closing the Gap Program, through the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Outreach Workers, links community members to appropriate health services. This includes attending medical appointments with clients, arranging healthcare and transport, promoting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander specific primary health care initiatives e.g. health checks, PBS co-payment and encouraging self identification via local schools, parent groups and other community groups and organisations.

Over the last 12 months, 336 patients have been assisted through this program.

In addition, 220 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander patients with chronic health conditions have been referred by their GP to the Care Coordination & Supplementary Services (CCSS) program. As part of this program, the **NBMML Care Coordinators support patients to access services consistent with their GP care plan and provides financial support to ensure access to specialists, transport and some medical/equipment supplies.**

NBMML is also the lead agency for **the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Healthy for Life Program, an initiative of the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Health Coalition.** This community-based health program works in partnership with five primary health care sites and offers services aimed to improve health for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Approximately 150 local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community members are registered with the Blue Mountains Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Healthy for Life Program (HFL) which focuses on chronic, complex and aged care; men's and boy's health; and Mums, Bubs and Kids Health & Wellbeing.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander eye clinics coordinated by NBMML have been accessed by nearly 100 Aboriginal & Torres Strait community members over the past year.

NBMML coordinates **a specialist paediatric outreach clinic in Lithgow**, and commenced **a new psychiatric outreach clinic in Katoomba** in March 2013. This provides affordable, accessible specialist services to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families and families from low socio-economic backgrounds. NSW Rural Doctors Network provides funding to cover the specialists and clinic costs through the Urban Specialist Outreach Assistance Program. Two hundred and thirty nine patients were seen through these clinics over the last year.





## Youth Services

The Junction Youth Health Medical Service is a youth focused GP clinic in Penrith. The service provides access to a range of comprehensive follow on support services including **psychological assessment and treatment through the ATAPS program, dietitian services and access to medication vouchers for at risk youth who may not otherwise afford prescription medication.** This year, GP services were accessed by 113 young people. Next year the GP clinic will be conducted from the newly opened Penrith headspace site.

## Veteran Community Health

NBMML coordinates a Veteran Community Health Project. This project **assists veteran community members know of health initiatives in their local area.** The program includes provision of a registered nurse to provide the HomeFront Service (the Department of Veteran Affairs Falls Prevention Program) to local veterans.

## Aged Care Program

The main goal of the NBMML Aged Care Program is **to improve the awareness of, and access to, Primary Health Care Services to the elderly population in the Nepean-Blue Mountains region,** whether they reside in residential aged care facilities (RACFs) or in the community.

A needs assessment of the RACFs across the NBMML region was conducted in May 2013 to identify gaps in allied health service provision for low care residents. The highest need identified was falls prevention followed by access to

dental services. NBMML has contracted allied health professionals to conduct Falls Prevention Programs in 11 RACFs across the region.

## 2. Practice and Workforce Support

### Primary Health Care Support

The Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local continues to **develop and implement a new Primary Health Care Support model to provide front line services to primary care across the region.** Up to 300 occasions of service are provided each month covering 139 general practices.

This includes:

- Assistance to practices in response to a healthcare professional workforce shortage, recruitment and retention.
- Support and advice for general practices with immunisation, accreditation, continuous quality improvement, data quality management and unbiased medical information.
- Support to roll out new health programs such as ehealth, after hours, healthy lifestyle programs and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health initiatives.
- Assisting practices to establish patient register, recall & reminder systems.
- Improving communication between different health care providers via secure messaging and uptake of the personally controlled electronic health record.

## Provision of education for Primary Healthcare Providers

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for GPs, practice nurses and other health providers has aligned to support national initiatives and local needs. **Seventy four educational events were held over the last 12 months with 882 attendances.**

All activities have been RACGP and APNA accredited for GP QI&CPD points and Nursing points. Collaboration with other education providers such as the Nepean Medical Association and the Hawkesbury Doctors Network has facilitated a collaborative approach to the delivery of locally identified education needs.

A formal needs assessment of the CPD requirements across primary health care will be conducted in the new financial year which should provide guidance on broader CPD requirements.

In addition Closing the Gap staff have worked closely with general practice to ensure Cultural Safety training requirements are met in line with the CTG PIP initiative. This has involved promotion of online training opportunities and the roll out of face-to-face events in March and April 2013 across each of the 4 LGAs.

## Allied Health Needs Assessment

A **needs assessment of Allied Health Professionals** commenced with a comprehensive mapping exercise to identify all allied health service providers across the 4 LGAs. Four hundred and thirty five allied health organisations from 18 professions encompassing 791 individual providers were contacted.

This comprehensive needs assessment will progress into 2013/2014, the results of which will assist in identifying the direction of primary health care support services and how NBMML can work in the future with Allied Health Professionals.

## Workforce Support

Discussions have been held with the NSW Ministry of Health, the NSW Minister for Health and Local Members in regards to GP workforce issues.

**Thirty four general practices utilised NBMML workforce support services on 59 occasions of service**, which included GP, practice nurse and admin staff recruitment, provision of information on Locum services, letters of support for District of Workforce Shortage and Area of Need, and

advertising vacancies on the NBMML website.

Workforce support staff have developed linkages with Rural Doctors Network (RDN) and now participate in monthly Medicare Local/RDN teleconferences.

NBMML has also secured funding under the Outer Metropolitan Relocation Grant program to assist in attracting GPs to the area.

## 3. Stakeholder Relationships Engagement

**NBMML is proud to have strong working relationships with many prominent organisations**, and works closely with them on initiatives relating to Consumer engagement, Mental health, Transport, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health, Homelessness and Veteran's health to name a few. Some examples of work with stakeholders are outlined below.

### Working with the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District

NBMML has a strong, practical working relationship with the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District (NBMLHD - which provides hospital and community services) at every level. This partnership is testament to the commitment at a Board and Executive level toward governance in delivering quality health services and addressing local needs. Commitment at a strategic level has facilitated joint initiatives such as;

- Development of a joint consumer engagement strategy that focuses upon the establishment of a governance structure where the Consumer Advisory Committee reports directly to the Boards of both organisations.
- Joint Board annual planning to determine and agree on areas of joint priority and measurements of improvement. This commitment and partnership is strengthened and supported by each of the Chief Executives of the organisations reporting to each others' Board. Work on shared priorities includes aged care, mental health, access to general practice care after hours, chronic disease management, establishment of a HealthOne, eHealth, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health and health promotion initiatives.



- Shared clinical governance arrangements for some programs.
- Establishing key strategic positions that work across both settings addressing key issues of communication and integration, big picture monitoring of the local health landscape and workforce planning strategies across the District.

## Partnering to improve health transport

NBMMML convened the Inaugural Key Stakeholder Health Transport Meeting in May 2013 at Penrith City Council as part of its response to a needs analysis that revealed access to health services as one of the major concerns for consumers

Representatives from the four LGAs, Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC), Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services, NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS), local health organisations (including the NBMLHD), local community transport organisations, and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander services impacted by health transport disadvantage, participated in the meeting, which resulted in the establishment of three working groups to commence the critical work of improving transport to health services across the region.

## Partnerships to promote health and disease prevention

NBMMML works with primary health care providers, businesses, community and other stakeholders to identify opportunities for joint health promotion and disease prevention. Examples of initiatives include:

- **Participation in a Mental Health Expo**, alongside numerous local businesses to offer free health-based seminars, information booths and health checks, and educating 50 people in attendance in relation to healthier food and lifestyle habits.
- **Formation of an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander support hub in the Nepean LGA** consisting of a growing number of primary care providers, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander specific and mainstream support services, transport services and Centrelink. This hub serves as a one stop shop where Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community members can access multiple services in a culturally safe space and where services can better coordinate shared care.
- **Active participant on the Penrith and Blue Mountains 'Homeless Hub' steering committees**. Supported 6 'Homeless Hub' events through the provision of GPs, practice nurses, immunisation officer and Closing the

Gap outreach workers.

- Delivery of **school health promotions session**. 40 individual sessions at 4 local high schools were conducted this year.
- **Partnership with Gundungurra Tribal Council Aboriginal Corporation and Blue Mountains City Council** to provide a young women's Aboriginal Cultural Camp covering health and well being targeting girls attending Blue Mountains high schools.

## 4. Community and Consumer Engagement

Consumer consultation is ongoing and pivotal to us understanding the health needs of our community.

NBMML is proud to be one of the leading Medicare Locals across Australia implementing a **comprehensive strategy to ensure effective consumer engagement**. In 2012, this commenced with consulting 500 consumers via community forums and online surveys.

From these interactions, **key issues for our area were identified, including access to transport to health services, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health, GP shortages, aged care and nursing home bed availability**. Our consumers also told us clearly that they consider their GP care is excellent and they want the Medicare Local to continue to build a strong relationship between GPs, consumers and other health professionals to ensure a more connected health care journey for them.

Results of the consumer and community consultations have been written up as four separate community reports (one covering each LGA) which are available on the NBMML website.

The consumer consultations also allowed us to discuss the role consumers can play in health service planning, delivery, evaluation and research, and to provide feedback on a model for ongoing consumer involvement

NBMML, in conjunction with NBMLHD, **established a Joint Interim Consumer Committee**. This committee, with NBMML and NBMLHD support, has developed processes and protocols for recruiting and establishing four new LGA-based Consumer Working Groups. It is expected that they will be fully operational by June 2014 and will increase consumer input

into the design and delivery of health services. Representatives from each of these committees will form a Consumer Advisory Committee which will report to the Boards of both NBMML and NBMLHD.

Consumer representatives also provided input into a number of NBMML and NBMLHD committees and initiatives. This has resulted in better accountability back to the community for the delivery of clinical services.

**Consumers have identified a key area for improvement as increasing communication within and between health services, and increasing community awareness and knowledge of the location and range of services in the Nepean-Blue Mountains region.** This will improve access for consumers to a range of primary and acute health services. This year saw further development of the NBMML website to include details of the location and range of primary health care services in the NBMML region.

## 5. Governance and Business Excellence

NBMML maintains excellence through strong governance and management structures and a commitment to organisational improvement. **The organisation is governed by a skill based Board of nine Directors** and has two board subcommittees that assist the board in its duties; the Finance, Audit and Risk Management subcommittee and Nominations subcommittee which meet at least four times a year. The inaugural AGM for the organisation was held in February 2013.

**NBMML is proud to have the following organisations as members:**

- Blue Mountains GP Network
- Hawkesbury Doctors Network
- Nepean Division of General Practice
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
- Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
- Lithgow Council

NBMML is committed to ongoing quality improvement and is working towards accreditation under the new Medicare Local Accreditation Standards by June 2014. This process will ensure that we have appropriate procedures and

processes embedded in the organisation to drive future performance and change. A Medicare Local Accreditation Implementation Plan has been developed outlining the quality framework for NBMML.

The organisation has also established a Quality Improvement Committee and a Clinical Governance Advisory Committee.

## 6. Research and Innovation

NBMML aims to instil a culture of innovation and research to develop a greater understanding of local health issues and the needs of our healthcare providers, and ultimately identifying new and resourceful ways of addressing these needs.

NBMML has **partnered with the University of Western Sydney to develop an evaluation framework and assist with evaluation of specific programs** such as Partners in Recovery.

Access to holistic care and support for people living with cancer was identified as a priority in three of our four LGAs. **NBMML, in conjunction with Blue Mountains Cancer Help (BMCH) and the University of Western Sydney, has developed a consumer-led research project.** This project, which will be carried out in 2013-14, will evaluate the BMCH model of care from the perspective of consumers and health care providers. In so doing, it will more closely identify

specific needs and information and service gaps, including referral issues, and provide a set of recommendations for program and service enhancement.

NBMML is **working in partnership with a number of organisations on the physical health needs of consumers with mental illness.** As part of a research project, funding has been secured to work in collaboration with the University of Western Sydney to pilot a consumer health check card, which encourages mental health patients to seek screening for medical conditions they are at an increased risk of (e.g. heart disease, cancer, diabetes, respiratory disorder).

We have also **worked with the “Involving Consumers in Research and Teaching” Committee** comprised of NBMML and the Chairs of General Practice from the University of Sydney and the University of Western Sydney. Professor Jennifer Reath, Professor Tim Usherwood and Dr Louella McCarthy of this Committee presented to the Community Forums on how consumers can be involved in academic research and teaching.

Within healthcare, continuing development is vital to the ongoing delivery of quality, contemporary care - so too **NBMML values and supports the ongoing learning and development of our staff to ensure we remain a contemporary, vital organisation** best equipped to manage the important role we play in supporting local healthcare providers and working toward a healthier community.





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**Healthy Lifestyle Dietetics Service**

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For more information about Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local visit  
**[www.nbmmml.com.au](http://www.nbmmml.com.au)**

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*Connecting health to meet local needs*