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## Director's Communiqué

### Director's welcome

A very warm welcome to you all in 2022. We continue to face the challenges of COVID-19, but I sense that as a society, we are beginning to see a way forward. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face ongoing challenges, but I have been delighted to see the many positive initiatives to enhance vaccinations rates. For example, Ernie Dingo's Vax the Outback program in the Kimberley, VACCHOs Vaccine Vans and the Northern Land Council's series of very engaging 'Get the Jab' videos. These are just a few of the creative and innovative ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have risen to the challenges posed by COVID-19. To continue to play our part we have upgraded our COVID-19 Information and Updates section to a [HealthInfoNet Portal](#).

Late 2021 and early 2022 have been sad times for me for other reasons too. Our amazing Research Team Leader, Jane Burns, has retired after a more than 21-year career with us, and Dr Uncle Mick Adams has completed his tenure at the HealthInfoNet (see my tributes below). To lose one stalwart in such a short time is terrible news; to lose two such iconic figures is ... well... scary. During the latter part of 2021, we also farewelled other highly valued staff. Avinna Trzesinski, who took leave in 2021 to accompany her partner to Broome, has formally resigned to stay a further year in Broome. These departures, while significant, highlight the depth of talent at the HealthInfoNet. We continue to evolve and grow as an organisation to meet our commitment to our users and funding partners.



One of my highest priorities this year will be to get back on the road again. It is crucial that we get back out and about to meet with our valued users, Advisory Board, partners and funding partners. I feel very disconnected even though I have tried to maintain a schedule of Teams and Zoom meetings. As I said in my last Communiqué, face to face meetings over a cuppa are very important. So, see you all soon.

Professor Neil Drew

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The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters of Australia and the Torres Strait. We respect all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—their customs and their beliefs. We also pay our respects to Elders past and present, with particular acknowledgement to the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional owners of the lands where our offices are located.

## Adelaide Roundtable



Our presenters were Gretchen Scinto, Rural Doctors Workforce Agency, Scott Wilson, CEO, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council South Australia, Michael Larkin, Manager - Public Health & Primary Health Care, Aboriginal Health Council South Australia



Caption

Tara Hoynes (Development & Marketing Manager) and I welcomed over 40 attendees from the main health sector organisations at our Roundtable half day meeting in Adelaide in April. It was a wonderful opportunity to be back on the road and engage face to face with organisations who use us in their work and hear from our informative guest presenters.

Our presenters were

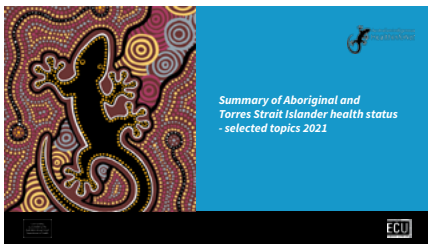
- Scott Wilson, CEO, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council South Australia
- Gretchen Scinto, Rural Doctors Workforce Agency (RDWA)
- Michael Larkin, Manager - Public Health & Primary Health Care, Aboriginal Health Council South Australia (AHCSA).

Tara also gave an update to staff at AHCSA and RDWA the following day. We always appreciate the support and welcome we receive in Adelaide.

## Annual Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status

Our annual authoritative Overview is a comprehensive evidenced based resource for those working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. The overall data shows it is critical to also address environmental health factors - such as housing and hygiene- that underpin the spread of many infectious diseases.

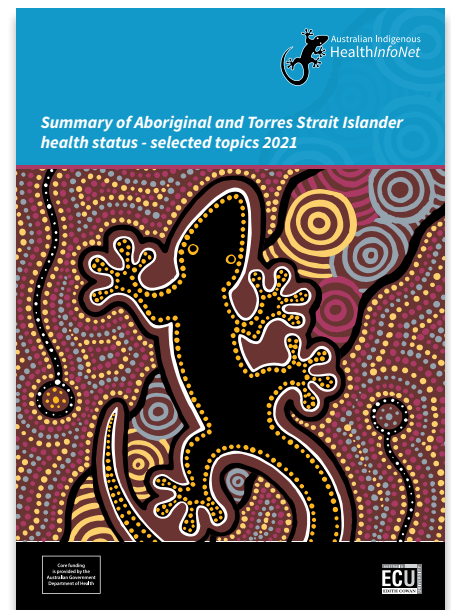
Accompanying the Overview is an infographic summary version of the key facts and PowerPoints.



**PowerPoint of the Summary of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2021**



**Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2021**



**Summary of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status - selected topics 2021**

## Advisory Board member recognised for a lifetime of achievement



Our congratulations to Professor Sandy Thompson who in January was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to tertiary education, to rural and regional health, and to Indigenous health.

Sandy is the Director of the Western Centre for Rural Health, School of Population and Global Health, since 2010 and long term member of our Advisory Board.

## Congratulations to another West Australian

Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service (KAMS) CEO, Vicki O'Donnell was recognised for her service to the Indigenous community of Western Australia. She recently received a Medal of the Order of Australia. She is based in Broome and has been the CEO for over seven years and headed up the Derby Aboriginal Health Service for 12 years prior to that. We welcomed some of her senior staff to our Roundtable in Broome last year.

## Budget news

As we do each year we added all the Budget information relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health to our HealthBulletin making it easy for our users to find in one place. <https://healthbulletin.org.au/articles/budget-2022-23-information-of-relevance-to-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health/>

## Sponsor of AADANT Excellence in Indigenous AOD Programs award



*Maddy Mackey accepting the award on behalf of the Mala'la Community Wellbeing Program.*

We were delighted to sponsor this award again this year. This award is for an NGO in the NT with an AOD program specifically for Indigenous Australians. This program must have been operational in the last year and shows innovation, excellence and contribution to the health and safety of the community/NT.

The Mala'la Community Wellbeing Program successfully combines culturally safe and secure AOD interventions with individual psychotherapy, family therapy, wellness education and advocacy. It encourages reconnection with family and community, re-engagement with education and employment and participation in traditional

ceremonies and other forms of culturally appropriate meaningful activity as part of the recovery journey. Mala'la Community Wellbeing Program has helped numerous individuals, families and the Maningrida community achieve many positive and long-lasting outcomes.

## Environmental Health Australia (WA) Conference



We presented and exhibited at the EHWA Conference in February. Conference delegate Chenique Pensini with HealthInfoNet team member Darren Deves



## Latest issue of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet journal

In February we published the first issue of the re-named and newly designed Journal of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet for 2022 via the Edith Cowan University (ECU) Research Online institutional repository. We have been encouraged by the global response since the inaugural edition of the journal was first published in December 2020 and have since released three editions of the journal, including two special editions, which have already accumulated over 2000 readers worldwide. The journal is becoming increasingly visible and accessible to researchers and readers throughout the world. As of April 2022, the journal has accumulated 6,758 downloads.

In this current edition of the journal we include papers that exemplify what we are striving to achieve.

**See this issue of the journal here.**

## We farewell a 21 year HealthInfoNet veteran

It is with mixed feelings that I farewell Jane Burns, our Research Team Leader who has made a valued 21 year contribution to the HealthInfoNet as she commences a well-earned retirement. I am in awe of Jane's career of service and dedication to our work and to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities throughout Australia over this sustained period. We were very proud to have Jane on our team.

Jane was involved in many projects over her career with us. Some of these included the formation and funding for a Women's, environmental health and ear health section, long time member of the HealthBulletin editorial team (was Deputy Editor for many years) and Joint Project Leader of the Healthy Lifestyle and Tobacco Workers project. With her wealth of knowledge, Jane was always up front and centre at many conferences both in presenting,



Jane Burns

conducting workshops and engaging with stakeholders at our exhibition stands. In 2013, Jane became a Research Team Leader and capably mentored and managed the research team. Jane is in essence a 'foundation' member of the HealthInfoNet having worked alongside Professor Neil

Thomson from the very early days of its existence.

On behalf of all of our team, I'd like to both thank and congratulate Jane on her enormous sustained contribution to the work of the HealthInfoNet and wish her every happiness as she commences her retirement.

## Farewell Dr Uncle Mick Adams



Uncle Mick Adams

It is with huge sadness that Uncle Mick finished his tenure as our Senior Aboriginal Research Fellow on the 31st December 2021. In early 2015, I was delighted to welcome him to the HealthInfoNet as our Senior Research Fellow with a particular emphasis on building a strong primary research program. During his time with us, Uncle Mick has been chief or associate investigator on many nationally significant research projects. He has published widely on a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues and supervised post graduate researchers.

Uncle Mick has been a wonderful mentor and friend to me personally throughout his time with us and I am truly grateful for his wisdom, insight and cultural guidance. I know that all staff at the HealthInfoNet also benefited in many ways from his always generous support. His presence and leadership at the HealthInfoNet immeasurably enhanced our reputation as a trustworthy and credible source of information.

## All the best Avinna Trzesinski

I farewell also Avinna ... now based in Broome with her husband but was working remotely for us on the cannabis review for a few months and resigned this year. I wish her all the best in the future and thank her for her contribution to the HealthInfoNet over many years.



Avinna Trzesinski