

Nutrition issues in urban areas—making healthy choices easy choices for Indigenous people in south-western Sydney

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As identified in NATSINSAP, limited statistics available indicate that the health outcomes for urban Indigenous people are as poor as their rural and remote counterparts. The Aboriginal Chronic Care Program (ACCP), coordinated by Sydney South West Area Health Service, aims to reduce chronic disease in Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people in the urban area south-west of Sydney. A multidisciplinary team of two Aboriginal health workers, diabetes nurse practitioner, primary health nurse and dietitian at Miller Community Health Centre run the program. The dietitian's role is to increase the awareness of the importance of healthy eating and lifestyle choices. The risk of chronic disease is lowered, as healthy choices become easy choices in urban areas. Both individual and group education sessions are used and include healthy cooking classes to improve cooking skills and food choices through practical application. Client progress towards lifestyle changes and healthy choice goals are monitored through dietary assessments, anthropometric measurements and continual review. Evaluation revealed increased awareness of better food choices when shopping and cooking, and healthier cooking techniques. Improved clinical outcomes such as weight reduction, improved glycaemic control and improved blood pressure were noted. Hence, through a combination of team and community involvement, Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people have been able to make positive changes towards healthy eating and lifestyle.