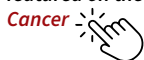


## CONTENTS

Latest annual Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health	2
Canberra Roundtable	3
HTLV-1 Portal launched	3
Cultural Safety for Health Professionals Portal refresh	4
Tackling Indigenous Smoking event held in Perth	4
New issue of our Journal	5
Partner news	5
Link to us	5
Conferences	6
Consultant news	7
Vale Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue 1932 - 2024	7
Staff milestone birthdays	7



Artwork: *Karnta* by Corinne Nampijinpa Ryan. This artwork is featured on the following page(s):



Cancer



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# Communiqué



## Director's welcome

On February 2nd, 2024, I celebrated my 10th year as Director of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet. What an extraordinary honour and privilege it has been for me. My journey from 1980 as a naïve student volunteer at the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service to here has been one I never expected to be gifted. I want to thank all the tens of thousands of people and communities throughout Australia I have met or been inspired by, or most often both, over the journey who have lifted me up, supported me, mentored me, taught me and yes from time to time growled at me (which I almost always deserved). Your generosity of spirit, your companionship and I am proud to say, your friendship, has defined my life and career, something I am eternally grateful for... Thank you.

Also, in February my partner Clare and I ticked something off our bucket list when



we visited Antarctica as part of an expedition cruise. It was a mind-boggling experience, awe inspiring and unbelievably beautiful. As part of the cruise, I kayaked for 2 and half hours among the ice cubes. Many people want to see the evidence. I am the one in the middle of the photo above. Unfortunately, the distance and quality of the photo do not meet the standards of evidence that

*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 acknowledgment to the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional owners of the lands where our offices are located.*

we usually insist on in our work here at the HealthInfoNet but I assure you... that is me, paddling around the sea ice encountering leopard seals, penguins and the occasional humpback whale... believe it or not.

In late 2023, we entered into a further funding agreement with the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care for the period July 2023 to June 2026. This agreement provides funding for our core resource, the Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre and Environmental Health. In addition to that we continue to receive funding support from key partners in the sector, The Healing Foundation, eMHPac, Palliative Care Australia, NACCHO, the Western Australian Department of Health and Ninti One (Tackling Indigenous Smoking). We are extremely grateful for their ongoing support. We are always seeking more funding partners so please give me a call if you are aware of further opportunities for us to partner with the sector. <https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/about/engagement/funders/>

Some of you may have heard me speak about the HealthInfoNet at conferences, Roundtables and so on. One of the key

points I make is that the HealthInfoNet is the most complete repository of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health information in Australia with our special library containing over 47,000 items and over 90,000 links to resources throughout Australia. My plea to those of you developing (or thinking about developing) websites to house resources is to speak with us. Do not waste your precious funds on building another data base. Ours is a custom designed data management system that has been built and refined over 27 years, funded on behalf of and to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. The **WellMob** site is a great example of a website with its own unique identity and web presence that is tethered to the HealthInfoNet data base from which it draws its resources and information. WellMob is an excellent example of a curated collection meeting specific needs and we are very proud of it, as we are all our funded partnerships.

We also pride ourselves on 'staying ahead of the curve' in technological advancement. Last year I established an AI Working Group at the HealthInfoNet to explore the potential for AI to enhance our work. Our IT

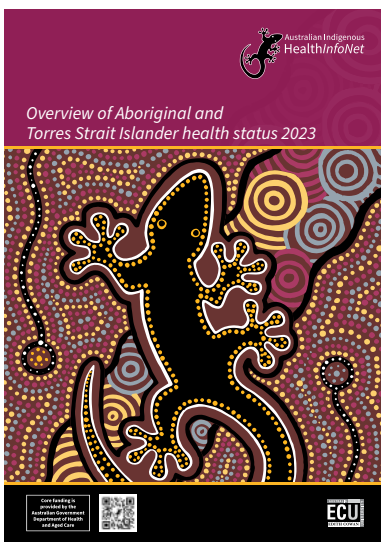
Manager, Renae Bastholm also sits on the ECU Working Party exploring the use of AI in universities. AI is here to stay, and it would be foolish and blinkered of us not to accept that we will need to embrace it in some form in the coming years. In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector we need to not only explore the technological implications but also the cultural impacts. There are questions around cultural safety, security, data sovereignty and governance and other moral and ethical dilemmas to be explored before we take a deeper dive into the use of AI. We will be liaising with technology experts in the coming months and years but more importantly we will be seeking support, guidance and authority from the sector as we navigate the myriad issues of the use of AI in cultural settings. Please feel free to contact me or to send your thoughts on this important topic.

Please enjoy this edition of my Communiqué. I hope it finds you safe and well.

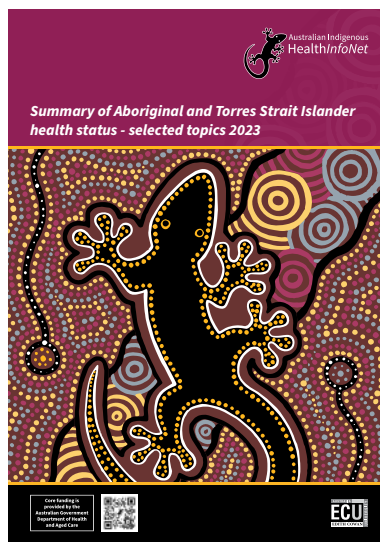


Professor Neil Drew

## Latest annual Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health



Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2023



Summary of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status - selected topics 2023



PowerPoint: Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2023: Key facts and tables

In early March we released our annual Overview which brings together and makes sense of all the available data from the previous year.

The most recent indicators of the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be found in our authoritative annual publication, the Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2023. Accompanying this is a plain language Summary version and PowerPoint of the key facts (all listed in the above link).

The Overview continues to be well used and we are told it informs funding submissions, policy work and provides up to date annual evidence-based information for practitioners in one document saving them time.

## Canberra Roundtable



Neil Drew and Dr Ana Herceg

Mid-March we held a Roundtable event in Canberra. This was a wonderful opportunity to update many peak organisations and senior representatives from the Department of Health and Aged Care about our work. We were also delighted to welcome one of our Advisory Board members Donna Murray, CEO



Shannan Dodson, Susi Tegen, Neil Drew and Peta Rutherford

of IAHA. In addition to my presentation, we had four guest speakers who shared about their key focuses and challenges for the coming year.

1. Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services - Dr Ana Herceg, PHMO
2. Rural Doctors Australia Association - CEO, Peta Rutherford
3. National Rural Health Alliance - CEO, Susi Tegen
4. The Healing Foundation – CEO, Shannan Dodson

## HTLV-1 Portal launched

At the end of April, we launched this new portal housed on our website. We collaborated with national peak body, NACCHO (who have funded the portal development), to develop a curated and culturally appropriate collection of HTLV-1 resources, aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

HTLV-1 is an emerging health issue in Central Australia and the Kimberley region. Aboriginal communities in central and northern Australia have some of the highest rates of HTLV-1 in the world.

The Portal is for health professionals and people with HTLV-1 and those in their community that support them. Ultimately, the aim of the Portal is to support the reduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait



Islander people living with HTLV-1 by increasing the understanding and knowledge

of this important health condition.

## Cultural Safety for Health Professionals Portal refresh

The Cultural Safety for Health Professionals (CSHP) Portal aims to support health professionals in their practice to deliver culturally safe, accessible and responsive healthcare that is free from racism. The Portal provides quick and easy access to high quality, up-to-date and relevant cultural safety information for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector.

The Portal was first established in April 2020 by the HealthInfoNet in partnership with the First Peoples Health Unit at Griffith University in Queensland. Funding, for the establishment of the Portal, was provided by Griffith University until 30 June 2020. Since that time, due to its importance to the workforce, the Portal has remained on the HealthInfoNet website, albeit without updates or maintenance.

As the CSHP Portal is accessed by the HealthInfoNet's user base on a regular basis, the HealthInfoNet made the decision to revamp the Portal using discretionary



funds. The Portal's 'Key resources' have been enhanced to include not only publications but also policies, resources (health promotion and health practice), programs and organisations. A new 'Workforce information' section has been added and includes the latest information on events, courses, funding and jobs in cultural safety.

The Portal has specific information for each of the allied health professions (based on the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency) providing quick and easy access to content relevant to the specific health disciplines.

The CSHP Portal and can be viewed [here](#).

## Tackling Indigenous Smoking event held in Perth

In March I had the great pleasure of joining staff from the TIS program for a dinner as part of the Tackling Indigenous Smoking jurisdictional workshop in Perth. It was a great pleasure to meet this amazing group in a relaxed setting and to hear more about their great work. The Tackling Indigenous Smoking (TIS) Jurisdictional Workshop brought together TIS Workers from WA, the NT, SA and the ACT in Walyalup (Fremantle). Over two days (12 and 13 March), teams shared stories of the work they're doing in their communities to reduce the prevalence of smoking and vaping, with other presentations from National Coordinator TIS Professor Tom Calma; the Department of Health and Aged Care; the TIS Program Evaluators A/Prof Raglan Maddox (ANU) and Lena Etuk (CIRCA); and the National Best Practice Unit (NBPU) TIS, including a presentation on the TIS website from the HealthInfoNet.

There were also guest speakers from Cancer Council SA and Cancer Council WA.

HealthInfoNet's Ashleigh Parnell who attended is pictured far right in red. Access the TIS website [here](#).



Tackling Indigenous Smoking Workshop March 2024



NBPU TIS, Professor Tom Calma (National Coordinator TIS), and the TIS Program evaluators from CIRCA and ANU

## New issue of our Journal

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

The Journal aims to facilitate access to information that supports those working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. Reflecting the wide range of readers – policy makers, service providers, researchers, students and the general community – the Journal of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet keeps people informed about recent research and promotes knowledge exchange.

With thousands of downloads in over 80 countries and across 400 institutions, we are extremely grateful for the continued support shown for the Journal by both authors and readers throughout the world. We are also delighted with the range and quality of papers submitted for publication in this edition of the Journal.

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

- The Koolungar Moorditj Healthy Skin Project (Ricciardo et al.) is an excellent example of community-led and owned research that delivers on community priorities and illustrates the quantum leap forward in our understanding of,



and indeed obligations to, undertake culturally safe and appropriate research.

- Enkel et al. remind us that the consequences of the 'know-do' gap can be profound. The know-do gap is the gap between what we know and what we do. Their example of the relationship between *Streptococcus pyogenes* (strep A) infections and the enduring historical legacies of racism and health inequalities, particularly in

remote communities, is as striking as it is unacceptable.

- Using data from the Aboriginal community controlled health services in five remote communities, White et al. report that the prevalence of diabetes in the Kimberley region of WA is markedly higher than reported by the National Diabetes Services Scheme.
- Willis et al. speak to the importance of maintaining and fostering a resilient workforce. They note that resilience among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers is related to identity, reinforced by the capacity to negotiate the intercultural or bicultural space where Western and Indigenous knowledge systems and culture intersect.

You can find this issue of the Journal [here](#).

If you have an article for consideration, please visit the [For Contributors](#) page of the website, where you will find further information on the submission process. We welcome submissions all year round from researchers, practitioners and health workers about research, strategies and programs related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, that have the potential to inform and support everyday practice.

## Partner news

I welcome our newest partner **Ngangk Yira** Institute for Change who are located at Murdoch University. The Institute is led by Professor Rhonda Marriott AM, a renowned leader in the field of Aboriginal health and equity research with extensive experience in both clinical and academic roles. They work closely with the WA Government, contributing high level expertise to projects and initiatives which seek to ensure Aboriginal families and communities have access to culturally safe maternity care. They are focused on research that benefits Aboriginal people and communities, honours self-determination and provides an enduring legacy. Their research is determined through a partnership between

Elders, community stakeholders, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers and focuses on complex issues in Aboriginal health and the achievement of social equity.

**Mental Health Coordinating Council** (MHCC) have been a partner since 2016 and we have refreshed our agreement recently with them. MHCC is the peak body for community mental health organisations in New South Wales. Their primary purpose is to build the capacity and ability of community organisations to support people on their recovery journeys. They represent community-based, non-government organisations who work to support people living with mental health conditions.



### Link to us

We link to over a thousand organisations in the health sector and more than likely we link to you **Organisations - Promote and practice - Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet ([ecu.edu.au](http://ecu.edu.au))**

Why not ensure your staff, members and stakeholders have access to our free to access evidence-based websites. Add our URL to your staff intranet, to your members resources page and include the link in your member or staff newsletters. It's quick and easy

**Link to Us!**



## Conferences

We exhibited at the following conferences in March and April:

- Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) (Sydney)
- World Indigenous Cancer Conference (Melbourne).



AH&MRC (Sydney) – Delegate Ru Kwedza pictured with HealthInfoNet's Michelle Elwell



World Indigenous Cancer Conference. Hamper winner Jodie Campain, Cancer Care Nurse Coordinator with HealthInfoNet's Hannah Tarrant.



World Indigenous Cancer Conference. Tira Albert and Maria Marama with HealthInfoNet's Hannah Tarrant (centre)

## Consultant news



Gail Garvey

Our congratulations to HealthInfoNet Consultant Gail Garvey, recently appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her service to Indigenous health. Gail is a National Health and Medical Research Council leadership fellow and Indigenous health researcher at the University of Queensland



Professor Kelvin Kong

And to Professor Kelvin Kong who was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to medicine as an Otolaryngologist and Indigenous health. Both these outstanding health leaders are long-time friends and supporters of the HealthInfoNet.

## Vale Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue 1932 - 2024

As a long-term partner and collaborating centre of The Lowitja Institute, we send our sincere condolences and pay our deepest respects to the family, friends and other loved ones of Dr O'Donoghue and acknowledge her lifetime of contribution and service to improving the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia.

## Staff milestone birthdays



Michelle Elwell

One of our long serving Research Officers, Michelle Elwell, celebrated a milestone birthday in February and we acknowledged the day with some flowers and chocolates.



Rob Etherington

In March, Senior Multimedia Designer Rob Etherington, also celebrated a milestone birthday and was given a gift voucher.



Monique Cumming

In April, Administrative Assistant, Monique Cumming celebrated 25 years at a staff morning tea.

Our congratulations to them all.