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## Director's Communiqué

### Director's welcome

Once again, the year has flown by. They say time flies when you are having fun... I am not sure that the adage applies during COVID times. It has been a challenging year in so many ways, personally and professionally. But... I remain eternally grateful for the ongoing support we have received at the HealthInfoNet. Reflecting on the year, I am confident that we have achieved most of our goals.

We have remained 'open for business' all year despite the lockdowns, thanks mainly to the wonderful staff, but facilitated by our cloud-based project management systems that allow us to work seamlessly from anywhere in the world. We have maintained contact through Zoom, and other online communication means. Our user statistics have dropped a little, but we feel that is to be expected due to the lockdowns and other COVID impacts. One area where we have not managed to meet our targets has been face to face meetings at conferences, workshop roundtables and other meetings. We think this may also explain some of the changes in user statistics. Meeting people face to face and introducing them to the HealthInfoNet resources is a key engagement and relationship building activity. I managed one interstate trip (to Canberra) this year and then was at risk of being locked out of my home state because I transited through Melbourne just prior to an outbreak (Mind you, I really enjoyed catching up with those I was able to schedule meetings with). Some of our staff have been reluctant to travel for fear of being locked out of WA and kept apart from their families for extended periods. I totally get that. We are looking forward to the easing of

restrictions over the coming weeks though I don't think we will go back to previous levels of travel for some time.

Dr Uncle Mick Adams and I had the great pleasure of meeting and working with a number of Aboriginal people and communities in South West WA to explore the ways that they have been accessing and responding to COVID information, particularly online information. There was widespread anxiety about access to trustworthy information, and that was feeding vaccine hesitancy. People told us they wanted to hear from trusted community members who had been vaccinated, and they wanted health officials to come and sit with them to discuss their concerns. As you can see in the story later in my Communique, we had a good response from the media that amplified the voices of the people and communities we met with. We will be going back to these communities very soon to provide further feedback and to seek their validation of the results we plan to report. My sincere thanks to all those who participated, particularly Brett Hill, our Cultural Consultant who facilitated access and introductions to each community.

The data gathering workshops were designed and co-facilitated by Associate Professor Stuart Medley from ECU, an expert in the use of visual data collection methods.

As we approach the end of 2021 and look forward with optimism to 2022, I want to thank all our supporters and friends.

To our funding partners... it starts with your confidence in our ability to deliver our services in support of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector workforce. We are

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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.*

honoured by the trust and confidence you show in our work. To our wonderful Advisory Board (including this year, our two young people's representatives Taylor and Stuart), your guidance and support makes us much stronger and safer in our everyday work). To our formal partners, it is wonderful to work alongside Australia's peak health organisations to achieve our shared aspirations to make a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities throughout Australia. Our Honorary Consultants provide the expertise to ensure that we represent the health and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, authentically, honestly and respectfully... thank you. Last and by no means least, to our users throughout Australia, we exist to serve you to the best of our ability to ensure that you can continue to do your remarkable work to support your communities... thank you.

I wish you, your loved ones, friends and colleagues all the very best for the Festive Season however you choose to celebrate. See you all again (hopefully with a return to face to face meetings) in 2022.



Professor Neil Drew

## ECU acknowledges our work



Some of the HealthInfoNet team with the award which was accepted by Neil Drew on behalf of the HealthInfoNet.

The work of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet has been recognised by Edith Cowan University as a part of the 2021 High-achieving Researchers Scheme. As Director of the HealthInfoNet, I accepted a special award in recognition of generating the highest external research income across all research themes at ECU. The HealthInfoNet is aligned to the ECU research theme of Society and Culture. The scheme rewards and recognises researchers who have produced high quality research outputs or attracted substantial and consistent

external research funding over 2018-2020.

I was delighted to accept the award on behalf of the HealthInfoNet team. I would like to acknowledge and thank all our funding partners and users, including the Australian Department of Health, which has funded the HealthInfoNet since its inception. I also want to thank our staff who continue to strive to be the best we can be in pursuit of positive health and wellbeing for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities we serve throughout Australia.

## Dr Uncle Mick Adams on expert panel



**12 August**  
11am - 12pm AEST

Hosted by **Dr Summer May Finlay** in discussion with expert panellists



**Raglan Maddox**  
PhD MPH



**Dr Mark Wenitong**



**Adjunct Professor**  
**Dr Mick Adams**

**KT & Coffee Webinar Series**

**Indigenous Knowledge Translation**

Dr Uncle Mick Adams was one of the panel experts in The Lowitja Institute's KT & coffee Webinar series on 12 August. With half the country in lockdown, it was a wonderful opportunity to hear from this panel. We continue our strong partnership with The Lowitja Institute (as a partner organisation, membership of our Advisory Board, and we are part of their Members Community).

## AOD Reference group meeting



We were delighted to welcome in person some of the WA based Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre reference group members to our meeting in September, with the other members joining us online. The user statistics continue to grow each year and confirm how important this evidenced based AOD information is to the sector. This year we have seen a 14% increase in pageviews and a 22% increase in sessions.

*In person attendees at the meeting. (Left to right) Vilma FitzGerald, Joanne Hoareau, Dennis Gray (Adjunct Professor at NDRI) Neil Drew, Anna Stearne (NDRI) Ashleigh Parnell.*

## Our Journal has a new name



For over 40 years, the Journal has been part of the *HealthBulletin*, but as of last year is now published via ECU's online repository via BePress. Nothing has changed other than how articles are submitted and viewed. It has, however, given us access to an international audience that we didn't have previously and encouragingly, the stats are growing. The newly designed journal (with a new logo and website) has accumulated over 2000 readers worldwide and is becoming increasingly visible and accessible to researchers and other readers.

The new name - [Journal of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet](#) - reflects the history that the journal is a product of the *HealthInfoNet*.

To celebrate the launch of the journal's new name, the journal is encouraging submissions to accompany two Special Editions in 2022. Each year the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet commissions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health topic reviews, which are subject to blind peer review and published as Special Editions in the journal (follow [this](#)



[link](#) to see the latest published health topic review).

In 2022, the following reviews will be published:

- *a Review of cannabis use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*
- *a Review of diabetes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*

Submissions may cover any evidence-based aspect of either cannabis use or diabetes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and can be full or brief research reports. All manuscripts will be subject to blind peer review. See our [Contributor's page](#) for further information and [submission preparation guidelines](#). The closing date for submission is **Thursday, 23 December 2021**.

## Aboriginal Natural helpers help naturally



*The consultation team with participants at the Mandurah workshop held at the Winjan Aboriginal Corporation facility in August.*

I am delighted that an ECU research project funded by the Western Australian government has been consulting with natural helpers in Aboriginal communities in the south west and Perth urban areas of Western Australia.

Led by Dr Uncle Mick Adams, Senior Aboriginal Research Fellow at the Australian Indigenous Health *InfoNet*, and supported by community Cultural Consultant Brett Hill, the project has been asking natural helpers about their experiences of Covid-19.

The workshops, held in Narrogin, Bunbury, Mandurah and Armadale attended by over 60 people, have been very revealing. Despite the overwhelming weight of information available, many participants feel that they still lacked information that they could trust. Natural helpers are those in the community

who are naturally turned to in times of crisis for information and support. A particular focus was to explore where people are getting their information from and how trustworthy they feel those sources are. Using a visual methods approach developed for the project in collaboration with ECU's Associate Professor Stuart Medley, participants visually 'mapped' their sources of information from those that were nearest to them and trusted, to those that were further away and considered less reliable.

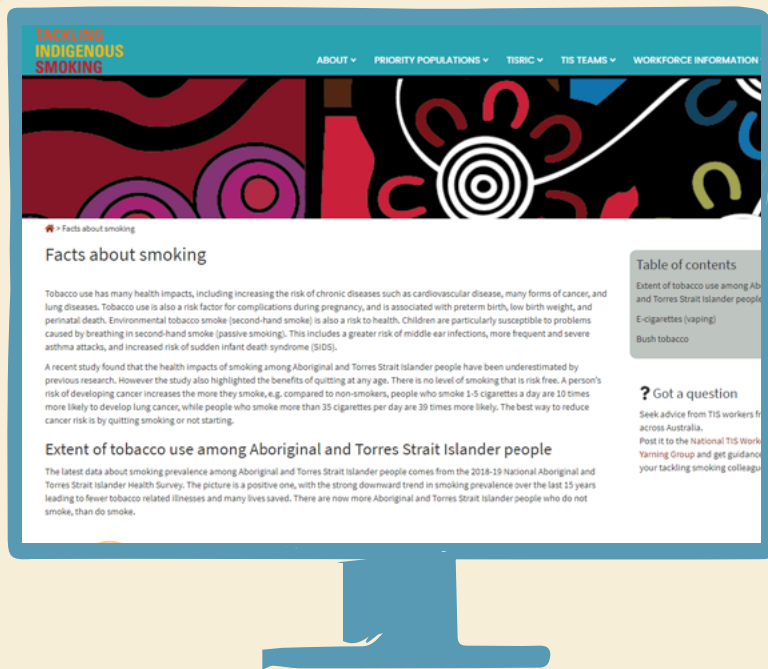
Another very strong theme is that people want resources that are visual and simple to understand. The team, along with the project Cultural Consultant Brett Hill, will be returning to each community in the coming months to get community endorsement of the findings, which will be compiled in a

report to the Western Australian government. The preliminary results shed some light on why vaccine rates in Aboriginal communities are low.

There was great interest in the preliminary findings. The story was pitched by ECU exclusively to ABC, which resulted in widespread coverage: including ABC Radio National (AM), [ABC Online](#), ABC TV and several ABC radio stations. There were 179 media mentions, reaching a total audience of 27,880,423 people, worth an estimated advertising value of \$257,894. Here is one of the articles [Noongar woman Charmaine Councillor wants local faces promoting vaccinations - ABC News](#).

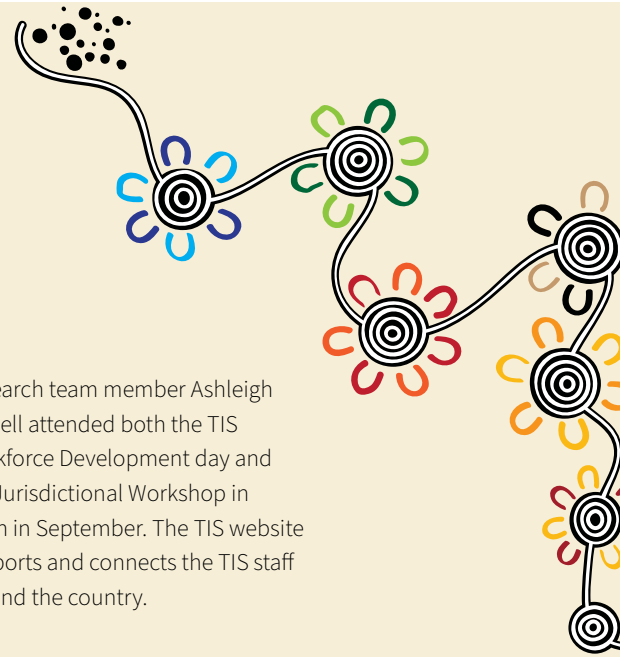
We are delighted that we could assist to amplify the voices of the people and communities we worked with.

## Tackling Indigenous Smoking events



Research team member Ashleigh Parnell attended both the TIS Workforce Development day and WA Jurisdictional Workshop in Perth in September. The TIS website supports and connects the TIS staff around the country.

**NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE UNIT**  
**TACKLING INDIGENOUS SMOKING**



## Healing Right Way

[ECU's Healing Right Way project](#), on which I am an Associate Investigator, has contributed to the Stroke Foundation's new booklet helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians cope with life after a stroke. Statistics show Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are more than twice as likely than non-Aboriginal Australians to suffer a stroke and are likely to have the stroke at a much younger age. The new booklet, called [Our Stroke Journey](#), was launched during National Stroke Week, covers everything people need to know about life after a stroke. Our [Stroke Journey](#) was made specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and was created in collaboration with Aboriginal organisations and community members. It includes stories from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors of stroke, their families, and Aboriginal health professionals.



## ECU Elder joins us for morning tea



It was wonderful to host a morning tea with special guest Dr Nan Roma Winmar, ECU's Elder-in-Residence to hear some of her extensive and inspiring experiences

and achievements, and for her to meet our staff. Dr Winmar is a respected Noongar Elder, a passionate advocate for education, language, arts, and is an accomplished

artist. She is also involved in several research projects involving Noongar language and song promoting Noongar language and cultural activities.

## Presentation about our cancer section to AHCWA staff



*In September, Tam Swann and Hannah Tarrant had the opportunity through Cancer Council WA to update AHCWA staff about our comprehensive cancer section.*

## Engaging at conferences



Rural Health West Conference delegates Michelle Kickett and Christine Ross visit our stand.

Despite border closures, we managed to take part in several conferences to promote our work, mainly as presenters, as we had six abstracts accepted.

- National Allied Health conference August – presented online
- AAFTC Conference September – presented online
- Oceania Palliative Care conference September – provided inserts as physical packs were sent to 1000 delegates
- NDRI Symposium October – attended in Perth and had a display table
- WANADA Symposium October – exhibited in Perth
- Rural Health West – exhibited in Perth
- APSAD – presented online
- Rural Medicine Conference October – presented online
- SNAICC Conference – presented online
- ANZMH Indigenous SEWB Conference – presented online
- IAHA Conference – virtual stand.



WANADA Conference Annette Pepper (Aboriginal Services Officer at WACHS) (left), Ashleigh Parnell (centre) and Rachael Ferris (icare outreach at Community Drug and Alcohol Service) (right).



Courtney King showing 3rd year medical students at Notre Dame how to access our resources.



HealthInfoNet Research Team Leader Jane Burns at the Rural Health West Conference.

## Presentation to ECU's nursing students



Two of our research team, Michelle Pierre and Tam Swann, gave a comprehensive update to students from the School of Nursing and Midwifery in August. It was an invaluable opportunity to support students in their study and future work

## HealthInfoNet 24th Birthday celebration

Another year has flown, and we celebrated quietly with a staff morning tea at our offices. It's important for us to mark this important milestone as each year means our work continues to be freely accessible to the workforce who need evidence based, relevant, up to date resources to support them in their work.



## Staff news



Marianne Durbin and Stephanie Huynh

We welcomed Marianne Durbin to our research team in August. Research staff member Avinna Trzesinski who took leave to work in Broome for a year, will be working remotely for us on an upcoming cannabis review and returns to the office next year. A former research staff member Kathy Ride has been contracted to work on a review of diabetes for us.

In September, we farewelled ECU Nursing cadet Natalie Stoksik who was with us for a year in our research area and is shortly to complete her final practical placement in Derby, WA before graduating as a Nurse. In October, we also farewelled research team member Tamara Swann who will be part of

a team working on a randomised trial at the Institute for Respiratory Health in WA in the coming year. Our Social Media Content Creator Joey Chua has also left to take up an interstate opportunity, and we wish them all the very best. We welcomed Stephanie Huynh, who joined us in October to take up the role.

Our staff continue to attend cultural events as part of their ongoing PD training. Pauline Shanley enjoyed a cultural tour with Kuku Yalanji Cultural Habitat Tours at Cooya Beach while on holiday in far north Queensland. She then worked from home for two weeks after the holiday as part of the WA quarantine requirements.



Pauline Shanley with the catch of the day!

## Congratulations to ACT Senior Australian of the Year nominee

I'm delighted to hear of the nomination of Julie Tongs OAM, CEO of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, acknowledging her long term contribution as an advocate working to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Knowledge exchange via social media

Since implementing our Knowledge exchange via social media strategy a few years ago, our engagement rates continue to grow across all of our social media channels – LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and added this year Instagram.

Keep up to date and follow us, like us and share us on our socials. Every touch point with us is a learning opportunity.



LinkedIn



Twitter



Facebook



Instagram