

Awabakal Aboriginal Primary Health Care Centre

(Newcastle)

Strong partnerships with local ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeons and Hearing Australia, support the Awabakal Aboriginal Primary Health Care Centre to deliver one of the state's most sought after ENT clinics.

Centre aims to effectively treat these conditions and provide health education to lower the rates of otitis media in the community. The success of the clinic has come from what Markeeta describes as some of *"the most successful relationships"* with stakeholders and partners, as

families. "Having our surgeons promoting our work is great. Kelvin for example, is a big picture thinker. He often brings registrars to the clinic to get them interested in Aboriginal health. Hopefully, one day, they might be inspired to go

Strong Partnerships Promote Good Ear Health

Now in its fifth year, the clinic is delivered as a half day at the end of each month, with four visiting surgeons, one of whom is well known Indigenous surgeon Dr Kelvin Kong. Hearing Australia also provides a visiting audiologist who conducts diagnostic testing for many of the kids at the clinic. They also supported Awabakal AMS worker Markeeta Douglas through her training to becoming a qualified audiometrist.

The idea for the clinic came about through a desire to improve ear health and in particular, to address a common group of inflammatory diseases known as otitis media. Aboriginal children have some of the highest rates of otitis media in the world, with it affecting 50-80% of children in some communities. The Awabakal Aboriginal Primary Health Care

well as through having one person dedicated to the clinic, who can work with the medical staff and who is passionate about ear health. The partnership with the surgeons also benefits families whose children need operative intervention. Through existing relationships with the Hunter New England Local Health District, the surgeons arrange for all operations to take place at the John Hunter Hospital at no cost to

and work in our communities, particularly ones that don't have these kinds of services."

The positive experience of Awabakal Aboriginal Primary Health Care Centre, means they can now champion the issue more broadly and share their model with others. Markeeta is excited about the clinic concept expanding into other parts of the state, so that it can support more families. In 2016, Newcastle will be the host city for a national conference on Otitis Media.



"We want to talk to other AMSs so that they can do what we're doing. The next step for us is to write this up as a proper business model so that other services can formally adopt it. We want to break down the barriers so that we can all meet the needs of our communities and of our little ones." - Markeeta Douglas

Awabakal Aboriginal Primary Health Care Centre is a member organisation of the AH&MRC.

**For more information contact
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