



**The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP
Minister for Aged Care
Minister for Indigenous Health
Member for Hasluck**

**Senator David Fawcett
Senator for South Australia**

**Rowan Ramsey
Member for Grey**

MEDIA RELEASE

21 February 2018

Connected Beginnings aims to help Close the Gap in Ceduna

Ceduna families are now benefiting from the new, community based Connected Beginnings program, linking health care and early childhood education, as the program continues its national rollout.

Indigenous Health Minister Ken Wyatt AM said the program aims for healthy families and improved school readiness.

“Connected Beginnings helps children enjoy good health, to set them on the way to academic success and a lifetime of better opportunities,” Minister Wyatt said.

“It works by providing children and their families with holistic support through existing and expanded local services.”

Minister Wyatt officially launched the program today at the Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health service, where it is already helping to build better, stronger lives.

“The first five years of life is a critical time that ultimately helps shape every child’s future and is fundamental to Closing the Gap in health equality,” Minister Wyatt said.

“I know Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health service has worked hard to attract professionals to fill five new positions to help support the program and local families.”

Through Connected Beginnings, Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health service provides health checks to women, babies and children up to school age.

“This means mothers and children in this community are being referred to specialist services including paediatricians, ear and eye specialists, dentists, occupational and speech therapists and dieticians,” said Minister Wyatt.

“The social and emotional wellbeing team here also provide much-needed support for mums experiencing anxiety and depression, plus an environmental health program that targets everyday housing and community living conditions, essential to maintain health and prevent disease transmission.”

Senator David Fawcett welcomed the extension of the Connected Beginnings program to Ceduna.

“Wrapping services including early childhood education, maternal and child health, and family services helps families now and will help generations to come,” Senator Fawcett said.

“Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health service has a strong working relationship with the Ceduna District Health Service through a memorandum of understanding, and works closely with the Aboriginal Maternal Infant Care worker.”

Member for Grey, Rowan Ramsey MP, said: “I congratulate Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health service and the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre for their leadership and dedication to giving local children the best start possible.”

Run jointly by the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Health, Connected Beginnings programs are now underway in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Galiwin’ku, Ceduna, Port Augusta, Mildura, Doomadgee and Doonside, along with a health-only program in Canberra.

Opportunities are being investigated to establish the program in further locations this year, including in Western Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania.

The Turnbull Government has committed \$12 million over three years from the Indigenous Australians’ Health Programme to implement the health component of Connected Beginnings, plus around \$10 million per year from the Community Child Care Fund to support the education component.

Connected Beginnings is a response to the Forrest Review: Creating Parity, which recommended a progressive roll-out of integrated early childhood services, closely linked to schools.

Minister Wyatt’s media contact: Nick Way 0419 835 449

Department of Health Media: news@health.gov.au

Senator Fawcett’s media contact: Caroline Rhodes 08 8205 1040
Caroline.Rhodes@aph.gov.au

Rowan Ramsey’s media contact: Caroline Rhodes 08 8205 1040
Caroline.Rhodes@aph.gov.au