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## MEDIA RELEASE

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# SIGNATORY CEREMONY FOR DELKAIA ABORIGINAL BEST START

A special ceremony was held last week at Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative.

The purpose of the ceremony was to re-sign the Delkaia **Aboriginal Best Start** Project Partnership Agreement, following an extension of funding by the Victorian State Government.

The Delkaia **Aboriginal Best Start Project** is a partnership between Wimmera Health Care Group, Horsham Rural City Council, Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Wimmera Primary Care Partnership, Horsham North Primary School, Wimmera Uniting Care, Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative, Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative, Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Delkaia Indigenous Reference Group, Department of Human Services and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The project's aims are to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from conception to eight years through prevention and early intervention initiatives.

The ceremony started with a formal Welcome to Country read by Aunty Irene Harrison and an opening address by Mr Chris Scott, Wimmera Health Care Group's Chief Executive of Wimmera Health Care Group.

Mr Scott said that the ceremony was a significant occasion, bringing all partners together to confirm their commitment to improving opportunities for Aboriginal children.

"We must all work together, if we are going to create change and ensure that we maximise the benefits given to us to achieve this as a whole community. The strength of the Delkaia **Aboriginal Best Start** Partnership has proven to be the cornerstone of the Delkaia Project's success and achievements" he said.

Mr Scott said that the agreement further demonstrates the confidence the Government has in the partnership's ability to achieve the aims of the program.

Miss Georgia Bamblett, Project Officer for the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd, reinforced Mr Scott's comments by stating that the partnership is looked upon as a leader for other Aboriginal Best Start Projects across Victoria.

Mr Scott said that the partnership group meets regularly and is the decision body making for the project. "Each member brings skills, knowledge and drive to the partnership, whose primary function is to approve, monitor and progress the project's action plan" he said.

Achievements of the Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start Project have included: 'The Welcome Baby to Country Ceremony' which has gained state-wide recognition through an Early Years Award, the successful 'Gap Gap Dyrir Family Camp', community engagement with the changing themes of the 'Delkaia Family Fun Days' and the launch of the 'Teeth for Keeps Poster' and 'Indigenous Child Record Insert'.

Facilitator, Ms Nola Illin said that the project had evolved over time. "We are now seeing more collaborative initiatives and partnerships with community organisations such as the Horsham North Kindergarten Association, Horsham Aquatic Centre, Sports Assembly Networks, dental services, libraries, Maternal and Child Health, family support programs, playgroups and parenting support, and the amalgamation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood sector previously located with Department of Human Services" she said.

Ms Illin thanked Aboriginal families in the Horsham, Dimboola and Halls Gap areas for contributing and sharing their input relating to project activities and community consultations.

"Without their valuable input, we wouldn't be meeting the needs of our community. We should feel proud of our achievements in working together and continuing the Delkaia journey" she said.

**MEDIA CONTACTS:** Sue Frankham  
Community and Private Patient Liaison Officer  
Ph. 5381 9309

Nola Illin  
Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start Project Facilitator  
Ph. 5381 9351