

PARISH COMMUNITY NURSING is active within the Pacific communities

“How wonderful it is, how pleasant, for God’s people to live together in harmony. That is where the Lord has promised his blessings...Life that never ends’ Psalm 133:1,3

Parish Community Nurses have been employed to work within the Pacific Communities of Auckland within what is known as Healthy Village Action Zones (HVAZ). HVAZ is the concept of building healthy Pacific communities with access to quality health care. HVAZ is about community led development, which is owned by Pacific communities, and looks after the physical, social and spiritual needs of Pacific peoples.

On the 29th October the HVAZ project was officially launched by the Ministry of Health the Hon. Pete Hodgson at the Ellerslie Convention Centre. Leaders of the Pacific Communities and representatives from the Auckland District Health Board were also present.

The Pacific churches participating in HVAZ are supported by Pacific Health providers, to set up health committees, and to play a larger role in improving the health and wellbeing of their parish congregations and their families.

This is a strengths-based **community led development** approach, grounded in the fabric of Pacific communities, and will be an important tool in tackling inequalities in health.

The health committees set their own direction, and enable the parish community to take ownership of health needs and develop services in response to those needs. **Auckland District Health Board’s has embraced the concept and their role is as an enabler; building the foundations**, infrastructure and mechanisms for delivery.

HVAZ builds on the learning’s from international models of parish nursing, originally developed in the United States; church-based health information programmes delivered in Auckland in the 1990’s; and local parish community nursing initiatives that were piloted in Glen Innes and Newton in 2002 and 2003.

Through HVAZ, an initial seven geographic action zones have been set up in Avondale, Mt Roskill/Mt Albert, Grey Lynn/Ponsonby, Otahuhu, Onehunga, Glen Innes, and Panmure. These are all areas with high numbers of Pacific peoples, and with strong networks of Pacific churches. Each HVAZ houses many different church groups and denominations. These seven zones provide starting points for activity and it is envisaged that more churches will participate in the future.

Four Parish Community Nurses will work with the parish populations and families. The nurses are supported by Pacific health providers and Primary Health Organisations. Each Parish Community Nurse will work in partnership with church health committees to develop and coordinate health plans and health promotion programmes for parishioners across the seven zones.

The parish community nurses will lead or coordinate activities including immunizations, exercise programs, screening programs, mobile nursing services, Well Child checks and health promotion.

HVAZ has already succeeded in building support from 30 church communities that are keen to be part of the programme, and has linked up with a further 12 churches who are part of the Pacific Island Heartbeat programme.

What makes HVAZ unique is its integrated model of working with churches using community action and self-determination to deliver improvements in the health of Pacific families. In the longer term, HVAZ will provide a platform for bringing agencies outside the health sector under the HVAZ umbrella to tackle determinants of health and improve services to Pacific peoples.

This is an ambitious and exciting venture, with the potential to create a new model for community-based service in NZ. For more information on Faith Community Nurse visit www.faithnursing.co.nz or email admin.faithnursing@xtra.co.nz