

GLCH part of nationwide trial

Gippsland Lakes Community Health (GLCH) will trial a new tool to assess the health, wellbeing and needs of vulnerable children.

It is one of four locations across Australia to be part of the trial.

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin and the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services, Julie Collins, recently announced the sites and community organisations that would participate in the trial project.

GLCH chief executive officer, Sue Medson OAM said GLCH was excited to be part of the four sites trialling the Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support.

"The range of services that GLCH provides to families means that we can apply the tool across disciplines and give real assistance to families who are having difficulties," Ms Medson said.

"The trial will run for 12 months providing practical resources and prevention tools and we

will be contributing directly to the further development of tools and resources."

The three other community organisations to take part are: Northern Connections in Elizabeth (SA); Interrelate Family Centre in Lismore (NSW); and the Rockingham Kwinana Division of General Practice in Kwinana (WA).

The common assessment tool helps to guide practitioners determine the needs of families and children.

Practitioners will look at the child's and family's relationship, safety, health, wellbeing, learning and development needs. This approach ensures that the right referrals are made and appropriate support is provided.

Families and children will benefit from more targeted support as the tool will bring a common understanding among professionals including doctors, nurses, teachers and childcare workers, about how to identify children who need addi-

tional support.

This tool will make it make it easier for practitioners to identify and respond early to the needs of families and children.

In February this year, the Government announced that \$1.1 million would be provided to the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) to trial the new tool. The sites were recommended by ARACY.

The pilot project follows a recommendation of the Common Approach to Assessment Referral and Support Taskforce, which brought together Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, non-government organisations and expert practitioners to develop a common approach to identifying and responding to the needs of children at risk.

This trial is being conducted as part of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020.