

# Communiqué



## New Director

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**Artwork:** *When the fresh water meets the saltwater* by Bec Morgan. This artwork is/was featured on the following page:

**Sexual Health**



I began my role as Director in early October, and I am grateful to everyone who has made this transition enjoyable and seamless. First, I would like to express my deepest thanks to the outgoing Director, Professor Neil Drew, for his remarkable leadership and tireless work in guiding HealthInfoNet over the past 10 years. Neil's dedication has been instrumental in building and maintaining our reputation for providing timely, accessible, and relevant information to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. I've had the pleasure of hearing heartfelt messages of thanks from HealthInfoNet partners and Advisory Board members, reflecting the respect and gratitude for Neil's

contributions. Fortunately, Neil will remain involved with HealthInfoNet as the Editor of the Journal of Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet and continue supporting our Impact and Evaluation efforts.

I also extend my sincere thanks to the entire HealthInfoNet team, our partners, and Advisory Board members for their warm welcome. It has been inspiring to learn about the significant work being done across the organisation and its continued success. Since October, I have had productive meetings online and in person with our funders, Advisory Board members, and other stakeholders, which included several centres within the University of WA, Mental

*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.*

Health Australia, NACCHO, Menzies, and Dementia Australia. I will be in Canberra in early December and am meeting with AIHW, The Healing Foundation, Winnunga Nimmityjah, RDA, CATSINaM, Indigenous Allied Health Australia Ltd, NIAA, National Rural Health Alliance and our funders within the Department of Health and Aged Care.

In late October, I was pleased to host CATSINaM CEO Dr Ali Drummond and Associate Professor Holly Northam at our offices, where we enjoyed a staff morning tea. I also had the privilege of attending the first day of the CATSINaM conference in Walyalup, where I was impressed by the work being done by them. I was particularly pleased to hear about the work by the AHPRA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Unit who presented on their culturally safe complaints process. I have also had the pleasure of meeting in our offices with Heidi Sturk from eMHPrac, who partners with us for the WellMob site and provides insights into the latest developments in digital mental health.

Looking ahead to 2025, I plan to engage with our partners and end-users through a series of consumer and community consultation sessions through the first six months of the year. This feedback will play a crucial role in shaping our Strategic Plan, alongside the input from our end-user survey. Additionally, I am in the process of forming a Working Group to strengthen our cultural governance practices.



*Holly Northam, Bep Uink and Dr Ali Drummond*

As we come to the end of the calendar year, I want to thank our valued funders, partners, consultants, Advisory Board members, staff and all our users. For many of us, 2024 has represented a year of strength and coming-together considering the 2023 Voice Referendum, which had ripple effects across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health sector. True to this year's NAIDOC theme – Keep the Fire Burning: Blak, Loud

and Proud – I have found strength in being together with community both for collective healing and to focus on how we can continue to celebrate the immense strength we carry. Best wishes to those of you who are taking time off at the end of the year. I look forward to working with you all in the new year.

**Professor Bep Uink**

## Introducing the new HealthInfoNet Director

Professor Bep Uink (She/Her), a Goreng, Minang, Noongar woman, is the new Director of Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet and commenced in early October. Professor Uink brings an impressive academic background and extensive leadership experience, including her most recent role as Senior Research Fellow at the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre and was the Inaugural Dean of Indigenous Knowledges at Murdoch University.

Professor Uink's dedication to improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing has made her a respected voice in the field, and her experience and passion will further the impactful work of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, which is now in its 27th year. She is the third Director of the HealthInfoNet.



## Bep appointed to new expert research committee to boost research outcomes in WA

The Cook Government is working to keep Western Australia at the forefront of medical research and innovation by appointing a new expert committee to provide strategic advice on future pathways and priorities. The Committee will provide strategic advice to Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Advisory Council and the Department of Health and has eight esteemed members appointed with a wide range of experience and expertise. Professor Dan McAullay, Dean of ECU's Kurongkurl Katitjin Centre for Indigenous Education and Research, and Director,

Aboriginal Research, shared his enthusiasm for Professor Uink's appointment to the Committee, recognising her commitment to advancing Aboriginal health and her impact as a leader. "Professor Uink's dedication to improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing has made her a respected voice in the field, so her experience and passion will undoubtedly further the impactful work of HealthInfoNet and contribute significantly to the Cook Government's health research initiatives," he said.



## HealthInfoNet celebrated 27 years in September

We celebrated this milestone with a staff morning tea. The HealthInfoNet is unique in the world in what it does. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the considerable investment the Commonwealth have made over 27 years in supporting our work and efforts to provide high quality evidence based information and resources to enable informed decision making to help the health sector to close the gap in health.

## New interactive healthy homes factsheets designed to reduce illness



We have produced a suite of new interactive resources for Environmental Health Practitioners and clinicians to use with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and clients. These are housed with the Environmental Health Portal on our website. New interactive healthy homes factsheets designed to reduce illness - [New interactive healthy homes factsheets designed to reduce illness - News - About - Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet \(ecu.edu.au\)](#)

The My healthy home: Home health factsheet series aims to provide simple, clear actions to take in each room of the home to prevent illness and the spread of disease. The factsheets were developed with Nurrumbung Environmental Health and Services and guidance from the Expert Reference Panel

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health. They have a strengths-based approach outlining some of the issues in the home that can affect health and provide practical advice to prevent illness. They use plain language and icons for accessibility and can be downloaded as separate room-based factsheets, or together as a 'workbook', which also includes some simple instructions for making cleaning products at home. The interactive factsheet PDFs can be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on their computers, or printed and put on the fridge for easy access to information that will help users keep their homes and their families healthy. Users can fill out the details of their local environmental health services on the back of each factsheet, and are encouraged to contact these services for a variety of home health issues listed on the back page of each factsheet.

## Advisory Board member honoured



One of our Advisory Board members, Uncle Mick Adams was acknowledged by being awarded the NAATSIHWP Board Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award at the NAATSIHWP Conference Dinner in September. Uncle Mick is one of the founding members of NAATSIHWP.

## Latest issue of the Journal of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet



The Journal aims to facilitate access to information supporting those working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector, keeping them informed about recent research and promoting knowledge exchange. With 38,500 downloads in over 120 countries and across 788 institutions, we are extremely grateful for the continued support shown for the Journal by both authors and readers worldwide [Journal of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet | Vol 5 | Iss 2](#)

The articles in the October 2024 issue address a variety of ways that researchers and practitioners can engage in culturally respectful, safe decolonising practice. In this issue, we present five papers that exemplify what we are striving to achieve:

- Barney et al. detail the co-design of a yarning approach to hearing the voices of those disenfranchised by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) processes and offer recommendations based on the lived experience of those intersecting with the NDIS.
- Gidgup et al. report on the development of a physical activity program for older Aboriginal people.
- Kairuz Santos et al. describe a pilot program to deliver cultural safety and capability training at a burns unit in a paediatric hospital.
- Kelly et al. present a thoughtful and innovative approach to qualitative data analysis known as Thought Ritual.
- Murphy and Roberts describe the outcome of a community mental health assessment and treatment service for Aboriginal young people that adapts a model of care incorporating the lived experience of participants and their families.

## Palliative Care and End of Life Care Portal promoted



Darren Deves at the Walawaani Conference

In partnership with our funder, Palliative Care Australia, we were delighted to promote the Palliative Care and End of Life Care portal at the Walawaani conference in Brisbane in December. Senior Research Officer Darren Deves who looks after the portal content was on our stand and met with a wide range of organisations who would benefit from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources in their work to support patients and their families. [Palliative Care and End-of-Life Care - Health System - Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet \(ecu.edu.au\)](#)

The Walawaani conference was aimed at delivering a holistic sharing of knowledges and wisdom to support the returning to Spirit journey for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities.

## Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status – get live updates

After a successful launch a few months ago, our online version of the Overview is updated as new reports, data etc, become available so it is the most current and up to

date version. Our Overview is used by policy makers, by organisations to strengthen their funding submissions, teaching staff at Universities and time poor health

practitioners wanting the latest data in one place [Latest information and statistics - Health Facts - Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet](#)

## Tackling Indigenous Smoking news

HealthInfoNet's IT Manager Renae Bastholm and Senior Research Officer Ashleigh Parnell attended the National Best Practice Unit - Tackling Indigenous Smoking Jurisdictional Workshop late August in Meanjin (Brisbane). The workshop was for TIS teams from Qld, NSW, Vic and Tas. Renae and Ashleigh presented a session on finding information on the TIS website. [View the Tackling Indigenous Smoking \(TIS\) program website here.](#)

*Image right: (L-R) Renae Bastholm, NBPU TIS Program Officer Maxine Turner (Ninti One) and Ashleigh Parnell*

*Image below: Attendees at the NBPU TIS Jurisdictional workshop*



## It is the season of Birak

The Nyoongar calendar tell us it's now the season of Birak - First summer (season of the young) December – January. Birak season sees the rains easing, warm weather taking hold and our afternoons being cooled by the sea breezes. Nyoongar calendar - Indigenous Weather Knowledge - Bureau of Meteorology ([bom.gov.au](http://bom.gov.au))



## AOD Knowledge Centre user survey results

In July /August, we conducted a survey of AODKC users. There were 184 respondents. The results were very positive with 94% of users expressing satisfaction and an impressive 98% saying they would recommend it to others. Some key points below:

- 42% of respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 90% felt the Knowledge Centre was a culturally safe resource
- 91% of all respondents found the website easy to use
- 92% rated the quality of the website's information highly
- 83% felt the site helped them build skills in reducing harms from AOD.

"I always go to the AOD Knowledge Centre first when seeking information for my work before I use Google."

"The AOD Knowledge Centre provides trustworthy resources for teaching and learning."

"I used the AOD Knowledge Centre to educate clients on harmful aspects of substance abuse."

## HealthBulletin user survey results

- 63% of our users access the Bulletin website from the email. You can subscribe here for updates

[Homepage - HealthBulletin](#)

- 90% said it helped them make more informed decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- 90% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents strongly agreed it is culturally safe.
- 97% satisfied and 94% said it provides information that meets their needs
- 87% said it is well designed and 88% easy to navigate
- Most users are from NSW, followed closely by WA, Qld and Victoria.
- Most users are urban (54%) and regional (34%)

Working for a national health agency, the *HealthBulletin* is of significant importance... as it helps me stay abreast of research and policy. *Non-Indigenous government researcher, NSW*

I love how easy it is to keep abreast of the latest research just by checking my emails. You guys have done all the hard work in locating the articles. *Non-Indigenous educator, Queensland*

The *HealthBulletin* is used to maintain my professional currency... as an Aboriginal Health Education Manager delivering training to staff. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker, NSW*

As an Aboriginal Narrative Therapist and PhD student, the *HealthBulletin* alerts me to new research that has come out and new methods that might aid my clients. *Aboriginal allied health professional, NSW*

The *HealthBulletin* has enormously helped with finding credible, evidence-based resources... to strengthen the advocacy pieces of the organisation I work with. *Non-Indigenous NGO Policy Officer, WA*

## Cultural Safety Portal popular with health practitioners

Our Cultural Safety for Health Professionals Portal continues to gain traction. Our most frequent users are Nurses, Occupational Therapist, Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Health Practitioner and Medical Practitioners. In the last 6 months there have been close to 20,000 page views. Nurse educators also use the content in

their teaching *Cultural Safety for Health Professionals - Health Professionals - Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet.*

## Conferences

- Compass NTPHN Darwin
- National Rural Health Conference Perth
- NAATSIHWP Perth
- APSAD Canberra
- CATSINaM Perth
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia Conference Adelaide



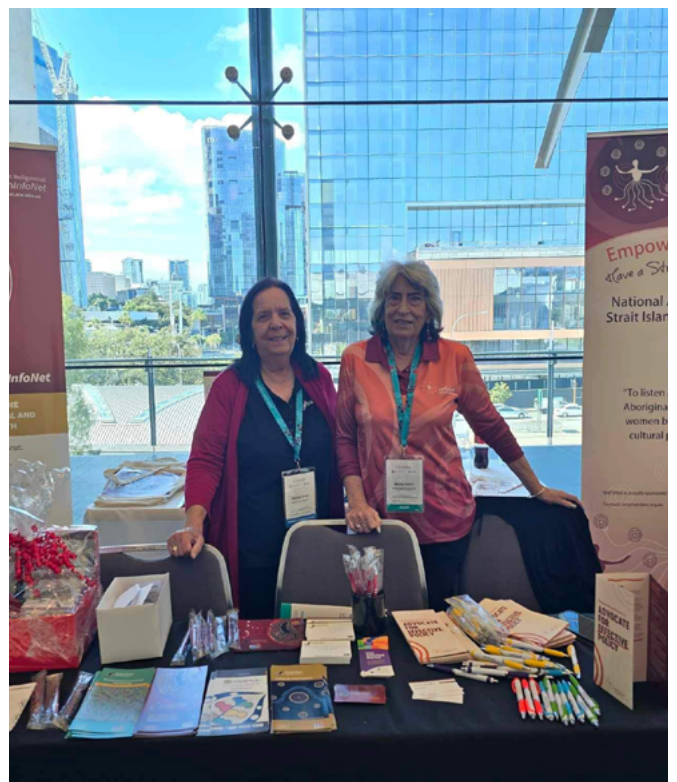
Michelle Elwell and Sabina Knight at the CATSINaM conference



Hamper winner Danielle Jocusen with Marianne Durbin at the NRHA conference



Jo Hoareau with Nathan from CAHMA at APSAD Conference



Michelle Elwell and Wendy Anders at the NAATSIHWP Conference



Bep Uink with Dr Sanchia Shibasaki COO CATSINaM Conference



Michelle Elwell with hamper winner Stafford Eades at NATSIHWIP conference



Michelle Elwell with hamper winner Kaitlyn Saunders-Hill at the CATSINaM conference



Rana Rankin delegate at Compass conference in Darwin

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[healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au](http://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au)

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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