

Director's Communiqué

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Director's welcome

Welcome to my second Communiqué for 2019. A number of significant events have occurred in the intervening period since my last Communiqué. In May I flew to the UK to celebrate the marriage of my daughter Amy to a surfer from Cornwall (who knew that surfing was such a big thing in Cornwall! I dipped my toe in the ocean and it emerged with an ice block on it. But that may just be because I have been spoiled by living in the most beautiful country in the world). But perhaps of more significance to most of you was the Federal election. My congratulations to all the successful candidates. In particular my sincere congratulations to Minister, the Hon Ken Wyatt on his elevation to the office of Australia's first Indigenous Minister for Indigenous Australians. Minister, I look forward to continuing to work with you in your challenging and exciting role. I look forward to walking alongside you as you seek positive outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities in Australia. And to all members of parliamentary houses throughout Australia, please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything at all we can do to support you in your work.

Since my return I have been on an extended, extremely enjoyable and informative road trip. I am drafting this introduction from Cairns where I have had the pleasure of accompanying Dr Uncle Mick Adams as he provides feedback to community on the results of his Lowitja Institute funded Valuing Young Aboriginal Men project. Feedback is in the form of a short film that allows participants to speak for themselves about their lived experiences and aspirations and expectations for the future. I have arrived in Cairns via Darwin, where I attended the Lowitja Conference; Broome where we met participants in the young men's project and

other community leaders... and had the pleasure of walking alongside thousands of like-minded people on the Reconciliation Walk; and then on to Brisbane to the AIATSIS Conference.

Both the Lowitja and AIATSIS conferences were inspiring and energising and it was a great privilege to spend time with so many wonderful people. One issue that was centre stage at both conferences was that of data sovereignty and governance. It is clearly, and quite rightly, emerging as a defining issue in the struggle for voice and self determination. And... it issues a challenge to data driven organisations like the HealthInfoNet. One that we accept with enthusiasm and determination. We established a Data Sovereignty page on our resource in 2017 to showcase positive examples of data sovereignty in action but there is much more we need to do. This year we have begun reviewing our Overview to ensure that we rise to the challenge issued by Craig Ritchie in his opening address to the AIATSIS conference delegates to report not only the 'what' but also the 'how' and 'why' in responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health concerns. I have had the opportunity to speak with many of the leading voices in this crucial debate and will continue to seek advice and guidance to find an ethical, professional and culturally responsive pathway forward.

In Broome Uncle Mick and I presented a HealthInfoNet guitar to staff at Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (BRAMS). It is a small contribution to signify our proposal to work with them on a project to explore the role of music and creative expression in health and wellbeing. The guitar was painted by Uncle Mick. As part of the process we met Johnny Pearson and Raphael Hunter, local singer songwriters who used the guitar (pictured)



Johnny and Raphael

to sing a couple of songs for us. One of the songs asked the question: 'Why do they say grown men don't cry' a beautiful evocation of fatherhood. Both songs will soon be available for viewing on our website.

Johnny's: <https://youtu.be/OV67vo3pGTA>
Raphael's: <https://youtu.be/Z2Lzj1j3Tg>

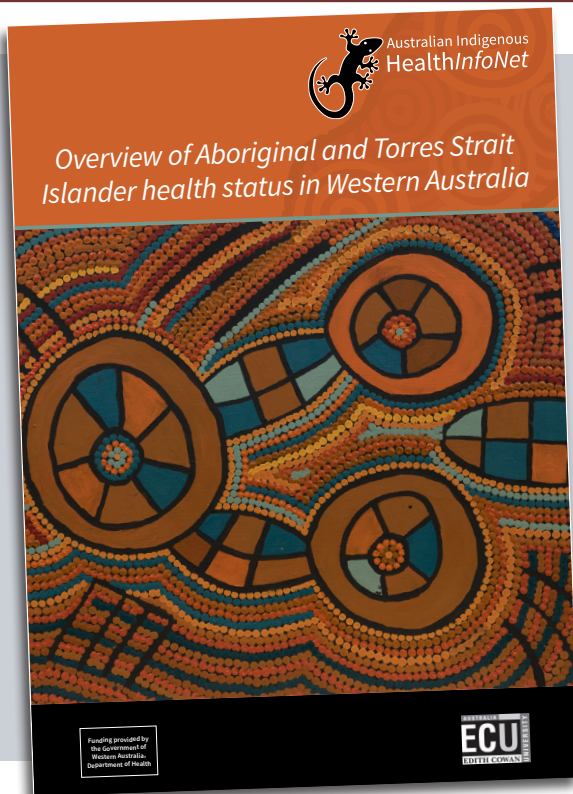
It was also a great pleasure to welcome Romlie Mokak back to the HealthInfoNet offices in his capacity as a Commissioner with Australian Productivity Commission, to discuss his work on the development of an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy. Romlie has been a great friend and supporter of the HealthInfoNet for many, many, years, most recently when he was CEO of the Lowitja Institute. I wish him and his team all the very best with their important work. Follow this link to find out more about Romlie's work at the Productivity Commission. <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/indigenous-evaluation#issues>

Please enjoy this edition of my Communiqué. As always, I welcome your feedback so please feel free to give me a buzz.



Professor Neil Drew





New Overview of WA health status

In June, we launched the most recent indicators of the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia (WA) in the *Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status in Western Australia*

<https://bit.ly/2JMMako>

The WA Overview was funded by the Government of Western Australia Department of Health and provides a comprehensive summary of the health and current health status of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This publication supports the aspirations and goals of the *WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030* and the broader refresh of the Closing the Gap targets for Aboriginal people to live long, well and healthy lives. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population accounts for 3.9% of the total WA population and 13% of the total Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

New review of Methamphetamine use

The use of methamphetamine and the related harms has been the subject of growing concern in Australia, with Australians rating it the drug of most concern in the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey. The most commonly used drugs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are tobacco, cannabis and alcohol. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are experiencing a disproportionate burden of harm from amphetamines, including methamphetamine.

Our latest publication is the *Review of methamphetamine use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* by Drs Mieke Snijder and Stephanie Kershaw from the University of Sydney. The authors say 'This review shows how important it is to support individuals, families and communities and the urgent need to develop more culturally appropriate resources'.

The review summarises many publications and data into one publication which ensures those working in the sector receive an authoritative update that is both

accessible and timely. The Knowledge Centre has created some Knowledge Exchange tools for those who want the key facts and updates in a visual format: an animated video and factsheet <https://aodknowledgecentre.ecu.edu.au/about/knowledge-exchange-products/>

The review describes the historical and social factors that influence the use of methamphetamine among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how family and peers and community can be protective factors, including a strong connection to culture and country. The review highlights new and emerging programs that are being implemented to address methamphetamine use, such as the Cracks in the Ice Toolkit for community and family members, and the Novel Interventions to Address Methamphetamine Use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities



(NIMAC) study in South Australia. There is currently no evidence on what are the most effective prevention and treatment strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for methamphetamine use, however appropriate responses need to address social determinants as well as provide treatment services.

Conferences we attended

- Aboriginal Health Forum Perth (we exhibited)
- The Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing conference Darwin – we exhibited to promote the Healing Portal and also gave a presentation. I also presented a paper with David Aanundsen from The Fred Hollows Foundation on the outcome of our evaluation study of the HealthInfoNet eye portal. Uncle Mick and Jesse Fleay presented about the Lowitja Institute funded Valuing Young Aboriginal Men project.



Sandra Creamer (AM) looking at the Healing Portal at the Lowitja Conference

- QAAMS Workshop Adelaide (we exhibited)



Michelle Etwell with delegates at our stand.

- AIATSIS conference Brisbane



Neil presenting at the AIATSIS conference



Nathan Appo, Donisha Duff, Uncle Mick, Sean Yorston at the AIATSIS conference

- Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Perth (we exhibited)



Valerie Swift Telethon Kids Institute

New Yarning Places coming soon

In our everyday lives we have conversations in many locations. We may meet a colleague at a café, then decide to continue the conversation back at the office. Or we may decide to organise to meet a few of our colleagues for a workshop discussion, or we might meet online. Sometimes, we might just want to drop a thought bubble on to a chat facility to see what happens when colleagues read it. This is the way that we organise our everyday lives and at the HealthInfoNet we want to use the same organic 'everyday life' approach

to our new yarning places. Rather than just having one Yarning Place where you may (or may not) go from time to time to catch up with colleagues and professional peers, we want to provide a range of Yarning places that you might encounter and use as you go about your business each day. We are currently testing a new addition to our Yarning places and will work towards seamlessly integrating it with our other existing Yarning places such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. We hope you will like it... so watch this space. We

also understand that sometimes our favourite meeting places changes... a café goes out of fashion... or closes down. So we are always on the lookout for the places where you may want to meet. If you have a favourite (virtual) meeting place let us know and we will do our best to add it to our list of preferred yarning places (we don't want to drag you back to places where there is too much noise or the coffee tastes awful 😊)

HealthInfoNet staff news

We welcomed Paige Kenney who joined us in May as a Research Officer. Paige has worked at ECU on the 'Old ways, new ways' project and has also been actively involved in the Wadjak Northside Aboriginal Community Centre. Also Jasmine Smith – Ince who joined us at the end of July and replaces our Administrative Assistant Monique Cumming while she is on maternity leave. Congratulations to Mon who gave birth to a healthy boy.

Two of our existing staff Tamara Swann and Vilma Fitzgerald (pictured above right) were promoted to Senior Research Officer. We are currently recruiting for three more research team members.

Rob Etherington (pictured below right) has accepted a new role as Senior Multimedia Officer in recognition of the excellent work he has done in the production of most of our knowledge exchange tools and resources. Rob will continue in his role as IT Support Officer, splitting his time between the two crucial roles.

With funding from Professor Braden Hills (thank you Professor Hills), The Pro Vice Chancellor Equity and Indigenous we have appointed Senior Research Fellow, Dr Monica Cass for the remainder of 2019. Monica will be working closely with Uncle Mick, the Impact and Evaluation team and me to further develop our impact and evaluation strategy.

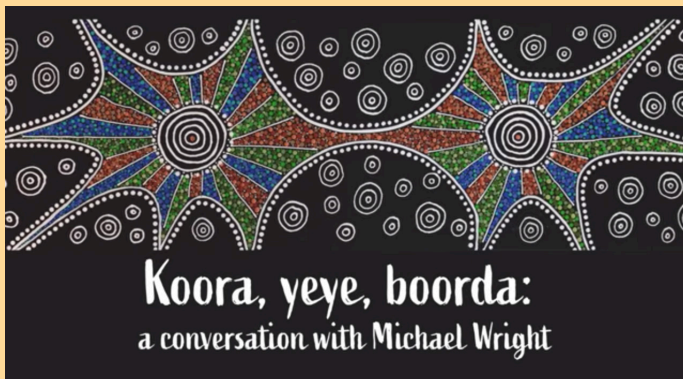


Tamara Swann and Vilma Fitzgerald



Rob Etherington

New film: Koora, yeye, boorda: a conversation with Michael Wright



We produced a short film which provides an inspirational insight into the career journey of Associate Professor Dr Michael Wright <https://bit.ly/2LBD5LU>

Michael Wright is a Yuat Noongar man who holds an Early Career Research Fellowship with the Faculty of Health Sciences at Curtin University and is an Honorary Research Fellow with the Telethon Kids Institute. In the film, Michael shares the challenges, milestones and inspirations during his career; as a student, working as a social worker and his subsequent role in higher degree research in the areas

of mental health and alcohol and other drug services.

In conversation with Jo Hoareau a Senior Research Officer from our AOD Knowledge Centre team, Michael talks about his research findings on kinship and caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with mental illness and the importance of developing an Indigenous framework for delivering mental health services. Michael describes the work he has done in partnership with Elders and community services through the Looking Forward Project part 1 and 2 to change the way mental health

and alcohol and other drug services work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. The film promotes the message that "health is a human right – everyone should have access to good health".

Koora, yeye, boorda is part of a series of knowledge exchange products produced by the Alcohol and other Drugs Knowledge Centre to make research and other information available in a form that is timely, accessible and relevant to the health workforce.

Staff planning and team building day



Neil playing and singing on the HealthInfoNet guitar with artwork by Uncle Mick Adams

In May we held our annual HealthInfoNet staff development and team building day. This gathering is a great opportunity to come together for all staff to reflect on how we have performed against our strategic goals and to spend a day thinking about and having the conversations we want to have about the year ahead. As always, the day revealed the depth of talent, commitment and creativity among our team. This year we chatted about a wide range of important topics including further development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership capacity within the HealthInfoNet, discussion on how to seek further feedback from users with a suggestion to utilise social media for quick polls, continuing to talk about how the HealthInfoNet and ECU can



Team building exercise - working together



Some of the team

take a leadership role in knowledge exchange research, enhanced project management practices and exploring ways to reward individual and team excellence. An important discussion concerned the proposal to establish an Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Advisory group, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at the HealthInfoNet to provide cultural governance of all processes and procedures for the development of knowledge exchange products and resources.

New Partner

I welcome new partner Charles Sturt University (The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Indigenous Health) and look forward to working more closely with them. We look forward to the opportunity to map our materials more purposefully to be used in the teaching curriculum aligned with embedding knowledge and cultural safety. The School of Nursing, Midwifery and



Charles Sturt University

Indigenous Health is committed to educating all students to live well and help others to adopt healthy lifestyles in a range of settings. The guiding ethos of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and

Indigenous Health is derived from the Wiradjuri people's phrase "Yindymarra Winhanganha" – the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in.

