

24 March 2017

## Elly looks to the Aunties to lead the way with breast screening

A local Aboriginal health worker is helping to save the lives of Indigenous women in Lithgow.

With breast screening rates in Lithgow well below the state average, Elly Chatfield has been working with Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network (NBMPHN) to assist in educating and supporting women to have a mammogram.

Last month she attended a morning tea to talk to women about the importance of breast screening and invited them to the mobile BreastScreen Mobile Van currently stationed at Lithgow Valley Plaza. Elly will be visiting local community groups during the coming months to increase the cancer screening rates.

“My work is immensely important for our community. Aboriginal women tend to forget they need to take care of themselves, putting family first,” said Elly. “Our Aunties are our natural leaders and role models and we need them to be well,” she said.

“I would like to see more Aunties being screened so we can so slow down the cycle of breast cancer. Mammograms can detect cancer before they can be seen or felt and early detection means a better chance of survival, increased treatment options and improved quality of life.”

In response to the low cancer screening rates in the NBM region, NBMPHN was recently selected as one of four PHNs in NSW to receive a Cancer Screening and Prevention Grant by the Cancer Institute NSW to increase participation in the National Cancer Screening programs and improve the early detection and early treatment of cancer.

In 2011-12, cancer was the second leading cause of death in the region. In Lithgow, only 15.8% of Aboriginal women participated in breast screening and they are 1.3 times more likely to die from breast cancer than non-Indigenous women.

“Cancer screening is a priority in our area, particularly among Aboriginal women,” said NBMPHN CEO, Lizz Reay. “The Cancer Institute NSW Grant helps us work with GPs and other healthcare practitioners to address the low screening rates.”

The BreastScreen Van will be at Lithgow Valley Plaza, Lithgow from 24 March - 10 April. FREE mammograms are available for all women aged 40 years and over, but especially for women aged 50-74 years. Phone 13 20 50 to make an appointment.

ENDS

Editors Note: Interview/photo can be arranged with Elly on request.

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