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Director's Communiqué

Director's welcome

Welcome, a little belatedly, to 2023. It has been a frantic beginning to 2023 but also a very satisfying one. Busy is best, and there is much that we need to do in partnership with all of you, our friends, colleagues and partners. For me, 2023 started in the best possible way with my daughter Amy and grandson Jack here for almost two months. It was such a joy to have them here after so much COVID disruption. I sometimes struggle to wake up in the morning, but now they have left, I deeply miss my morning alarm at about 6 am, 'Poppa, Poppa'. I hope that you too managed to find time to spend with family, friends and other loved ones. With so much going on, it was good for me to remember that we all have the 'right to disconnect' from the workplace, and if we don't, it is often a recipe for stress and burnout. We can't support the communities, people and places we love if we are in no fit state to perform our duties. In the new age of work from home, this is a particular trap we can easily fall into.

I have travelled to Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne in March and had the great pleasure of meeting with our core funding partners, Parliamentarians, Advisory Board members and other supporters. I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to update them all on the developments at the HealthInfoNet since my last visit. We also held a Roundtable in Melbourne in late March, and it was a pleasure to welcome over 45 people to the event to hear our guest speakers update us on their work. Jill Gallagher AO, CEO at VACCHO; Shaun Tatipata and Mitchell Anjou from the Eye Health Unit at the University of Melbourne and Dr Sarah White, CEO at Jean

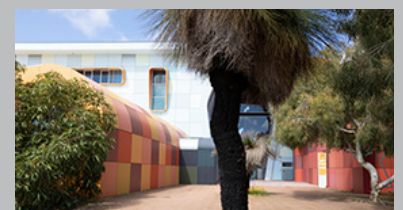


Hailes for Women's' Health, all provided thoughtful and engaging updates on their recent activities. The Roundtables are a wonderful networking opportunity and time well spent with inspiring people who have a shared vision and aspiration to make a positive difference in the health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. One of the great pleasures of speaking about the work of the HealthInfoNet is that it reminds me once again of what a great honour it is to do the work we do. I am touched and grateful for the overwhelming expressions of support for our work.

One area that we are all becoming acutely aware of is the 'rise of the machines' (forgive the Terminator reference... I couldn't resist). Artificial Intelligence has been around for a very long time, but I think that ChatGPT has been an eye-opener that the power of AI has

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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, present and emerging with particular acknowledgement to the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional owners of the lands where our offices are located.

grown exponentially in recent years. Clearly, it is important that we understand that it is here to stay and to adapt and adopt it to support our work. I have established an internal working party at the HealthInfoNet to explore the implications and opportunities of AI in our work. But... and it is a big but... we need to fully explore the ethics, morality, accuracy, legality, and cultural safety of AI, particularly as it becomes more self-aware. Speaking of the way that data is managed, I

relished the opportunity, during my travels, to spend some time with Professor Marcia Langton and her team at the Indigenous Data Network at the University of Melbourne. They are undertaking work of national and international significance in the area of data governance. It is crucial that we at the HealthInfoNet understand our obligations when managing data of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and I thank Marcia and her team for some

excellent suggestions and their willingness to work with us as we continue to develop our data governance procedures and practices. Welcome to my first Communiqué of 2023. I look forward to seeing and hearing from many of you in the coming months. Take care and stay safe and well.

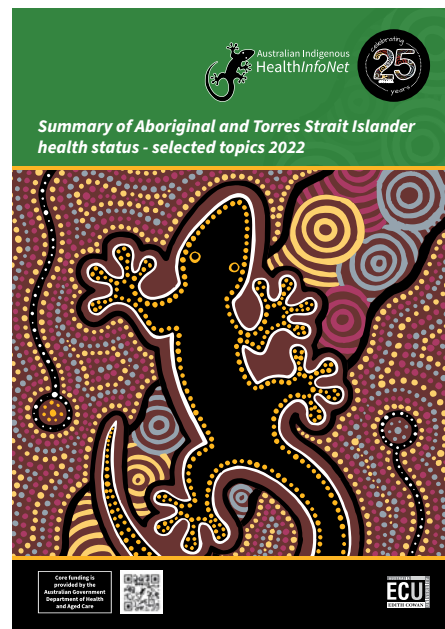


Professor Neil Drew

Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2022



Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2022



Summary of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2022- selected topics 2022

Our annual overview was released in March this year and is accompanied by a plain language summary version and a PowerPoint of the tables. By reviewing and translating all the available data into one publication, our 2022 Overview provides a 'snapshot' of the most recent indicators of health. Current Census data has provided fresh insights as well as detailed findings from the latest Australia's Burden of Disease study which revealed that mental and substance use disorders and injuries were the leading contributors to the overall burden of disease. We are also very pleased to have included some information from the Mayi Kuwayu studies undertaken by Professor Ray Lovett and colleagues. This is significant as one of the emerging studies that explicitly responds to call for data sovereignty and governance principles and practices in research.



PowerPoint: Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2022: Key facts

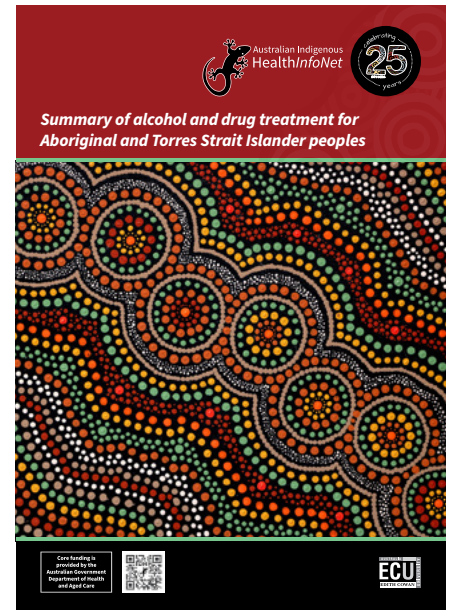
New review: Cultural approaches and best evidence can optimise AOD treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The Alcohol and other Drugs Knowledge Centre with external authors launched this review in February. We received positive feedback from users about how timely and relevant it was. The review highlighted the importance of culturally secure treatment and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and staffing. That treatment can include cultural approaches, mainstream approaches and adaptations that include the best of both. The value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in culturally secure and accessible health care has been widely recognised. Evidence also points to the value of cultural awareness training and cultural audits for non-Indigenous staff and mainstream services.

The report was authored by Marguerite Tracy, Bradley Freeburn, Kylie Lee, Julie Woods and Kate Conigrave. Bradley Freeburn is Bundjalung man from North Eastern NSW and Julie Woods is a Menang woman from South Western WA. Author Bradley Freeburn said "Collaboration and two-way learning between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled and mainstream services can offer gains in service access on one side and cultural appropriateness on the other to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Quality treatment needs to be supported by broader alcohol and other drug policy and secure funding".



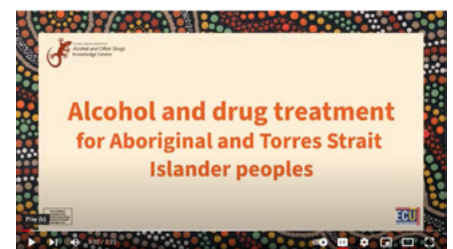
Review of alcohol and drug treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Summary of alcohol and drug treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Factsheet: Alcohol and drug treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Video: Review of alcohol and drug treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Neil Thomson Scholarship recipient awarded PHD

Uncle Mick Adams and I secured the Neil Thomson Scholarship a few years ago which was jointly funded by ECU and The Lowitja Institute. The recipient of the scholarship was Charmaine Green, co-supervised at ECU by Uncle Mick and I with Professor Sandy Thompson and Professor Juli Coffin as external supervisors. Charmaine was awarded her PhD in 2022.

In January 2023, Charmaine also received the ECU Kurongkurl Katitjin Research Medal for her PhD research. This is a great testament to her scholarship and determination, and I know you all join with me in congratulating her.

My sincere thanks to the Lowitja Institute and Edith Cowan University for supporting this excellent work.

HealthInfoNet Consultant news

HealthInfoNet Consultant, Deanne Minniecon has been appointed Adjunct Associate Professor at Queensland University of Technology.

HealthInfoNet Consultant, Professor Alex Brown has been appointed to the CSIRO board of directors, becoming the first Indigenous scientist to serve on the national science agency's board. A leader in Aboriginal health and public health services, Professor Brown commenced in the role in March and will serve on a part-time basis for five years.

Melbourne Roundtable



Presenters L-R Sarah White, Jill Gallagher, Mitchell Anjou and Shaun Tapitata.

It has been a while since we visited Melbourne due to COVID and as noted in my introduction we were delighted with the response to our Roundtable. Our guest presenters included:

1. Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation – CEO, Jill Gallagher, AO

2. Indigenous Eye Health Unit – Director, Mitchell Anjou AM and Deputy Director Shaun Tapitata
3. Jean Hailes for Women's health – CEO, Sarah White

I also took the opportunity to meet with many organisations I hadn't seen for a while.

Our Development & Marketing Manager Tara Hoyne met with other organisations including APNA, RWAV, Department of Health, Allied Health Australia, VAADA, Palliative care at St Alfred's among others and we were able to make up for lost time.

Tackling Indigenous Smoking workshop



National Tackling Indigenous Smoking Workers Workshop organised by the National Best Practice Unit TIS, led by Ninti One.

On 7-8 March, Ash Parnell attended the first National Tackling Indigenous Smoking Workers Workshop since 2019, which was held in Darwin on the land of the Larrakia people. We are funded to produce, update and maintain the TIS website to support the use of best practice by organisations funded under the Australian Government

TIS program. The gathering included over 200 TIS workers from across Australia and facilitated the opportunity to network and learn from each other; explore innovative methods of expanding partnerships; enhance their approach to population health promotion activities and leadership in communities.

The workshop was organised by the National Best Practice Unit TIS, led by Ninti One, and featured a Keynote Address from National Coordinator TIS Professor Tom Calma. My congratulations to Tom too, for being recognised as the 2023 Senior Australian of the Year.

You are invited to become a reviewer

The **Journal of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet** is inviting academics, practitioners and those with lived experience or expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health to register as a reviewer for journal submissions. This is a valuable opportunity to contribute to the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet's ongoing mission to facilitate access to information that supports those working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector.

We welcome support from emerging academics and those with lived experience

in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health who may wish to demonstrate and/or build their skills and confidence in the academic peer review space. As a token of our appreciation, this year we will be offering reviewers a gift certificate valued at \$50.

If you would like to take part in this professional development opportunity, while supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research – please get in touch editors@healthinonet.ecu.edu.au



Journal news

The latest issue of the online Journal of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet is now available.

Collectively, this selection of papers reminds us of the importance of community engagement in the process of not only gathering research data, but also the approach to health concerns when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You can find this issue of the Journal [here](#).

In this issue, we present seven papers that exemplify what we are striving to achieve:

- In a study conducted in the Kimberley region of WA, Cox et al. explore the experiences of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) workers. Seven workers employed at Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations across the region identified the needs of an Aboriginal workforce who deliver SEWB services to Aboriginal clients. The study highlights the importance of induction and professional development support and describes the development of an induction support resource.
- Anderson describes the unacceptably high rates of incarceration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the disconnect prisoners can have from their networks of support and culture. Anderson notes this disconnect can lead to high rates of re-incarceration and calls for an initiative to support Aboriginal prisoners from the time of imprisonment to their release and during their post-release journey.
- Atkinson et al. offer a thought-provoking analysis of key policies relevant to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in medical course curricula in Australia.
- Menges et al. identify the elements of effective programs to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal men. They conclude that successful programs enhance identity and social connection.
- Dawson et al. examine factors that affect Aboriginal men accessing sexual health services and suggest the provision of more culturally safe healthcare pathways for Aboriginal men to access sexual health care.
- Santos et al. present a study protocol to explore the consent process in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients undergoing surgical procedures and participating in medical research. The study will aim to provide insights into how the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be improved through the culturally safe design and application of informed consent resources and approaches.
- Neville et al. appeal for acute post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis (APSGN) to become a notifiable condition in Queensland.

Conferences

We exhibited and updated delegates at the following events in the period February - April:

- NDIS & Community Mental health, Sydney
- AHCWA, Perth
- ANZ Addiction, Gold Coast
- EHA(WA), Perth
- PHAA, Adelaide



PHAA delegate Louisa Gordon.



Winner of our newsletter sign up competition from the 2023 Australian & New Zealand Addiction Conference on the Gold Coast, Amelia Gates, Addiction Practitioner at Anglicare Tasmania (pictured left).



Delegate Patricia Maraëa Moeke at the NDIS & Mental Health conference in Sydney.



Research Officer Michelle Barratt (seated) chats to a delegate at the AHCWA conference.

Core funding is provided by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care

Helping to close the gap by providing the evidence base to inform practice and policy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
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