



# newsletter

*our health, our choice, our way*



10

a night of  
celebration for  
our graduates



6

the AHCSA  
team makes a  
colourful splash



9

national  
conference  
in Brisbane



13

grants program  
for regional and  
rural towns





## message from the **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**Welcome to this edition of the AHCSA newsletter. Since our last issue published in June last year, it has been another very busy period for AHCSA, and we look forward to an equally challenging and rewarding period for the remainder of 2019**

I would firstly like to thank our AHCSA Board Members for their continued commitment and guidance to our organisation, and our staff for their commitment to their roles and the support they provide to our Members. I would also like to acknowledge our Members and key stakeholders as we continue in our shared goal of improving Aboriginal health outcomes.

Over the last twelve months, the AHCSA Board and staff have been developing our Strategic Direction for 2019-2024. I would like to thank the Board for their commitment and contribution to this important document, which will guide the work of AHCSA over the next five years. I would also like to thank all of those who attended our Strategic Direction launch on 7 March and shared in this special event. Please refer to AHCSA's website for a copy or our Strategic Direction resource.

We look forward to working with our Members on implementing new initiatives as part of our Strategic Direction and sharing the outcomes of these initiatives in future editions of our Newsletter.

In December 2018, we celebrated the graduation of over 50 AHCSA RTO students over a range of qualifications and this was coupled with an AHCSA Health Awards ceremony. Both the students and the health award winners should be very proud of their achievements and the contribution they have already made and will continue to make towards Aboriginal health.

AHCSA continues to forge strong partnerships with our funders and key stakeholders. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the Wardliparingga Aboriginal Research Unit from the SA Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), Cancer Council SA, Drug and Alcohol Services SA, the Heart Foundation, the South Australian Council of Social Services (SACOSS), Health Consumers Alliance, Rural Doctors Workforce Agency (RDWA), GPEx, Baptist Care SA, UniSA, University of Adelaide, Flinders University, and Adelaide and Country Primary Health Networks.

Our research programs and partnerships have expanded in recent years and it is pleasing that Aboriginal research is being driven, owned and lead by Aboriginal researchers and the Aboriginal Community, for the benefit of the Aboriginal Community.

The AHCSA Board and staff representatives sit on a number of State and National Committees to provide guidance and advice on key issues impacting Aboriginal health and we will continue to lobby Government and raise awareness of critical health program needs and gaps in services to Aboriginal Communities.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your interest in our newsletter and hope you enjoy the many and varied articles contained within this edition. AHCSA values any feedback regarding our publications, either through our website or by contacting AHCSA via the details on the back page of the newsletter.

**Shane Mohor**  
Chief Executive Officer

## a new web safety app

# YOUR ONLINE JOURNEY

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians will now have access to an innovative new digital tool to support them in improving their digital literacy and protecting their online safety**

The app, launched recently by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, is funded by the Coalition Government through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and is specifically designed for use in remote Aboriginal Communities.

'Remote Communities are increasingly using online services as a way of connecting with friends and family across Country and to support access to services. While there are many benefits to online connectivity, it's critically important that people are aware of the risks and know how to protect themselves online,' Minister Scullion said.

'On Safer Internet Day (5 February), I am pleased to announce the launch of the Your Online Journey app, created in partnership with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Indigenous Communities and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant.' He added that we are increasingly 'living in two worlds – Community and a digital world. So much of our everyday activities are online or require the use of technology in one form or another.'

He added that we are increasingly 'living in two worlds – community and a digital world. So much of our everyday activities are online or require the use of technology in one form or another.'

'We are supporting Indigenous Australians in remote Communities to build digital capacity and confidence online. The app will help people to safely access the opportunities the digital world provides, be it connecting with family, study, research, online shopping, banking or job seeking.'

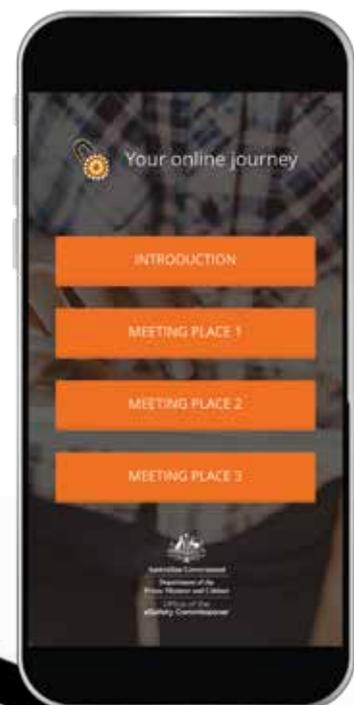
'The app shares how to safely use social media, manage your online footprint and how best to deal in the instance of online bullying. I'm pleased that early feedback from Communities has been really positive about what this app will mean for them.'

eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant, praised the benefits of the new app, saying that: 'We have worked in partnership with Indigenous Communities of Koonibba and Yalata in SA and Hay in NSW, to develop this app as a fantastic tool to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.'

'Your Online Journey helps address the digital literacy and safety needs of remote Indigenous Communities by providing straightforward and easy to understand information, including the fundamentals of using mobile devices and social media safely,' she added.

The investment builds on the Government's \$3.6 million investment in new Community internet access in over 70 remote Indigenous Communities. This is in addition to more than \$3 million a year for ongoing Community-based internet and telephone services in remote Indigenous Communities.

The app is free to download and is available now from app platforms the Mac App Store and Google Play and will be available on a number of other sites including <https://www.indigenous.gov.au> and <https://esafety.gov.au>





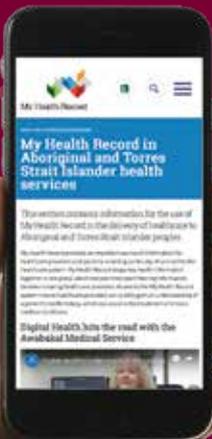
## What My Health Record means for you

The My Health Record system has been designed to provide health services with better access to healthcare information to support them in caring for their clients. Every Australian will have a My Health Record unless they chose not to have one and 'opted out' between 16 July 2018 and 31 January 2019.

Through the My Health Record system, registered healthcare providers will be able to access timely and important healthcare information about their clients in real time. This access to information includes shared health summaries, discharge summaries, prescription and dispensing records, pathology reports and diagnostic imaging reports.

The Australian Digital Health Agency has partnered with AHCSA to ensure that all ACCHSs in South Australia are aware of and ready for the commencement of the expansion of the national My Health Record system. AHCSA's Digital Health Coordinator, Carly Clyant, has been supporting and working closely with the ACCHSs across the state and the Australian Digital Health Agency on a range of digital health initiatives, including the My Health Record Expansion Program.

For more information on the online health service, email Carly Clyant on [Carly.Clyant@ahcsa.org.au](mailto:Carly.Clyant@ahcsa.org.au), or visit [www.myhealthrecord.gov.au](http://www.myhealthrecord.gov.au)



Online tool... New resource created to support those dealing with grief and loss.

## RISING TO SUPPORT AND EDUCATE the Community through bereavement

**The Grief and Loss, Help for Aboriginal People Going Through Grief booklet and the Rising Spirit Grief and Loss Website were key recommendations of the Rising Spirits Community Resilience Project, a partnership between SAHMRI and the University of South Australia, funded by Beyond Blue**

That Rising Spirits Project ended in 2015, and since then, AHCSA has maintained the website and worked to advocate and implement the recommendations from the project in a challenging funding environment.

For this reason, AHCSA is grateful for the investment of support and contribution from The Healing Foundation. Their financial support has assisted AHCSA to recently update and reprint the booklet.

This resource is intended to help our Community to deal with grief and loss, as well as provide support to service providers working alongside individuals and Communities impacted by grief and loss.

The booklet works through the stages of grief, explaining how grief may feel, physical feelings, common behaviours and ways to cope with and heal grief. Most importantly, it advises when and where to get help.

As part of the project's commitment to giving back to the Community, AHCSA has ensured that the needs of children and young people have been included in the booklet as well as

providing valuable input regarding how to help a family Member, friend or client through grief.

AHCSA, its partners and supporters have continued to recognise the experiences of grief and loss for Aboriginal people, and in response to that, provide much needed information and help by offering the booklet and website as a free resource.

To date, the booklet has been distributed across the state at various Community events, programs and activities and has been placed in health services, prison sites, and with Community organisations.

**Get a copy:** The book can be ordered by contacting AHCSA on (08) 8273 7200 and is also accessible via the website: [aboriginalgriefandloss.ahcsa.org.au](http://aboriginalgriefandloss.ahcsa.org.au)

**If you'd like to make a difference:** Individuals or organisations with the capacity to donate towards making this resources available in hard copy, contributions can be made via the AHCSA Website **DONATE** icon, quoting Rising Spirits: [ahcsa.org.au/donate/](http://ahcsa.org.au/donate/)

# Honouring a lifetime OF DEDICATION

**Les Kopinyeri has devoted his life to serving both his Community, and Australia at large through his military career. On the occasion of his retirement, CEO Shane Mohor thanked Les for his input, passion, and commitment to the organisation and the Aboriginal Community before presenting him with the Inaugural AHCSA Honorary Life Membership**

Over the years, Les has proved to be an exceptional leader, a strong advocate for improving Aboriginal health outcomes and has been a highly valued Director on the AHCSA Board.

He has been involved in Aboriginal health through both the Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service, as CEO and Board Director (including PLAHS Chairperson and Treasurer), as well as his long tenure as a Board Director with AHCSA. This period included service in a number of Office Bearer roles, including Chairperson in 2002 and, more recently, Treasurer.

Over the last 18 years, Les has participated in many other roles for AHCSA, including

service as NACCHO Representative for South Australia, Congress Representative, and Member of the AHCSA Enterprise Agreement Committee and on various recruitment panels, to name just a few.

Prior to AHCSA becoming incorporated in 2001, Les was also involved with the Aboriginal Health Organisation, when still under the SA Health Commission Act, which is a testament to his long history with the organisation.

**AHCSA will miss Les greatly and we wish him all the best for a long and happy retirement**



## Women's Winning Approach to Tackling Smoking

Last year the women in the Moorundie Ruwe Miminis (Women's) Group in the Riverland started and regularly attended a quit challenge program, working closely with AHCSA's Tackling Indigenous Smoking Project Officer, Jenaya Hall.

Women participating in the quit challenge program were eager to set a challenge for themselves, as they did not want smokes to negatively impact on their health or the health of others around them. To remain accountable to the group, the women tracked their progress by measuring their carbon monoxide levels using a smokerlyzer on each visit.

In addition to improving their own health, they have passed on the information that they have learnt through the program to family and friends, promoting smoke-free environments and the dangers of second-hand smoke.

Jenaya continued to have regular visits with the women to continue to support them on their smoke free journeys, until the challenge was completed late last year. The women's achievements were praised at a big celebration day to honour their new pathways to live a longer and healthier life.



# TACKLING SMOKING CAMPAIGN BRINGS A SPLASH OF COLOUR

It was a bright and fun morning at Woodward Park in Port Pirie when this colourful inaugural event was held to promote Community health and fitness

The Colour Run/Walk was held late last year to promote Community health through the increase of physical activity and smoking reduction. The Port Pirie Aboriginal Health Service hosted the event in conjunction with the Puyu Blasters, who work continuously with AHCSA's Members and partners to reduce the impact that smoking has on Aboriginal people in our Communities.

Participants in the family fun day signed a pledge to either quit smoking, reduce smoking or to support someone they care about to quit or reduce their smoking habit.

Sonder (the new name for the Northern Health network), the Environmental Health Centre, the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council and the Aboriginal Health Directorate were all in attendance at the

**A great day, full of life, hype and colour, where anyone could be involved, and run around looking like a rainbow**

event to provide valuable information and engage with the Community.

A number of staff from Community Health and UniSA students volunteered on the day to help proceedings run as smoothly as possible for the huge Community turnout.

The event resulted in 152 Community consents, and 101 pledges being signed. It was very rewarding for the organisers to see so many families and Elders out, enjoying the event, particularly since it encouraged physical activity and improved health for the entire Community. A big thank you to everyone who came along to take part.



## Aboriginal Health Practitioner Profession Milestone ACHIEVED

**After extensive planning and a rigorous recruitment campaign Central Adelaide Local Health Network (CALHN) at the Royal Adelaide Hospital has introduced the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner profession**

The introduction of this profession brings to life the Closing the Gap funded, Enhancing in Hospital Care Program supported by SA Health. The introduction of Aboriginal Health Practitioners and Clinical Nurses extends the role of Aboriginal Health Units in CALHN hospitals. It provides more active and comprehensive encouragement and support with co-designed opportunistic screening, clinical continuity of care, case management, referral and follow up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

The six new recruits, Roxanne Sambo, Lisa Hanson, Joe Agius, Brenton Wilson, Natasha Sumner and Waylon Miller will be working in the areas of Emergency, Renal, Cardiology and Cancer. Cancer and Cardiology will additionally be supported by experienced Registered Nurses, Kate Tyrell and Shereen Rankine.

### Purpose of the Program

- Build a new, strengthened Aboriginal Health Unit within CALHN, better able to service the needs of all Units within CALHN and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients using those services.
- Introduce targeted opportunistic screening for all CALHN Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients to improve primary and secondary prevention.
- Build a sustainable Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander workforce in CALHN.

This introduction has enabled the ongoing partnership between AHCSA, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit, CALHN

RAH and Nurse Unit Educators of CALHN to support and expand the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health profession from primary health care settings into the acute hospital sector. This represents a significant milestone and one that has been greatly supported by the Executive of CALHN and AHCSA.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit is located on the third level (ground floor) of the RAH, where staff, patients and their families can engage with the new Aboriginal Health Worker team and learn more about the Aboriginal Health Practitioner roles. For those attending the Emergency, Renal, Cancer or Cardiac Units, please do not hesitate to ask to see one of the new Practitioners.

For further information, email Kerri Reilly at [kerri.reilly@sa.gov.au](mailto:kerri.reilly@sa.gov.au)

*Providing appropriate support... The six new recruits and Registered Nurses from the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit.*





BLOOD BORNE VIRUS PROGRAM

# PRODUCTION WITH A KEY MESSAGE

AHCSA and Hepatitis SA were successful in securing a grant from the Department for Correctional Services to bring to South Australia Ilbijerri Theatre Company's, production **VIRAL – Are you the cure?**



Ally lives up in the flats. Things aren't the best right now but she has big plans. She just wants a better life for her baby. Ally is ready to make a life-changing decision. But does she have the strength to see it through? And is her Community ready to support her?

If life wasn't complicated enough, Ally is being filmed for an explosive new documentary. One thing's for sure. Things are about to go viral.

Ilbijerri is one of Australia's leading theatre companies, creating innovative works by First Nations artists. This is the third play in a series focused on increasing awareness of hepatitis C amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. The tour included a total of six shows at the Youth Training Centre, Yatala Labour Prison, Mobilong Prison, and a performance at Tauondi Aboriginal College.

The shows were attended by 203 people (127 Aboriginal), with the audience invited to participate in a yarning circle at the end of the show. These provided an opportunity for the audience to ask questions about the play, and get more information about hepatitis C.

The play was very well received. Comments from the audience included 'I will pass the information on to my Community', 'I only came for the popcorn and coke, but thought it was amazing and found connection with the characters'. Another person commented, 'it was the first play I have seen and felt goose bumps'. Other feedback included 'it was better than a film', 'killa, deadly, amazing', 'great message from our perspective and humour'.



A number of audience Members shared how they strongly related to the character in the play. There was also lots of discussion and questions around hepatitis C transmission and treatment.

AHCSA and Hepatitis SA are hoping to secure further funding to bring Ilbijerri back to South Australia to perform more shows.

There is a cure for hepatitis C. For more information contact your local Aboriginal health service or call the Hepatitis SA Helpline on 1800 427 222.





*Knowledge is power... (l-r) Gabbie Zizzo, Jessie Motlik, Anna Dawson, Robert Dann, Karrina Demasi, Sally Fitzpatrick and Alex Zurawski.*

#### YARNING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WORKFORCE PROJECT

# Understanding Stress and Staying Strong

AHCSA is currently working on this Project, which is funded by the Lowitja Institute, and preliminary findings were presented at the National Conference on Indigenous Health Workforce Leadership in November 2018

The mixed research method project includes an in-depth qualitative study to understand how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (A&TSI) workforce overcome challenges and stay strong. Expert roundtable discussions to interpret findings and generate a series of recommendations for policy makers, managers and workforce will follow.

### Purpose of the Study

The ultimate objective is to effectively contribute to the overall advancement of the A&TSI workforce by influencing national workforce policy and systems, strengthening the capacity of that workforce.

### Project Team

Led by Project Coordinator, Robert Dann, the team includes Dr Anna Dawson from the Wardliparingga Aboriginal Research Unit, SAHMRI, and Dr Gabriella Zizzo.

The investigative team is led by AHCSA's Deputy CEO, Amanda Mitchell along with CEO, Shane Mohor, accompanied by Prof Alex Brown, Dr Odette Pearson, Dr Natasha Howard and Kim Morey.

The project is strengthened by a National Aboriginal Governance Panel featuring prominent A&TSI workforce leaders who guide the project team and contribute to the interpretation of findings.

### A Gathering of Stories

The team travelled extensively in 2018 to collect stories from A&TSI workforce representatives across diverse settings, including metropolitan, rural and remote locations. A diversity of experiences from workforce employed in government, Community-controlled and non-government organisations was captured across



multiple sectors, including Human Services, Corrections, and Juvenile Justice, Mental Health, Health and Education. The team are currently analysing data for the development of resources to be disseminated in 2019.

### Preliminary Findings

Preliminary findings were presented at the National Conference, hosted by the University of Queensland's Poche Centre for Indigenous Health in Brisbane. This was an opportunity to discuss early findings, emphasise the strength-based approach and showcase the project's Aboriginal leadership.

The presentation was part of a wider, national conversation about developing our workforce and was well received by the audience of academics, workforce development and engagement experts, health care professionals and national peak bodies.



# Student Graduation CELEBRATING 35 YEARS

At the end of last year, the AHCSA Education, Training and Workforce team were proud to organise and host the Graduation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care students from 2017 and 2018, which coincided with the presentation of the 2018 Health Awards

2018 marked a special year, as it was the 35th Anniversary of the first graduating class of the accredited Aboriginal Health Worker course in South Australia. To honour this significant milestone, AHCSA extended a special invitation to graduates from the first class and we were thrilled that some of the original graduates were able to attend the night of celebrations.

Appreciation for these individuals was heart warming when they received a standing ovation from the 200 guests, recognising their legacy. AHCSA honours the standard they have set and hope to continue to provide the opportunity for future Aboriginal students to continue in their footsteps.

The graduation ceremony was hosted by Gordy Rigney Jnr, an emerging Aboriginal Health Worker from Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service, who did an exceptional job and kept everyone laughing. Guests were entertained throughout the night by DJ Juanita Sumner and the extraordinary Electric Fields.

Over 50 students graduated from the following qualifications or courses:

- HLT30113 Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care
- HLT40113 Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care
- HLT40213 Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice
- Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Care Training Program
- HLTAHW020 Administer Medications

These students have been hard at work over the past two years, most of whom have spent weeks away from home in Adelaide to attend classes and the countless hours back home to complete their work. We congratulate the students for their effort and commitment to their study as well as their dedication to improving health care and outcomes for their Communities.



Continuing in the first graduates' footsteps... The AHCSA class of 2017 and 2018.



## AHCSA 2018 HEALTH AWARD WINNERS

### Doug Turner

Outstanding Leadership Excellence Award – Male

### Glenise Coulthard

Outstanding Leadership Excellence Award – Female

### Joseph Agius

Mary Buckskin Aboriginal Health Worker Award – Male

### Schania Czygan

Mary Buckskin Aboriginal Health Worker Award – Female

### Lexa Weetra

Mary Buckskin Aboriginal Health Worker Award – Female

### John Watson

Aboriginal Health Practitioner Award – Male

### Antoinette Liddell

Aboriginal Health Practitioner Award – Female

### Sonder – Closing the Gap Integrated Team Care Program

Outstanding Health Program/ Project from AHCSA Membership – Metro

### Treasuring LIFE Network

Outstanding Health Program/Project from AHCSA Membership – Regional

### The Yalata Blue House

Outstanding Health Program/ Project from AHCSA Membership – Remote Male

### Well Women's Pamper Day – Tullawon Health Service

Outstanding Health Program/ Project from AHCSA Membership – Remote Female



The evening was a joyous occasion that evoked the true spirit of Aboriginal health, while simultaneously celebrating past, present, and future Aboriginal Health Workers. It reminded all in attendance of the importance of spending time to reflect on the success and achievement of our workforce and Community.

AHCSA would like to thank all of those who contributed to the success of the event, making the night as special as possible for the new graduates, first graduates and special guests.

Congratulations to all of the graduates on their huge achievement and we wish them good luck for the next part of their journey, and a big thank you to the class of 1983 for leading the way.

AHCSA would like to thank the following sponsors who helped make this event possible. We would like to especially acknowledge Rural Doctors Workforce Agency Inc., our Gold Sponsor of the 2018 Aboriginal Health Worker Graduation. Thank you for your support and great working partnership.

### Gold Sponsor

Rural Doctor's Workforce Agency

### Silver Sponsors

Department of Health and Wellbeing

Wallmans Lawyers

University of South Australia

Adelaide City Council



### Bronze Sponsors

Tullawon Health Service

Commonwealth Bank

Northern Adelaide Local Health Network

Flinders University

Rural Health SA

Adelaide PHN

Country PHN

Cancer Council SA

**CEDUNA KOONIBBA ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE**

# Practical ear health training sets an inspired benchmark

**Early in February, Benchmark Training Group delivered the hands on Otitis Media Management Program at the health service**

Seven participants from the clinic were involved in the training day, which was facilitated by Benchmark trainer Leanne McGill, who delivered her presentation whilst showing visuals of the inner ear on a screen.

All of the attendees were able to actively participate in the Program, which included looking into each other's ears with a normal otoscope and a digital otoscope.

They learned that one of the first steps to becoming a skilled Otoscopist is being able to identify the Tympanic Membrane (ear drum) landmarks within the middle ear.

They particularly appreciated the fact that the trainer had a broad knowledge of ear health and staff were excited to learn that not only does Benchmark offer training in ear health but have many other courses including foot care, nutrition and wound care.

**Feedback from the training delivered was very positive and the team at Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service is looking forward to completing their online assessment**

The units of the Otitis Media Management Program delivered were are as follows:

**Assess Ear Health**  
EHHAE001

**Promote, Educate & Manage Ear Health**  
EHHPEH002

**Paediatric Ear Health Assessment**  
EEHPEA004

*A sound message... Trainer, Leanne McGill presents key ear health information to the team at Ceduna.*



## AHCSA HR UPDATE

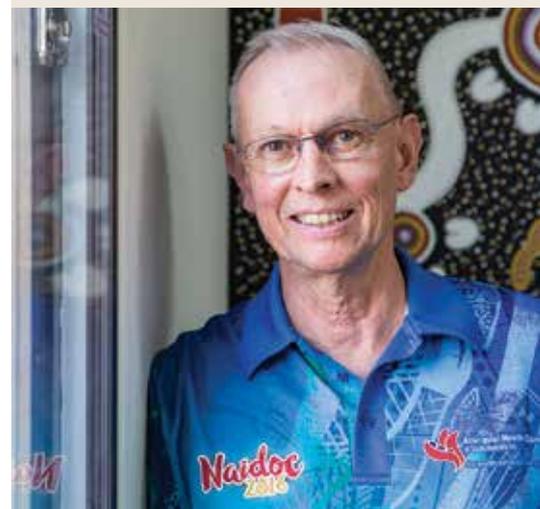
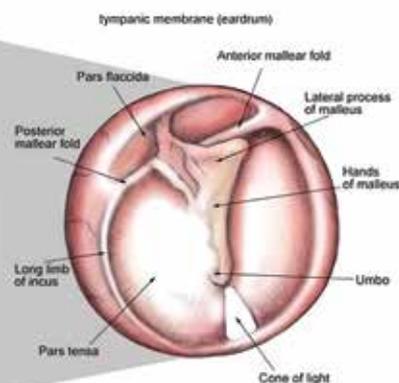
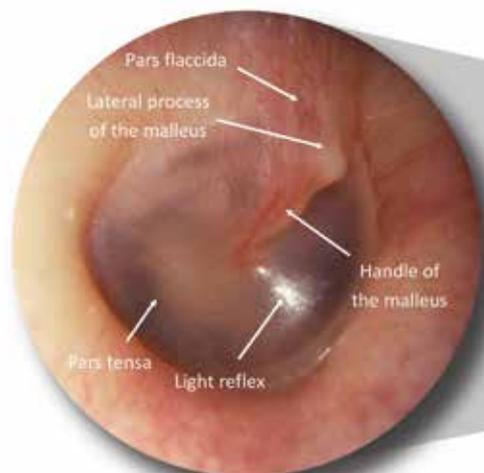
### New PHM Registrar

We welcome Sonali Meena, who has joined AHCSA as a Public Health Medicine Registrar. Sonali will be working closely with David Johnson on research projects as part of her placement with AHCSA. She will also be assisting the Sexual Health team with the Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Program.

### A Fond Farewell

After seven years of commitment and service to the AHCSA family, our Human Resources Officer, Jeff Mountford, decided it was time to retire. His last working day was 16 January and we wish him everything of the best for his next adventure.

Laura Azar, the Human Resources Business Partner who has been job sharing with Jeff since November 2018 on a six-month hand over to help with the transition, has now taken on the Human Resources role full-time.



## SA HEALTH GRANTS PROGRAM

**HEALTHY TOWNS CHALLENGE**

The Healthy Towns Challenge is an SA Health grants program for regional and rural towns to develop preventive health programs within their Community

Each year for four years, grants of up to \$50,000 each are offered to a minimum of five towns. Ngara Keeler, Tackling Indigenous Smoking Programme Coordinator at AHCSA, was one of the six members of the Grant Assessment Panel, which assessed all 42 applications received in Round 1, in which the following winners were selected:

**Fregon Anangu School, APY Lands****Project: Bikes Palya Healthy Lifestyle Program**

The project is based on special visits by youth program, Bikes Palya, to address critical health and wellbeing issues contributing to obesity and diabetes. They proposed that visits be spread evenly across eight APY Communities, including schools. Activities will be based around the promotion of cycling, including the preparation of bike track facilities, as well as healthy eating and nutrition messages.

**The Community Co-operative Store, Barossa****Project: Rural Environments and Cardiovascular Health (REACH)**

This project will target rural adults identified as having a high risk of developing cardiovascular disease. The project aims to increase rural people's motivation and capacity to be active and eat healthily within a supportive Community context.

**Wakefield Regional Council****Project: Lettuce Grow – Balaklava Community Garden**

This initiative involves the production of a Community garden with complementary programs, which include weekly Green Gym and nutrition workshops. It will include a propagation shade house, and engage people in their Community to contribute to positive physical and mental health and wellbeing.



Photos courtesy Bicycle SA

**Uniting Country SA, Port Pirie****Project: FoodHub Health and Wellbeing**

This aims to address people's general health and wellbeing with a focus on diabetes, obesity and lead absorption. Activities at the Port Pirie FoodHub will promote healthy eating, disease prevention and minimising lead absorption.

**Dunjiba Community Council****Project: Oodnadatta Community Bike Program**

Their project addresses health issues by the gifting of bikes to build a Community-owned fleet; upgrading of the bike track riding facility; the introduction of a cycling club and regular riding events; skills training in track construction; and bike maintenance workshops.

**Wudinna District Council****Project: Shared Pathways to Better Health**

Their project aims to enhance and develop shared walking paths in the Wudinna district to promote regular exercise, special events and social interaction.

Round 2 of the Challenge has commenced, and further information is online: [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/SAHealthyTowns](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/SAHealthyTowns)

Applications close on 15 April 2019. Aboriginal Communities are encouraged to apply



# A Scholarship Program with Community Vision

**Sarah Davey was recently awarded \$10,000 through the RDWA Health Workforce Scholarship Program to undertake a Graduate Diploma in Nursing (Diabetes Management and Education) from Flinders University, while continuing her work as a Nurse in the Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service**

Sarah is one of twelve health professionals working in Aboriginal health in rural South Australia who were supported through the Health Workforce Scholarship Program over the past twelve months. Scholarships and bursaries have also been awarded to people working in Aboriginal health in the APY Lands, Coober Pedy, Mount Gambier and Yalata to increase their skills, capacity and scope of practice in their chosen field.

As an Aboriginal clinician, Sarah recognises the over representation of Aboriginal people living with diabetes, who have a higher incidence of gestational diabetes, and are more likely to experience adverse outcomes due to poor diabetes management. This course will increase her skills in diabetes management and education. She is working towards becoming a Credentialed Diabetes Educator and hopes to further her studies with a Master of Nursing to become a Nurse Practitioner.

The Scholarship Program is open to any health professional working in a non-Government role, providing services in Aboriginal health to rural and remote Communities and provides funding for course costs, travel and accommodation.

Activities eligible for funding support include post-graduate formal education, short courses and conferences. Applicants are required to describe how the activity will benefit the health and wellbeing of their Community.

To find out more about how the Health Workforce Scholarship Program can support your professional development, contact the RDWA on 8234-8277 or go online to: [www.ruraldoc.com.au/health-workforce-scholarship-program](http://www.ruraldoc.com.au/health-workforce-scholarship-program).

*Scholarship recipient... Study and hard work pays off for Sarah.*



## The RTO's Cultural Advisory Team

The pivotal role of AHCSA's RTO Cultural Advisory team (CAT) is to ensure appropriate cultural consideration with regards to training development and delivery.

The CAT is made up of Aboriginal staff from across the organisation, who bring a wide range of skills, experience and knowledge to the group.

The CAT has continued its involvement in the development and delivery of training services at AHCSA over this period and is currently working on some exciting projects within the RTO.

Following feedback received from the Community Controlled workforce, the CAT structure was reviewed in mid-2018 to reallocate the responsibility of coordination of the team to an Aboriginal staff Member within AHCSA's Education Training and Workforce team. This shift is intended to ensure Aboriginal direction and governance of the Cultural Advisory team to enable the best outcomes for AHCSA students and stakeholders.

# AHCSA's RTO Inspires a PASSION FOR LEARNING

A number of new staff Members have been welcomed to AHCSA's Education, Training and Workforce (ETW) team over the last few months

There are now six staff Members in total working to provide high-quality training programs and workforce support and development within the Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

## **Christine Fraser**

*Senior Clinical Educator*

With the team for six years and is responsible for the delivery of training and assessment in Primary Health Care courses. In her more senior role, Christine provides support and guidance in education and training.

## **James Bisset**

*Educator*

Since April 2018, James works alongside Christine in the delivery of training and assessment activities for Primary Health Care classes. He has previously worked with the RTO as a guest speaker in his education role at Drug and Alcohol Services SA.

## **Annabella Marshall**

*Clinical Educator*

Since late 2018, works with Christine in the delivery of clinical training and assessment activities in Primary Health Care courses.

## **Dominic Guerrera**

*Educator Assistant*

Transferred in July 2018 from his previous role as Researcher. He has extensive experience in adult education and is celebrating 15 years of work in Aboriginal health, since his career started at Nunkuwarrin Yunti of SA in 2004.

## **Annie-Rose Thurnwald**

*Team Leader*

She has been with the team for over six years and is responsible for maintaining compliance, continuous quality improvement and the day-to-day operations of the RTO.

## **Hannah Keain**

*Junior Project Officer*

She joined the team in June 2018 transferring from her previous position as Receptionist. Hannah has a passion for improving outcomes in Aboriginal health and has proved to be a great asset to the team.

In addition to these Members of the ETW team, the RTO receives significant support from other program staff across the organisation:

## **Chris Reksinis**

*Eye Health Project Officer*

## **Robyn Cooper**

*Trachoma Elimination Project Officer*

## **Michael Larkin**

*Blood Borne Virus Project Officer*

## **Mary-Anne Williams**

*Tackling Smoking Maternal Health Project Officer*

## **Sarah Betts**

*Sexual Health Program Coordinator*

## **Catherine Carroll**

*Sexual Health Program Clinical Support*

## **Leanne Quirino**

*Ear Health Project Officer*

## Special thanks to INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Educators also seek support from industry specialists to provide current information to students in a range of health areas:

**Jen Cottrell**, Rheumatic Heart Disease Control Program, SA Health

**Samantha Wilke**, Coordinator Rheumatic Heart Disease Control Program, Communicable Disease Control Branch

**Sabine Drilling**, Cardiovascular Health Project Officer, Heart Foundation

**Jenny Grant**, Hepatitis SA

**Claire Oliver** NDSS Project Officer (Dietician) and **Jaclyn McCarter** NDSS Project Officer (Diabetes Educator), Diabetes SA

**Kidney Health Australia**

**Rob Gerrie** and **Katie Coulthard**, Drug and Alcohol Services SA

**Seth Westhead**, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute



*Inspiring a new generation of students...  
Annie-Rose Thurnwald, James Bisset,  
Christine Fraser and Robert Dann.*

## SHEDDING THE SMOKES PROJECT

# Community Impact

The 'Shedding the Smokes' research project, which explored how a 'men's shed' philosophy would work in two remote Communities in South Australia, reached completion at the end of December, with very positive outcomes

AHCSA gained funding through the Department of Health's TIS Innovation Grants for what was to become 'Shedding the Smokes' and the two Communities selected for the research were Yalata and Coober Pedy. Here, AHCSA collaborated with their local Member services at Tullawon Health Service Inc. and Umoona Tjutagku Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (UTHSAC) respectively.

### The Bigger Picture

Whilst the project was about addressing the high smoking rates in both of these Communities, as is the case many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, the team also knew that there were many other factors that needed to be addressed to support and encourage people to 'give up the smokes'. These factors were physical and mental, as well as environmental.

It was a busy year for Walter Champion, Josh Riessen and Tim Lawrence who collaboratively worked on the project. Walter was based full-time in Yalata, while Josh and Tim travelled on a monthly basis to both Yalata and Coober Pedy from the AHCSA office in Adelaide.

### Visible Results

The enthusiasm shown by the men in both Communities inspired everyone working on the project and the support of both Tullawon and UTHSAC's Drug and Alcohol Service helped the team to continually improve the project. Improvements included bringing people to speak about health and social topics that the local men had indicated an interest in, and these yarning sessions helped them to learn more about the dangers of smoking and the importance of their health. They also realised that smoking not only affected their health, but their family and the Community.

During the year there were presentations from Nathan Rigney (Cancer Council), Trevor Wingard and Grant 'Snowy' Day (AHCSA TIS team), Aaron Ken (AHCSA Sexual Health Educator) and KWY who presented on domestic violence.

At both Communities, regular health checks took place, with the Blue House at Yalata having a GP and a Health Worker spend time in the building for a day, so the men could access services for their health needs in privacy.

### Community Activities

Throughout the past year lifestyle activities included bush trips, BBQs, trips to the beach, hunting days and art and artefact making sessions. Apart from these activities being great fun and helping the men to reconnect with culture, they also provided opportunities for the men to talk about men's issues, including their health, learning about drugs and the reasons for giving up the smokes.

In October, before the weather got too hot, a camp was held at Kingoonya, where about 30 fellas from Coober Pedy and Yalata got together. The Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation, through their Sport and Recreation division came along and transported some of the men. It was a great couple of days spent hunting, cooking, talking about health and most importantly for many of the fellas, reconnecting with family. Many stories about the past were told, passing that knowledge on to the younger men and cultural activities were also shared with family Members.

This trip was supported by Complete Personnel at Yalata, who covered the cost of a bus to transport some of the men, and other contributors included Jimmy Perry (Making Tracks), UTHSAC's Drug and Alcohol team, Trent Wingard, Trevor Wingard and Grant Day from the AHCSA TIS team, Aaron Ken (AHCSA Sexual Health Educator) and Cameron Gear from Tullawon Health Service, who was the bus driver for the trip.

### Next Steps

AHCSA is now in the process of evaluating the project and compiling the reports for the Department of Health, however the Shedding the Smokes project had been running for 18 months, it was evident that Men's Sheds are a really positive influence for remote Communities, and down the track the TIS team hopes to see more of them.





## New Clinical Educator for RTO

With a background in Emergency Nursing, Annabella Marshall joined AHCSA in October as a Clinical Educator in the RTO. She has been a Registered Nurse for many years, working both in SA's larger local tertiary hospitals, rurally, and with the Community.

Annabella is passionate about Indigenous health outcomes, and has embarked on further studies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Administration and Development to help her to make the difference she strives for. She enthusiastically explains that she 'welcomes the challenge of developing a strong, proud and highly skilled workforce and wholeheartedly embraces the education journey for all of (AHCSA's RTO) students.'

After her first four months in the role, Annabella is excited about the direction the RTO is taking with training and education, and she 'looks forward to the increasing scope of practice for Aboriginal Health Practitioners.'

She is also feeling encouraged by the number of young men who have signed up for the Certificate III this year. 'I am so proud of the number of registered Aboriginal Health Practitioners this year,' and she hopes to see many more in the future.

Annabella candidly shares that when she closes her eyes and thinks about her dream job, 'right here at AHCSA is where I want to be and what I want to be doing. It's a great feeling.'

Annabella also expressed her appreciation for the work AHCSA's Members and Stakeholders, do in the Community and that the unwavering dedication they show behind the scene is both powerful and inspirational to her.

To get in touch with Annabella, you can email her at [Annabella.Marshall@ahcsa.org.au](mailto:Annabella.Marshall@ahcsa.org.au)



### SQID CYCLE SUCCESS

# OTOSCOPY RATES

**AHCSA's Quality Systems team have revealed that the Aboriginal health sector has achieved an overall increase of 7.9% in the number of child ear health screenings (otoscopy) undertaken in the second half of last year**

The AHCSA SQID Cycles are a state-based, three-monthly, interactive clinical quality improvement activity that specifically focus on one area of healthcare delivery for SA ACCHSs.

#### How SQID Cycles Work

It involves the collection of de-identified baseline health data, followed by webinar presentations that explore the underpinning processes, procedures, data entry methods etc. associated with the cycle topic. De-identified health data is collected again after three months and compared with the baseline data to assess health service improvement.

#### SQID Cycle 2: Child Ear Health

Between July and December 2018, SQID Cycle 2 focused on improving otoscopy screening rates in Aboriginal children under five years of age. Nine of AHCSA's Member Services participated in this activity.

Throughout the first three online webinars, various aspects of child ear health and otoscopy were explored. Content included best practice screening methods, otoscope

training, Communicare documentation, review, and referral pathways, and linkages to the greater social determinants of health.

Participating Member Services were encouraged to develop a quality improvement plan using the Plan, Do, Study, Act method (PDSA) with regards to how they aim to boost child otoscopy rates within their respective Communities. After six months, data extracted at the beginning of the cycle was compared with follow-up data collected in November 2018 and the results showed an average increase of 7.9%.

The Quality Systems team will be presenting this information at the upcoming AHCSA Ear Health Workshop on the 20 and 21 March. They are keen to further explore the otoscopy screening results from SQID Cycle 2 and the presentation will also provide the opportunity to take advantage of time for reflection and discussion with those in attendance.

**Thanks to all involved in SQID Cycle 2 and congratulations on the improvements that have been achieved in the area of child otoscopy screenings**



## SMOKE-FREE CEDUNA

# Community Event

**At the end of January, Ceduna was a scorching 48.4 degrees, but the Puyu Blasters didn't hold back at the Smoke Free and Drug and Alcohol Free Family Information Session and Activities for the Ceduna Community**

The Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (CKAHSAC), AHCSA's Puyu Blasters Tackling Indigenous Smoking Programme, and the Ceduna Youth Hub hosted the event.

Organisers had planned to hold the event at the Aboriginal Sporting Complex, however due to the extreme heat, it was relocated to the Ceduna Foreshore, overlooking the pristine waters of Murat Bay.

The event started at 10am, and although the heat kept many Members of the Community away, the people who did attend took part in the fun activities and received valuable information provided by the Puyu Blasters and the CKAHSAC teams. A particular focus for both teams was to provide support for those wishing to 'Take the Pledge' and quit smoking.

They also promoted the importance of protecting others from second hand smoke, or passive smoking, by sharing the importance of keeping homes, cars, workplaces, playgrounds and sporting clubs smoke-free.

The younger people who attended were either really interested in thinking about quitting, if they were smokers or were proud of not starting to smoke. These individuals were keen to share the messages about the benefits of quitting and effects of smoking on health and finances, which was encouraging.

The kids played in the shade with paints and bubbles. For added fun and educational value, the Puyu Blaster and CKAHSAC teams turned the 'what's your poison cigarette education resources' into a game, and the children were really good at identifying the poisons in a cigarette.

During the day, the Ceduna Youth Hub provided kayaks for attendees to use out on the water, which was perfect for those wanting to cool off a little. A BBQ lunch was provided under the shade of the trees and marquees that had been set up.



*In good hands... The Puyu Blaster superhero at the Ceduna Family Day.*



## THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL

# MAJOR UPGRADE

**More than \$270 million is being invested in The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (TQEH) which will provide the Western Adelaide Community with access to the best emergency, cardiology, surgical, medical, mental health, outpatient and rehabilitation services in a first-class, modern hospital setting**

The significant investment into the upgrade will include an Aboriginal Health Unit and ensure that the Indigenous Community has access to world-class health services, which will include a new Emergency Department, outpatient clinics, operating theatres and day surgery suite as well as new clinical support services that include medical imaging, pathology, pharmacy, nuclear medicine and rehabilitation services. A new multi-deck car park, with 500 spaces for patients and visitors will complete the refurbishment.

Construction of the patient and visitor car park is currently underway and it is anticipated for completion by mid-2019. Work on the new clinical services building will start later this year. The end of 2022 will see the completion of the contemporary hospital facility.

TQEH redevelopment will include the exploration of a suitable location and design of the Aboriginal Health Unit as part of the broader hospital entrance. The redevelopment will ultimately improve accessibility and quality of health services for consumers in the TQEH

catchment by considering cultural factors, including the recognition and engagement of Kaurna Native Title and Heritage interests. It will address the overall patient journey in service and facility planning to ensure a positive health experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers.

The Central Adelaide Local Health Network TQEH Governance Committee is seeking expressions of interest from the Aboriginal Community to be a part of the Aboriginal Reference Group and AHCSA is currently engaged in this project.

If Member organisations and patients, Community and consumers are interested in the project or would like more information please contact Kerri Reilly, Director of Aboriginal Health and Research Translation by calling 08 70740710 or email her at [Health.TQEHStage3Redevelopment@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.TQEHStage3Redevelopment@sa.gov.au)

*Strong foundations... Artist's impression of the new car park currently under construction.*





# NUNYARA UPDATE

## New Skills and Services Achieve Better Outcomes

**At Nunyara Aboriginal Health Service, their family focus is an important part of their service delivery. Programs are developed, implemented and maintained to encourage the whole family to participate in taking care of their social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing**

With a wider variety of services available for their clients to access over the past year, Nunyara is celebrating an increase in episodes of patient care. This means that more families within the Community are seeing an improvement in their health and general wellbeing.

### Skills and Training

Nunyara is committed to continually updating the skills and knowledge of their staff Members and a number of staff have travelled to Adelaide to complete certified training courses. Aboriginal Health Workers Tineale and Jeremy have been studying Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Primary Health Care transition. With this qualification, they can become Aboriginal Health Practitioners. The course is being done through AHCSA's RTO and both workers have travelled to Adelaide to complete six study blocks over the past year.

In June last year, the Nunyara Tackling Smoking Project Officer Zena Wingfield started a Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Community) through Nunkuwarrin Yunti in Adelaide, and she hopes to finish the course by March 2019. Aboriginal Health Practitioner Robyn Taylor completed a course in Administer Medications, which now allows her to be fully registered with AHPRA.

'At first I found it very challenging, learning the drug calculations, but once I got my head around it, I really enjoyed it,' Robyn said. She also enjoyed meeting other Aboriginal Health Practitioners from other Health Services around SA.

Practice Manager Deb Hanley attended the General Practice Training and Education Conference and Pathways to Preschool Coordinator Jane Baulderstone and Dr Tracey Landon attended an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Health Meeting. This was hosted by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

### Mums and Preschoolers Clinic

The Nunyara Pathways to Preschool (P2P) Clinic, which aims to improve the healthcare of expectant mothers, post-partum mothers and their pre-school children, opened in May last year. Since then, there have been 17 births from Nunyara clients and Dr Tracey and Aboriginal Health Worker Tineale had another 15 pregnant mums under their care by the end of last year.

Dr Tracey Landon is now consulting three days per week from Wednesday to Friday, adding an additional day for women's and children's appointments.

### Specialist Visits

Endocrinologist Dr Chinmay Marathe now consults from Nunyara for two days per month, assisting diabetic clients as well as those with hormone, menopause and thyroid-related issues.

Additionally, due to Community demand, Nunyara have continued to fund Griefologist Rosemary Wanganeen to visit once every five weeks.

Optometrist Ken Chenery has visited once every three months, and Dr Ian Wong and the team of audiologists has also visited a number of times in the past year. Nunyara also continues to offer their monthly 'Multi-D' days with visiting specialists from Whyalla Hospital, as well as the services of their visiting Locum GP, Dr Chris Powell. Doctors need to take care of their health and wellbeing too, so Dr Rick Hambour will be taking six months of annual leave this year.



# a day of education & fun for **THE COMMUNITY**

**During the October school holidays, a great crowd attended Nunyara's annual Community Connection Day**

With perfect weather, visitors were able to enjoy a wide range of fun activities which included a bouncy castle, face painting and entertainment by Nelson's Magic roving clown and magician. Wyn Bring Jida Childcare also had a number of fun activities set up for the younger children, and everyone enjoyed the live music.

Nunyara provided a barbecue, as well as salad rolls for lunch, which was a big hit with the crowd. Importantly, the day was an ideal opportunity for Nunyara to showcase their services.

These included access to the Tackling Indigenous Smoking Programme and the ever popular Puyu Blaster, as well as the new Pathways to Preschool Clinic. Mini health checks were made available to both adults and children.

Those who participated in the health activities were able to enter raffles to win a number of prizes including a flat screen television, a bike and a scooter.



## Vaccination days held to prevent Meningococcal W

**With the support of AHCSA, Nunyara held vaccination days to help protect the Community against Meningococcal disease.**

The days were organised in response to the outbreaks of Meningococcal across South Australia, with the Aboriginal Community being at higher risk of the illness. The day focused on the immunisation of children and young adults from ages 12 months to 19 years.

AHCSA doctors and nurses travelled to Whyalla to administer Meningococcal W (Menveo) vaccinations.

A large scale letter drop was done prior to the event, in an attempt to get as many children as possible to attend. Participants were also offered the chance to win a \$200 Target voucher by being immunised.

Over the two days, about 40 people were vaccinated, and more have responded to the letters since, and have booked appointments to have their immunisations completed.



TREASURING LIFE – ATSI SUICIDE PREVENTION NETWORK UPDATE

# EARLY INTERVENTION

**The My Life Counts Through The Eyes of Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention initiative was held from 5 to 8 February at the Noorla Yo Long Adventure Camp near Millicent in South Australia**

The Treasuring Life – ATSI Suicide Prevention Network develop and implement suicide prevention initiatives with the aim of working towards reducing the shame factor about suicide within the Aboriginal Community. They also strive to encourage help-seeking for the promotion of a healthy, strong and safe Community. Their philosophy is to ‘work with rather than on’ regional ATSI people.

### Positive Outcomes

Following on the success of the Nguldun Palli (strong future) initiative in 2015/16 and the Live Long, Live Strong initiative in 2017/18, the network has again achieved good outcome with their latest one. The My Life Counts Through The Eyes of Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention initiative was recently held at the Noorla Yo Long Adventure Camp.

Coordinated by Peter May, an Aboriginal Primary Health Care Worker at Country Health Connect (Mount Gambier), this initiative was a partnership between Treasuring Life – ATSI Suicide Prevention Network (supported by SA Health) with a grant of \$13,000 and Pangula

Mannamurna Aboriginal Corporation. The initiative was focussed on engaging with the young ATSI population on the Limestone Coast, providing culturally safe and appropriate social and emotional support.

Prior to the roll out of the My Life Counts initiative, this Community had recently been impacted by a young person who had intended to commit suicide. When this young person was given the support they needed, they indicated that supportive activities are needed in the region to keep young people connected, hopeful and safe.

### Invaluable Support

To date, the Treasuring Life – ATSI Suicide Prevention Network has secured more than \$82,000 to plan, implement and evaluate these initiatives and develop projects for the Community. Support from the following partners is greatly appreciated: Pangula Mannamurna Aboriginal Corporation (Rowena Hammond), Lifeline SE (Eve Barratt), StandBy (Tracey Wanganeen), Headspace (Nick McInerney and Kym Galluccio), Life Without Barriers

(Tim Brennan), South East Health Services, SAPOL and the staff at the Noorla Yo Long Adventure Camp (Michael Ringshaw). Without this valuable support and adopting the right approach, the My Life Counts initiative would not have achieved the success it has.

### A Nourishing Vision

Treasuring Life – ATSI Suicide Prevention Network strives for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community that treasures life. The Community needs to actively work together to nourish each other, celebrate our people and our journeys. They aim to change Community views on suicide by reducing shame, encouraging help-seeking, promoting life, and celebrating it.

### Teachings to Value the Past

To achieve this, the Network believes it is vital at Community remembers the past and builds on the strengths of Aboriginal culture. After all, it is the oldest culture in the world. Peter emphasises that the Aboriginal people should be proud of this and reminds the youth that traditional message sticks provide hope, healing and guidance to the Community.

### We all have a Responsibility

Everyone from individuals to families, and organisations to government has a responsibility to prevent suicide by ensuring that people feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings in our society.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 3% of the population. However, their suicide rates are at around 5.5% overall. Non-fatal self-harm is estimated to be 17%, placing this cohort at secondary risk. As a Community, we cannot be complacent and think that we are doing enough. Last year, 165 Indigenous Australians died as a result of suicide despite continued efforts to improve suicide prevention programs. Our young people need to be protected and empowered with opportunities to build resilience and have a greater sense of self pride.





### Connecting with our Youth

Providing the right information to our people to make informed decisions about suicide, the warning signs, the importance of keeping safe and knowing where to turn to seek help is essential.

For this reason, the My Life Counts initiative has a strong focus on connecting with young people, talking about living and about one day being future Elders. Providing this sense of responsibility has been the key to connecting with these young people. Many haven't had the influence of stable Elders in their lives, however, My Life Counts is changing that by empowering young people to see that they can stand tall to live strong and proud.

### Community Building

When the My Life Counts initiative provided the opportunity for these young people to attend the suicide-prevention camp, it gave them a chance to connect and build Community through a sense of belonging. With interactive suicide prevention sessions held during the morning and team building activities in the afternoon, the camp also helped to share and develop new interests.



As many of the young people that participated are not attending school full-time, this aspect was really important. They revealed that they do have interests but feel that the word itself is oppressive.

### Resources and Action Plan

Treasuring Life – ATSI Suicide Prevention Network has secured additional funding to work with Kinship Productions to produce a DVD, which showcases the network's journey since 2015, and the positive outcomes it is achieving. The My Life Count's Through The Eyes of Indigenous Youth initiative forms an integral part of the DVD content, which will be officially launched later in the year, along with the Network's Action Plan 2020-2025.

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Very informative and fun activities.

An interesting and supportive camp that really taught us informative messages, about keeping safe and to always go to someone to talk.

I thought this camp was a good idea and was a good amount of kids.

More is needed to prevent suicide.

This camp was a good thing.

I had my downs and ups but I thought the camp was good and exciting.

I liked the camp because it was a good experience and learnt a lot.

I like this camp because it had everything and learning about suicide.

It was good learning about my indigenous heritage... I think this camp was really good.

It was fun... helped me a lot to control my anger

This camp is a great place and good idea. If I had the chance to come back I would.





## THE STRONG DADS STRONG FUTURES

# DOING IT THEIR WAY

**This project identifies how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men define parenting from their perspectives, with a broader cultural understanding of how males nurture and relate to their children, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren**

For a long time, the realm of parenting has belonged to females. In most cultures, it is the female who has tended to the sick and who has predominantly cared for and raised the children. The result for Aboriginal male parents, is them being largely excluded from contributing to the parenting conversation. This has led to an inadequate distribution of opportunities for dads.

It has also created a societal perception that male Aboriginal parents are disinterested in and/or disengaged from their parental roles and responsibilities. However, findings of the Strong Dads Strong Futures (SDSFs) Project challenge this misconception.

### Approach to the Research

This project has followed an Indigenist approach, which privileges Indigenous lives, knowledge, and voices. The participants' stories have been captured through culturally respectful yarning. The number of services and organisations involved in the SDSFs project highlights the importance of the roles

and responsibilities these men hold within their families and Communities.

Dr Kootsy Canuto, Kurt Towers, Joshua Riessen, Shane Bond, Dudley Ah Chee and Jimmy Perry conducted four focus groups across Coober Pedy, Wahgunyah Conservation Reserve, Port Lincoln and Adelaide. In total, 46 participants contributed their experiences and stories of their roles and responsibilities as parents to this study.

### Need for Education and Support

The SDSFs project has revealed a deficit in educational parental programs and services specifically aimed at Aboriginal males. However, this lack of appropriate education and support services has not stopped the men from wanting to be involved and fulfil their roles and responsibilities as parents.

When given the opportunity to engage with and utilise appropriate parenting and early years services, Aboriginal male parents are very willing to step up to their

roles and responsibilities. However, within these Communities, each of the men had complex barriers to fulfilling these roles and responsibilities. These included a lack of employment opportunities, gender-specific services and spaces for male parents to talk with one another. Although consideration of Aboriginal men's involvement and experiences prior to conception, prenatal and postpartum has slowly improved, there has been little improvement in the overall provision of appropriate parenting support services and programs for these men.

### Culturally Appropriate Resources

A literature review unveiled a lack of rigorously researched and published literature around the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal male parents, and the societal complexities these males face when parenting. SDSFs will now produce a peer-reviewed scoping review and a qualitative results paper, as well as present the findings at national and international conferences.

### A Valuable Opportunity Exists

Addressing the attitudes and beliefs of some maternal and early years services and staff provides an opportunity to create an inclusive space for Aboriginal males at very limited financial cost.

Identifying the men's strengths, and understanding the significance of their roles as parents is an important first step towards supporting their involvement with their children and engagement in early years services and/or programs. Their roles and responsibilities should be considered so important within the parenting domain, that they gain equal access to appropriate support services and programs throughout the parenting life course.

### Research Partners

The Wardliparingga Aboriginal Research Unit at SAHMRI, with support from AHCSA, Aboriginal Health: Northern and Central Adelaide Local Health Network, the Healthy Mothers and Babies Theme (SAHMRI), the Murdoch Children's Research Unit: Healthy Mothers and Babies Theme, University of Adelaide, Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service, Drug and Alcohol Council of South Australia, and Kornar Winmil Yunti (KWY).