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Director's Communiqué

Director's welcome

Welcome to my mid-year Communiqué. I hope this finds you, your loved ones, friends and colleagues all safe and well. In WA we have had relatively few periods of lockdown and my thoughts and empathy are with those of you in other states that have been more impacted by lockdowns. I sincerely hope we are on a path to a post COVID world where we can once more enjoy the freedoms we took for granted prior to the pandemic; travelling if we felt like it, being with loved ones when we wanted or needed to be with them and so on. My grandson Jack in the UK turned one recently and while he is responding to 'Poppa' on the phone with smiles and waves and has even begun blowing kisses (and raspberries!), these do not replace the face-to-face cuddles. However, in what has become a heartfelt mantra for so many of us, 'at least they are safe and well'. At this time of the year, we are well into our reporting season where we provide reports of our progress against contracted deliverables to our many funding partners. While this is an intense time for all staff it is also a time when I am reminded what a wonderful privilege it is to be invited into the lives and activities of so many amazing people and organisations. As you will see in this Communiqué, we have managed a couple of trips interstate in recent months. Not nearly as many as we usually do, but they have been very welcome. I breathed a sigh of gratitude to be out and about again to meet with many of you face to face. Unfortunately, the borders have been closed again to many, for long periods. Technological solutions to communication and meeting have grown exponentially in their reliability and accessibility but perhaps I



am just a little old fashioned, but, as I said in my last Communiqué, nothing beats catching up with people over a cuppa. One unexpected bonus has been that I have managed to do some travel within Western Australia. So, I had hoped not to still be talking about the impact of COVID in this Communiqué but... here we are... Enjoy, this brief update of some of the things we have been up to since I last wrote. Stay safe and stay well.

Professor Neil Drew

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@ Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet.

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 Nyoongar nation, the traditional owners of the lands where our offices are located.

Perth Roundtable



Our Perth Roundtable was held in May (it had been rescheduled due to a snap lockdown in Perth) and was a great opportunity to hear about some of our partners' work and for attendees to network.

Our presenters were:

- Tim Shackleton, Chief Executive Officer, Rural Health West
- Simon Lenton, Director, National Drug Research Institute
- Sandy Lukjanowski, Chief Executive Officer, Injury Matters
- Amanda Collins-Clinch, Executive Manager Workforce and Sector Development, Aboriginal Health Council of WA.



(Top) Simon Lenton, Tim Shackleton, Sandy Lukjanowski and Amanda Collins-Clinch. (Above) Neil Drew welcoming attendees.

HealthInfoNet Advisory Board appoints two young members

On advice from our Advisory Board members, we invited expressions of interest from around the country for two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to join the Advisory Board. The two youth representatives will provide important feedback from the health sector from a young person's perspective.

I am pleased to announce that the two successful applicants are Taylor Bliss and Stuart McGrath and I welcome them and look forward to their valuable contribution.

Taylor is a Wiradjuri woman employed as the Operations Manager/Social and Emotional Well-being Worker at Forbes only Aboriginal Medical Service, Yoorana Gunya Family Healing Centre Aboriginal Corporation. Stuart is an Aboriginal



Taylor Bliss.

Health Practitioner and is currently studying a degree in nursing at Charles Darwin University.

Our second online meeting for the year was held in June.



Uncle Mick Adams with Stuart McGrath.

Broome Roundtable

Our Broome Roundtable was held in June and gave us the opportunity to update organisations about what's new on the HealthInfoNet and AOD Knowledge Centre websites, as well as new portals and reviews.

Guest speakers from Broome included:

- Dr Jonathan Blundell Chief Medical Officer and Delia Lawford Practice Manager, BRAMS
- Jenny Bedford, Executive Manager Remote Services and Danielle Thorne - Operations Manager, Remote Services, KAMS
- Matt Burrows, Chief Executive Officer, Boab Health.

We were delighted to welcome all attendees, and it was lovely to meet up with Angus Turner, one of our honorary Consultants who also heads up the Lions Outback Vision, and to meet Dr Robert Isaacs, who has recently launched a biography about his extraordinary life 'Two Cultures, One Story'.



KAMS presents Danielle Thorne Operations Manager and Jenny Bedford Executive Manager, Remote Services.



BRAMS presents Dr Jonathan Blundell Chief Medical Officer and Delia Lawford Practice Manager.



Presenter Matt Burrows, CEO, Boab Health.



Attendees Dr Robert Isaacs, Maria Morgan and Sasha Bailey.

Other meetings in Broome



When the fresh water meets the saltwater by Bec Morgan, is featured on our sexual health section of our website.

In Broome, we also caught up with a staff member, Avinna Trzesinski, working up there for a year on a leave of absence who has joined the team at the KAMS population health unit. She's pictured right with Bec Morgan whose art we have purchased for our website.



Bec Morgan Acting Remote Services Program Support Coordinator with Avinna.

We also managed to have a farewell dinner with Anomie, a highly respected member of our staff who has moved on to the next big adventure in her life by moving with her family to Broome. She is now working with Environs Kimberley, and will be looking after their communications, promoting the work they do to support sustainable use of the land and waters of the Kimberley and cultural care projects, in conjunction with the different Traditional Owners of the region.

We thank her most sincerely for her dedicated service and wish her all the very best for the future.

Our Development & Marketing Manager gave an update to GPs attending a workshop run by PEPA in Broome and let them know about our Palliative care and end-of-life portal, which has culturally appropriate resources for patients, family members and community.

I also met with Men's Outreach and staff from the Nulungu Research Institute at Notre Dame.



HealthInfoNet Consultant Angus Turner (Director Lions Outback Vision) and Neil Drew.

Vale former Advisory Board member

We express our deepest condolences to the family of Ms Malera-Bandjolan who, was one of the HealthInfoNet's founding Advisory Board members in 2009. She was appointed by then Director Neil Thomson. Ms Malera-Bandjolan was a proud Bundjalung woman from the northern rivers of New South Wales – Australia and died at home on Country with family in February 2021.

Ms Malera-Bandjolan served on the Advisory Board from 2009 until her passing in 2021. She was an active contributing member

despite her ongoing health issues and will be greatly missed by all the Board members.

Ms Malera-Bandjolan was a strong supporter of the HealthInfoNet since it began and made an enormous contribution to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. I personally, truly appreciated the many wonderful conversations and collaborations we had and will miss her generous and always insightful advice and guidance. Her legacy will not be forgotten.

She was also the CEO and Editor of 'The

Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal', the only national publication written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers. The Journal is distributed nationally and internationally and has been in circulation since 1977.

- This brief tribute was authorised by Ms Malera-Bandjolan's family

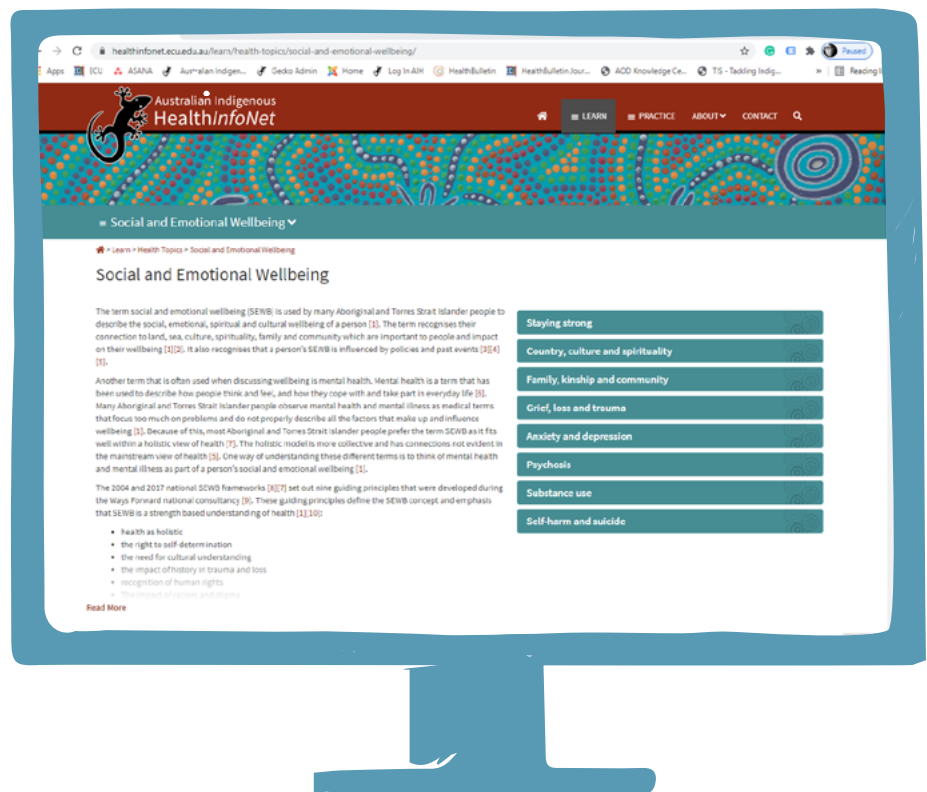
**Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet
Advisory Board**

Expanded Social and emotional wellbeing portal

Our existing social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) portal has been expanded to further emphasise the holistic meaning of social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This new content is based on substantial evidence around models of SEWB, which will provide a strengthened coverage of updated resources for both policymakers and health practitioners.

<https://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-topics/social-and-emotional-wellbeing/>

New subtopics on the already comprehensive portal include *Staying strong*; *Country, culture and spirituality* and *Family, kinship and community*. Each of these subtopics will provide high-quality information for the health sector workforce about relevant publications, resources and programs. The existing subtopics have been changed to fit within these models. The free to access portal will continue to be regularly updated.



New Sexual health review

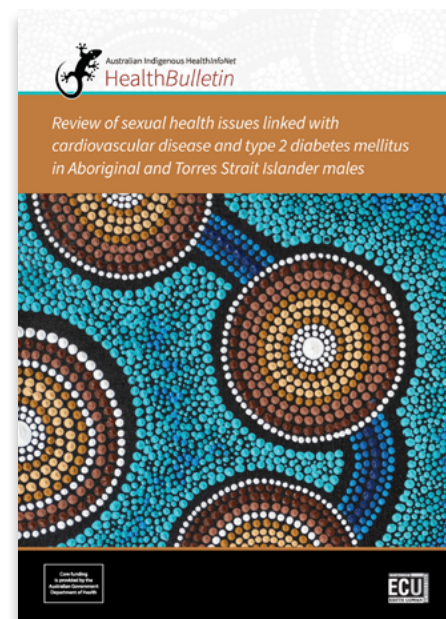
The latest publication from the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, a **Review of sexual health issues linked with cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes mellitus in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males** confirms that the links between male sexual health and chronic conditions are well established, however, there is poor knowledge and awareness among both health professionals and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males. There is also a lack of research and data about sexual problems among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and how they are managed.

One of the authors, Dr Mick Adams, says, "Most males are suffering in silence, so there is a need to improve knowledge about male sexual health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to guide health promotion programs and health services. The growing evidence base about the links

between male sexual health and general health, including shared risk factors can provide opportunities to address not only sexual health concerns of males but also potentially improve their general health".

This review outlines the mounting evidence that erectile dysfunction (ED) can be a sign of future cardiovascular disease or type 2 diabetes. This has the potential to motivate males of all ages to seek help if they experience ED, and for health professionals to become skilled in discussing sexual health with patients. This requires further consideration of cultural factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and the social and historical context in which their health and wellbeing exists.

Accompanying the review is an infographic *Summary* of the key information, a short video and a factsheet.



Sexual health review, summary, video and factsheet

New review of FASD

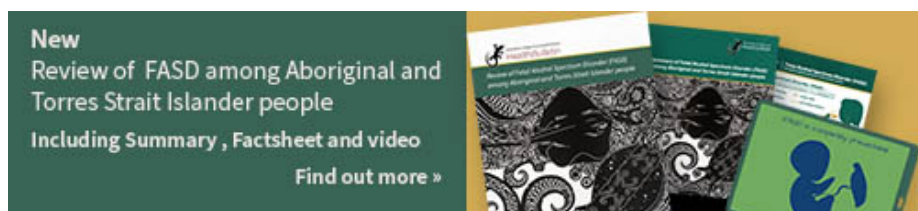
We were delighted to commission this important review and partner with the authors to provide a comprehensive and sensitive review of the evidence around FASD with clear recommendations for future action.

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre has published a **Review of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**. The review states that FASD is a preventable, lifelong disability. FASD disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; however, there are limited prevalence statistics available in the mainstream Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Accompanying the review is a short video of key points from the

review, a summary version of the review with infographics and a factsheet.

The review explores the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in preventing FASD and proposes that programs that work best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are those that are done with, for and by the communities and their leaders. Authors Sharynne Hamilton, Michael Doyle and Carol Bower, recommend that, where possible,

federal and state governments should choose to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to develop their own evidence-based, fit-for-community FASD prevention, intervention, and management strategies. Men are largely absent in FASD interventions. Co-author Michael Doyle says, "There is a need to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in research to understand the role they can play in the prevention, treatment and management of FASD".



Conferences and events

We attended the following conferences as an exhibitor.

1. PHAA national conference
2. AADANT Drug and Alcohol Conference
3. AIATSIS Research Conference
4. Mental Health Nurses WA conference



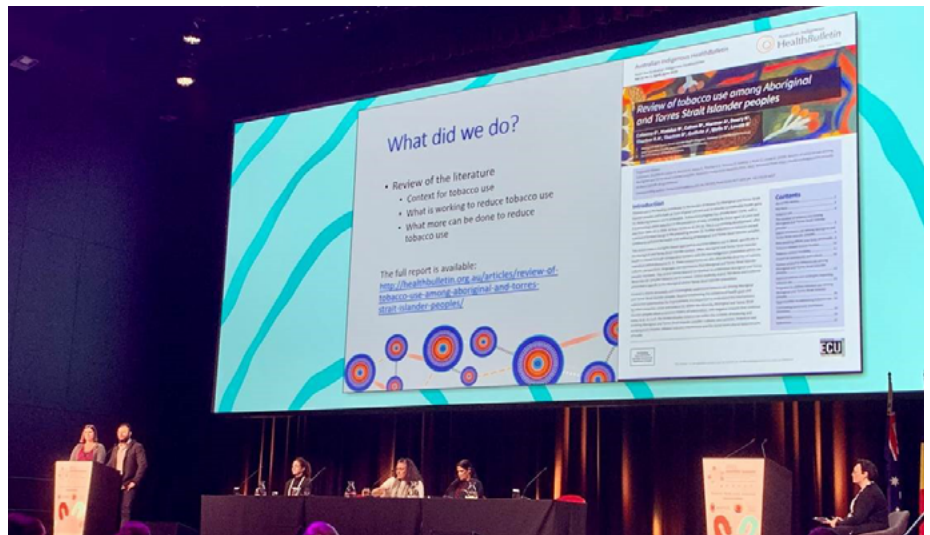
Tamara Swann and Vilma Fitzgerald at PHAA Conference in May, Perth WA.



Cecily Cropley, Mental Health Advocacy Service Mental Health Nurses WA Conference.



PHAA Conference in May, Perth WA.



Emily Colonna and Raglan Maddox presenting about our Tobacco Review. The presentation was titled: Past, present and future: tobacco use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

NT AOD sector awards night



HealthInfoNet's Ashleigh Parnell (left) presenting the award to the CAAPS Healthy Families Program winner.

We sponsored the 'Excellence in Indigenous AOD Programs' and the winner was the CAAPS Healthy Families Program. This award was presented to a non-government organisation (NGO) in the NT with an alcohol and other drugs program specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Australians. The program must have been operational in the last year and will have demonstrated innovation, excellence and contribution to minimising the harms of alcohol and other drug use for individuals.

Darwin visit

Our Development & Marketing Manager met with health sector organisations in May and updated them on our new portals and reviews. It had been a few years since we were last there and it was a good opportunity to meet with organisations like NTPHN, NTCOSS, AADANT, RDH palliative care, Aboriginal health division and customer

engagement team, NT Health, Cancer Council and NT Healthy Living.

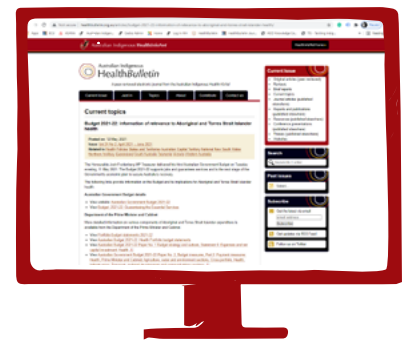
The Royal Darwin Hospital put on a special morning tea for national Reconciliation Week. We had the opportunity to be there and hand out promotional materials to medical staff.



Amanda Hart Engagement Manager Royal Darwin Hospital and Laura Blowers organised a Reconciliation Week morning tea for Hospital staff.



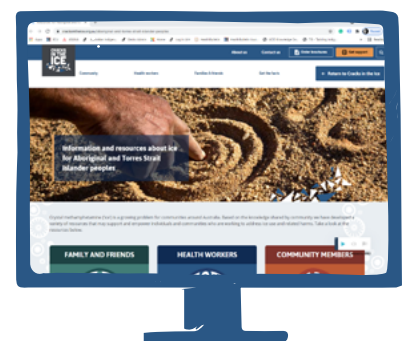
Some of the Royal Darwin Hospital staff enjoying the morning tea.



Budget 2021-22: information of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

Each year, we bring together all the information of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health from the May Federal budget making it easy for our users to access this in one place.

[Link to articles here](#)



Cracks in the Ice website launched

Uncle Mick Adams and I are on the Advisory Group for this project Cracks in the Ice website launched on 21st July.

[Information and resources about ice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples](#)

Annual review of our work in 2020

Now available on our website, take a look at our latest review of what was achieved in 2020 despite the challenges of COVID-19. Highlights include:

- In May, we reached a milestone of 40,000 entries in our library database
- We had a 9% increase in site visits over the year
- Our social media engagement grew by 36%.

Annual Review 2020



Online presentation to Aboriginal Health Practitioners in Broome



In June, we were invited to conduct a live online presentation about finding resources on the HealthInfoNet for the Cancer Council WA's Cancer Education Program for Aboriginal Health Professionals in Broome, WA. Pictured above are presenters Tamara and Hannah.

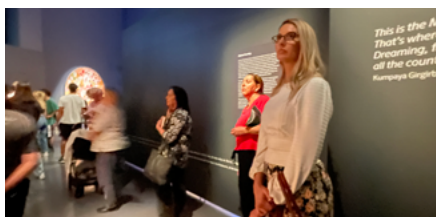
Cancer Council WA fundraiser

In June we held a special morning tea to raise funds as part of the Biggest Morning Tea campaign. This was held at our offices. There was a presentation by Cancer Council WA staff. Kristy Stewart, their Aboriginal Projects Coordinator was joined by Monica and Colleen. We raised over \$300 from staff donations.

Hannah Tarrant, Kristy Stewart, Monica, Colleen and Tamara Swann.



Cultural outings for our staff



Boola Bardip Aboriginal Tour of the new WA Museum.

We had a Guided Boola Bardip Aboriginal Tour of the new WA Museum and also saw the Seven Sisters exhibition which used mixed mediums of weaving, film and art.

A staff member visiting the south west went on a cultural tour where local Elder, Iszac Webb, shared his Wadandi knowledge and culture of the river, known as the Woodjup Bilya in the south west of WA.

Reconciliation Week saw staff attend a flag raising event on the Mount Lawley campus. Some staff also attended an ECU workshop called 'Who are the Stolen Generations' and made flowers to be part of a project which incorporates these into the final piece.



Iszac Webb.