



'Our Story. Our Future.' was created by proud Wiradjuri, Wotjobaluk, Yuin and Gumbaynggirr artist Luke Penrith and Maluiliilgal people, Badu Island artist Naseli Tamwoy.

Census data supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mums and bubs program to expand across South East Queensland

The Institute of Urban Indigenous Health uses Census data to inform expansion of its successful 'Birthing in our Communities' program. The program provides holistic support to more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mums in South East Queensland.

This includes transportation to appointments, social and emotional wellbeing services, and assistance from a personal family support worker.

The Institute used Census population data to identify where there was growing need to support new mums in Brisbane's northern suburbs. It was able to partner with a private practice to expand the program.

Since its inception in 2013 with two clinics, the Birthing in our Communities program has grown to 25 clinics across South East Queensland. Pre-term births have reduced by 50% through the program.

Torres Strait Islander mum of three, Mackapilly Sebasio, has been involved with the program since her first bub.

"I started using the service when I was pregnant with first bub. She was 7 weeks premature, my second was 3 weeks premature and my last bub was 3 days overdue," said Mackapilly.

"The guidance and comfort that the program provided was so helpful and removed much of the stress."

Courtney Conlon runs the Salisbury clinic and says providing a culturally safe environment for mums is key, with the focus on people understanding the community and culture.

"All of our family support workers are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and roughly 82% of our program staff identity as Indigenous," said Courtney.

"From the time mums first enter they program they feel safe. The service is here whenever mums need us, and we support them from conception to up to two years after bub is born."

The program also hosts a weekly community day. It's a chance for mums, their family, and their community support network to come together to celebrate the family unit and learn from visiting specialists like dieticians and psychologists.

Mackapilly said it's been a great opportunity to learn and be part of a community of mums and bubs.

"I am so grateful for playgroup and community days. It was been useful to connect with other mums and share advice. We feel like we are at home, like we are a family," Mackapilly said.

Mackapilly would love to see this program expand to other areas and communities to help more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mums and bubs.

"Now that I know Census data has helped to create and expand the Birthing in our Communities program, I'll be telling other mums to make sure they fill out the Census because I can see how it can help show what community services are needed," said Mackapilly.

Other important dates on the calendar provide opportunities for mums and families to come together. The Birthing in our Communities program is getting ready to host a Covid-safe celebration and playgroup for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day on 4 August.

Census field staff will be in remote communities during July and August to help people complete their Census form. Information to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is available at www.census.abs.gov.au/indigenous or by phone on 1800 512 441.