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Partners Apunipima and Catholic Health Australia Recognise NAIDOC Week through Collaborations with Community

The theme of NAIDOC week 2018, 'Because of her, we can!', celebrates the essential role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have played and continue to play at all levels of society. The health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is an important priority which should not be overlooked.

In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievements—and with the support of HESTA—representatives from Catholic Health Australia (CHA), HESTA, St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA), Mercy Health, Cabrini Outreach and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) recently joined representatives from Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Apunipima) on a visit to the remote community of Kowanyama in far north Queensland.

Representatives were able to recognise and honour the contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make, by listening to reflections from members of the community, and identifying health priorities where the Catholic health and aged care sector can support Apunipima to deliver community-driven services in the Cape.

With a special focus on women's health and wellbeing, a health workshop followed in Cairns to work towards developing these learnings into tangible outcomes for the communities of Cape York as a whole.

"This workshop gives us the opportunity to reflect on what we've achieved since this partnership commenced in 2015, and to look strategically at how we can continue building on the strengths of these relationships and the community," said Paul Stephenson, Apunipima's Chief Executive Officer.

"The visit to Kowanyama was very successful in familiarising the delegates with the experiences that communities can provide on a localised level, and the challenges that remote health service delivery presents. We look forward to continuing to work together to deliver community-driven services in the Cape."

"As Catholic providers it is our mission to ensure that every Australian receives equitable access to quality healthcare, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable," said Suzanne Greenwood, CHA's Chief Executive Officer.

"CHA's vision for our partnership is to use our position with our members to support Apunipima's service delivery; and to continue to advocate for better access to healthcare,



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housing, prevention, and other measures that will go towards addressing these intolerable gaps in health outcomes for the communities of Cape York.”

HESTA Executive Partnership Engagement, Neil Saxton said the visit provided valuable insight into the challenges experienced by HESTA members working at Apunipima and in rural and remote areas.

“HESTA is very proud to have been a part of this initiative. It has provided the opportunity to learn first-hand about the gaps in women’s health and the unacceptable health gaps experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” Mr Saxton said.

“We share in Apunipima’s goal to close these gaps and look forward using these learnings to inform how we can continue to partner with organisations like CHA to have a meaningful impact in addressing these challenges.”

SNAPSHOT

- Apunipima is now one of the largest community controlled health organisation in Queensland and delivers a comprehensive primary health care service to 11 Cape York communities. With over 230 staff, centres in Aurukun, Coen, Napranum, Mossman Gorge and Kowanyama with four wellbeing centres in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, Apunipima is continuing with its mission to eliminate health inequality on the Cape.
- Members of CHA have been partnering with Apunipima to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health organisation to strengthen Cape York Research Governance by extending Apunipima’s Research Coordination Capacity, thus empowering the Cape York communities by giving them ownership over their own research agenda.
- CHA will welcome members of Apunipima’s Board of Directors and senior executive body including Public Health Medical Advisor, Dr Mark Wenitong, to its National Conference in Melbourne, 27-29 August 2018 to continue to progress the partnership projects.

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