

MEDIA RELEASE

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Attention: Editor



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE EMBARGO Date:

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service Receives Sorry Statement

In the spirit of National Reconciliation Week, Bairnsdale Regional Health Service (BRHS) has formally accepted an Apology Manuscript on behalf of the indigenous community of East Gippsland.

Jason King, CEO of Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative (GEGAC) presented the official document to BRHS Board President, Philippa deVoil at a barbecue luncheon for staff and guests of both organisations.

Mrs deVoil spoke to the audience about the importance of reconciliation, "National Reconciliation Week is an ideal time for everyone to join the reconciliation conversation and to think about how we can help turn around the disadvantages experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

The Apology Manuscript is a transcript of the speech given by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in February 2008 which apologises for the policies of past governments in the treatment of indigenous Australians.

BRHS has launched a number of initiatives in recent years to aid reconciliation and to help close the life expectancy gap between the wider community and indigenous Australians. These initiatives include a memorandum of understanding between BRHS and GEGAC; outreach healthcare services including physiotherapy and podiatry; organisation wide cultural awareness training; traineeships for the indigenous community and a joint submission with GEGAC for Commonwealth funding for Chronic Disease Management.

Jason King, CEO at GEGAC encouraged staff of BRHS to play an active role in reconciliation within the community, "The theme for 2009 National Reconciliation Week is 'see the person, not the stereotype'. We encourage everyone to participate in the NAIDOC reconciliation march on 15th July through the Bairnsdale Main Street, to show your support for a united community."

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Photo captions: Staff and guests of BRHS and GEGAC display the Apology Manuscript presented to BRHS Board President, Philippa deVoil by GEGAC CEO Jason King.