



MEDIA RELEASE:

COLLABORATION FAST TRACKS ENT SURGERY FOR 16 CHILDREN FROM CAPE YORK

20 September 2016

A collaboration between CheckUP, Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service (HHS), and ENT surgeon Dr Sukhbir Ahluwalia with support from Apunipima Cape York Health Council, the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), is paying dividends for 16 children from Cape York who are having a variety of ENT surgical procedures performed at the Cairns Private Hospital and Cairns Day Surgery on 20 and 21 September 2016.

The funding was generously provided to CheckUP by the Commonwealth Department of Health through the Eye and Ear Surgical Services program and will be put to good use by fast-tracking surgery for children who would have had a long wait to have their health issues addressed.

The children's health assessments were undertaken with staff from all the agencies including health workers, nurses, doctors, the Apunipima audiologist and Outreach-funded ENT specialists. Staff were quick to get on board this initiative knowing that the surgery would have an immediate impact on the children's overall health and well-being, as well as their learning at school. Following the surgery, the children and their families will start noticing improvements in their sleeping, breathing, hearing, behaviour and concentration, almost immediately.

The project has been led by Denise Newman, Ear Health Coordinator, Torres and Cape HHS who coordinated and organised the delivery of the project including the planning and logistics of getting the children and their families to Cairns and meeting each of the children and their families to help them understand what was involved and gain their support.

Michel Lok, Chief Executive for Torres and Cape HHS, said that the ENT surgery initiative was a great partnership benefitting Cape York children. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience some of the highest levels of ear disease and hearing loss in the world, with rates up to 10 times more than those for non-Indigenous Australians. We are very proud to be a part of this program to help address hearing health in Cape York."

Apunipima Cape York Health Council CEO, Cleveland Fagan said, “It’s a great opportunity that we’ve been given thanks to the support of CheckUP and the Commonwealth Department of Health. We have managed to get a lot of kids assessed, and to get them treated in a far timelier manner than otherwise would have been possible is tremendous”.

CheckUP CEO, Ann Maree Liddy, is also delighted that so many children will have their hearing issues addressed all at once through CheckUP’s Outreach program. “Without this funding, this wonderful initiative would not have been possible. We are so grateful to our partners in this initiative, Torres and Cape HHS and Apunipima, as well as the surgeon Dr Sukhbir”.

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