

Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Health in South Western Sydney (1993) was the first plan of its kind in Australia to be developed in partnership between an Area Health Service, an Aboriginal-controlled health organisation and a State health department.

In 1998 an evaluation of the Plan was conducted in order to identify the achievements of the Plan, and the areas in which progress had not been made. This information was to be used to inform the development of a new plan to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

The 1993 Plan identifies 7 goals to be achieved, and a total of 45 strategies. The goals are:

1. To improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in South Western Sydney
2. To meet the primary health care needs of Aboriginal people in South Western Sydney through appropriately resourced, Aboriginal owned and controlled services and structures
3. To improve the accessibility and appropriateness of mainstream health services to Aboriginal people in partnership with Aboriginal communities
4. To develop community consultation mechanisms and processes that actively encourage Aboriginal participation and control of health care
5. To incorporate Aboriginal health advancement into the corporate objectives of the South Western Sydney Area Health Service through collaboration with the Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation and the Office of Aboriginal Health of the NSW Department of Health
6. To identify and maximise intersectoral contributions to Aboriginal health advancement
7. To ensure that Aboriginal community of South Western Sydney receives an equitable share of all resources available for Aboriginal advancement.

The evaluation focused on the extent to which strategies had been implemented, and described benefits of the strategies and difficulties encountered. This information was derived primarily from a survey conducted of all stakeholders identified as being responsible for implementing a particular strategy.

Responses to the survey were collated, and the following pattern of implementation emerged, as shown in the table on page 6. Of all the strategies, 17 are regarded as being fully implemented (38 percent), 19 as partly implemented (44 percent) and 9 (18 percent) as not at all implemented.

Goals where there has been substantial work relate to the development of specific projects, activities or services; working with Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation to provide services; increase in the number of Aboriginal Health staff and support for staff; consultation with Aboriginal communities; and inclusion of Aboriginal Health items in performance agreements

Goal 3 “To improve the accessibility and appropriateness of mainstream health services to Aboriginal people in partnership with Aboriginal communities” was the only goal where no strategy was fully implemented, and where almost one third of strategies were not implemented at all. A number of difficulties were identified with implementation of the strategies for Goal 3 including: the lack of a clear Aboriginal health infrastructure until recently, high turnover of Aboriginal and mainstream staff within SWSAHS and in external organisations and problems of engaging mainstream health services in taking action to improve Aboriginal health.

Goal	Number of strategies	Number fully implemented	Number partly implemented	Number not at all implemented
1	4	2	2	0
2	11	6	5	0
3	15	0	9	6
4	4	3	0	1
5	6	4	1	1
6	3	1	1	1
7	2	1	1	0
Total	45	17	20	9

Major issues to emerge through the evaluation were:

1. the need to set clear directions and achievable goals
2. the need to integrate Aboriginal health issues into all parts of SWSAHS
3. the need to invest in infrastructure, and
4. the need to develop and strengthen partnerships.