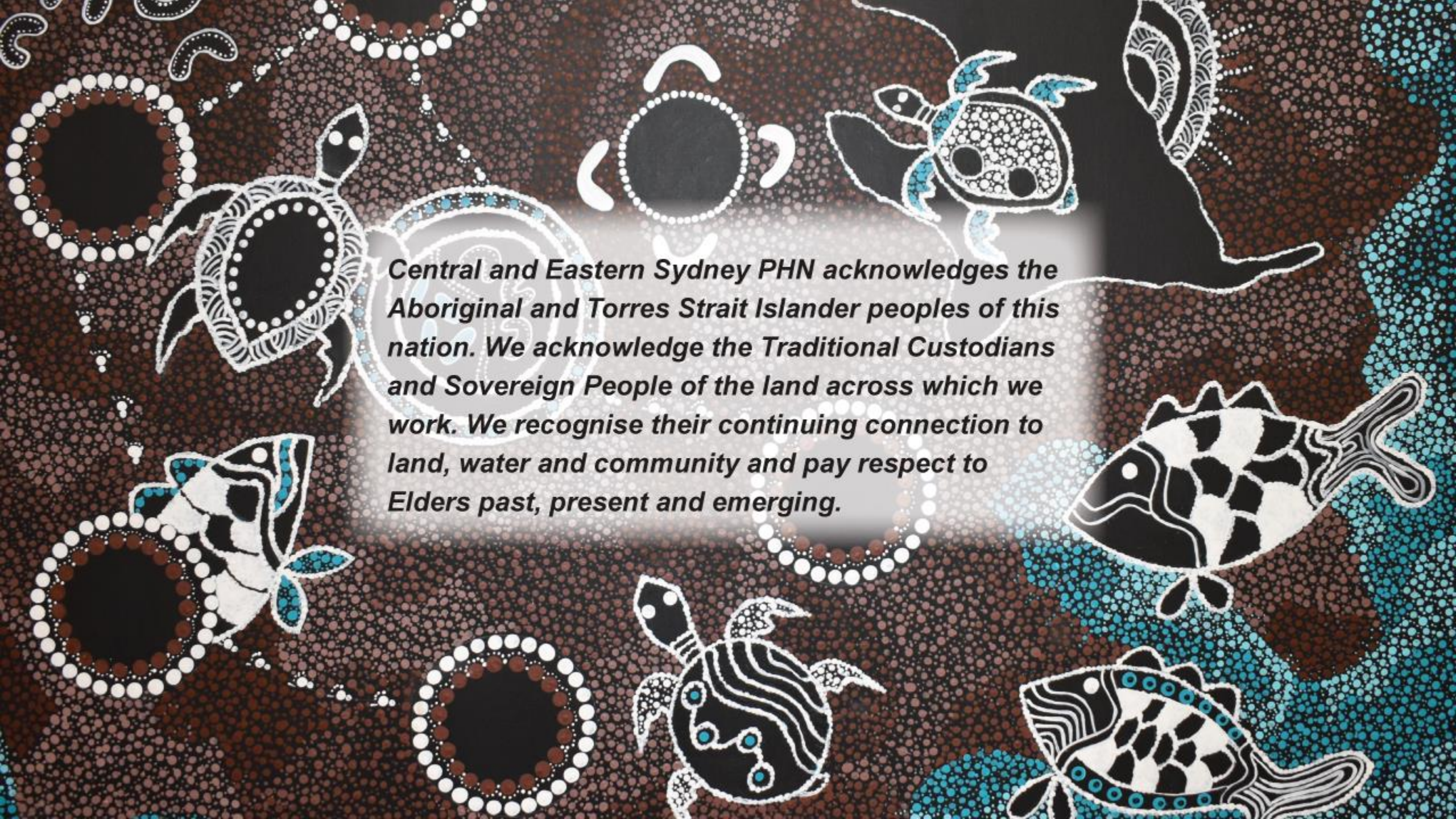


# Early Intervention Speech Pathology Program

*Commissioning with Partners*

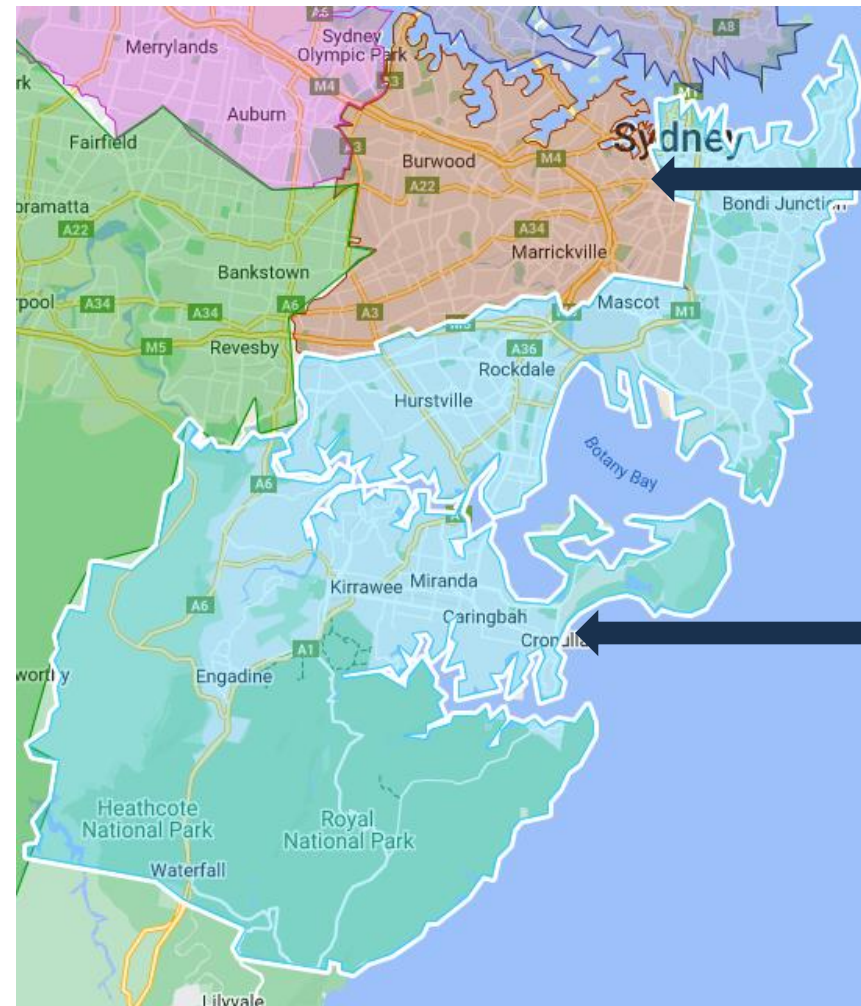
Kylie Sommerville



*Central and Eastern Sydney PHN acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and Sovereign People of the land across which we work. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.*

# Central and Eastern Sydney PHN

- CESPHN is the second largest of the 31 PHNs, by population with over 1.6 million residents.
- The regions population is culturally diverse, with an estimated 16,225 people (1.05% of total population) identifying as Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander, and 41% of residents born outside Australia.
- Socioeconomic inequalities exist between and within suburbs, contributing to inequitable access to services.
- Factors contributing to this inequity include income, speaking a principal language other than English, and pockets of intergenerational disadvantage, especially for young children



**SLHD region**

**SESLHD region**

# The challenge..

- A service gap was identified for vulnerable children in our region who could benefit from early intervention to detect and manage developmental and communication challenges
- Approximately 20% of children starting school in Australia have a speech, language or communication impairment.
- Prevalence of language and communication impairment in young children is known to be much higher in socially disadvantaged populations.
- Challenges in speech and language development can result in significant issues with school readiness and on life factors into adulthood.

# Early Intervention Speech Pathology Program

- Developed in partnership between CESP HN and SLHD in 2017
- Following its success, CESP HN then commissioned SESLHD and SCHN in 2018
- Program provides screening and intervention to vulnerable children aged 0-6 years to identify speech, language, and communication difficulties.
- Targets suburbs with a higher proportion of children with speech, language, and communication challenges
- The service delivered by SCHN is specifically targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

# Program structure

## Capacity building

Formal and informal capacity building sessions for early childhood education staff.



## Outreach screening

Teams visit early childhood education centres to screen children for communication challenges at least once per year.



## Assessment and therapy

Individual and group therapy interventions for children identified as requiring support.

# The impact



**12,000+ children** screened through the program between July 2017 and July 2023.



**Assessments offered to 100%** of children identified as being at 'moderate' or 'high' risk of communication difficulties



**5000+ speech therapy sessions** delivered to children who would not have received them otherwise.



The program has led to research articles and conference presentations, and development of the WE CARE screening tool, adapted for First Nations families.

# Health outcomes



**Early identification of children** with communication and/or developmental challenges.



**Improved diagnostic and** therapeutic supports for children from priority population groups.



**Improved parental understanding** of communication supports and children's needs.



**Upskilling of staff** from participating early childhood education centres.



# Key learnings

## Service Delivery

- Benefits of screening and early intervention
- Value of community based allied health interventions
- Importance of early childhood staff upskilling



## Commissioning

- Challenge - increase scalability and achieve value for money
- Longer-term contracts to enhance service planning
- Sustaining long term partnerships



Thank you