

Director's Communiqué

Issue 19:
April 2019

Director's welcome

Welcome to my first Communiqué for 2019. The year is already flying by. I can't believe it is already April. That is a measure of how we have hit the ground running in 2019. There has hardly been time to draw breath. I know from my conversations with many of you that you have had the same busy start to the year. Earlier in April I had the great pleasure of hosting a HealthInfoNet Roundtable in Sydney (see below). I am always absolutely delighted to host these events. They bring together many of our partners, colleagues and friends to share a little about each other's work and to

just catch up for a deep breath in our busy lives. The levels of collegiality and support are really gratifying and reinforce for me once again how wonderful it is to be a part of a national movement towards positive change. You will also see that we have once again published our annual *Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status*. This year we are particularly pleased to launch our new look summary. It is more visual and emphasises the many positive initiatives and outcomes that have occurred across the sector. We will continue to adopt a more strengths based approach in all

our work. The HealthInfoNet Knowledge Exchange Products Team is bringing a renewed focus and consistency to our work in this area. I look forward to seeing many of you in the coming months. In the meantime if there is anything at all we can do to support you in your work please let me know.



Professor Neil Drew



New Advisory Board members

We've had a few changes to our Advisory Board. With unanimous support from the Advisory Board I invited CEO of Indigenous Allied Health Australia, Donna Murray and CEO of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association, Karl Briscoe to join our national

Advisory Board. I am delighted these two peak bodies have accepted.

Melanie Robinson is the new CEO of CATSINaM and replaces Janine Mohamed. Also I was delighted to see that Janine Mohamed is currently Acting CEO at our partner organization Lowitja Institute.



Donna Murray CEO IAHA



Karl Briscoe CEO NATSIHWA

Zoom meetings



We are enjoying our new microphone as we engage with organisations around the country. 😊



Three research staff setting up for a zoom meeting



Sydney Roundtable

In April we held a Roundtable with peak bodies and organisations based in Sydney. It was an opportunity to provide an update on our work as well as facilitate networking with all participants. We had approximately 45 attend from a range of organisations across the health sector.

We also invited representatives from four of our NSW partner organisations to speak about their work. I was delighted to welcome:

1. Carmel Tebbutt, CEO - Mental Health Coordinating Council
2. Tricia Keys, Global General Manager - Public Health - Brien Holden Vision Institute Foundation
3. Frank Beard and Katrina Clark - National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance
4. Scott McGill, Deputy CEO -ASHM

The Roundtable was a great success and provided us with a wealth of valuable feedback that we will incorporate into our everyday work.



Sydney Roundtable presenters April 2019

Changes to WA Tenancy laws

Two of our staff attended the 'Freedom to Fly' artwork unveiling with Aboriginal artist Barbara Bynder inspired

by WA tenancy law changes to support renters affected by family violence. The event was organised by the Community Education Team, Consumer Protection, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety.



HealthInfoNet Christine Potter and Tara Hoyne with Artist Barbara Bynder (centre)

Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2018

Once again we are proud to publish the Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2018. The Overview is our flagship knowledge exchange resource.

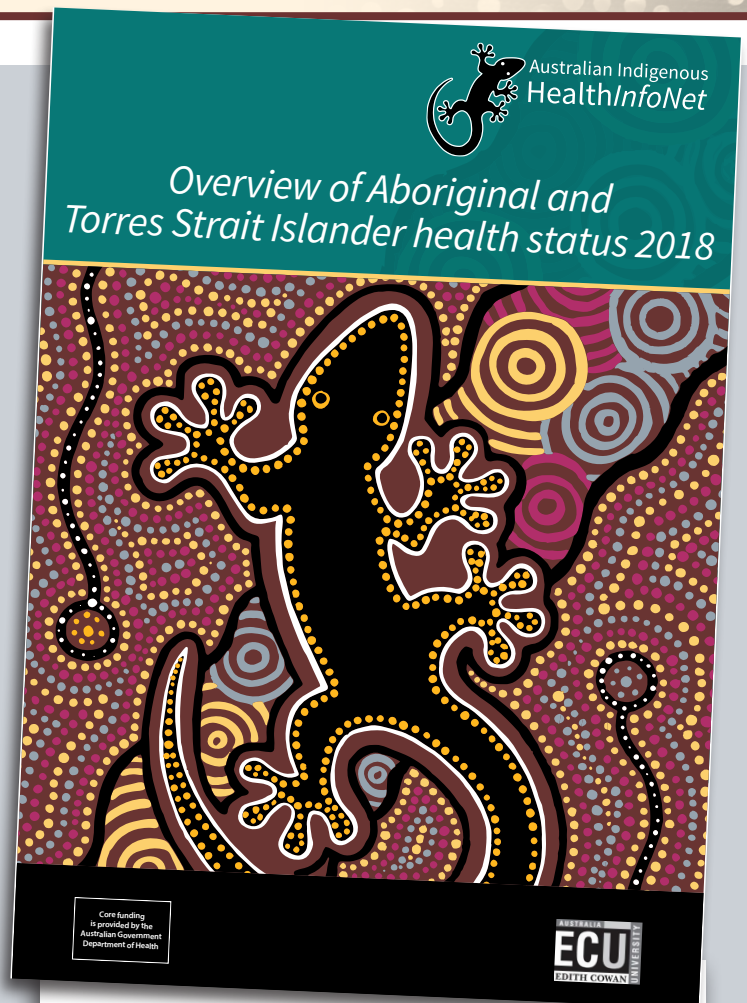
The 2018 Overview shows that despite some improvements, there are still significant health disparities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians, which supports the need for the broader refresh of the Closing the Gap targets. The Overview supports a strengths based approach and as such we have highlighted areas where improvements have been achieved or positive outcomes realised. The Overview provides a comprehensive summary of the most recent indicators of the health and current health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

<https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-facts/overview-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-health-status/36501/?title=Overview%20of%20Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20health%20status%2C%202018>

As part of our commitment to knowledge exchange, we also produced:

- A plain language Summary version of the Overview which uses infographics instead of being text based
<https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-facts/summary-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-health/36479/?title=Summary%20of%20Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20health%20status%202018>
- PowerPoints that can be used as a teaching resource
<https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/publications/36501/>

This year we have made some significant enhancements to the summary. It is now a much more accessible and readable combination of text and infographic content. We have also provided clear information on positive outcomes as part of our ongoing commitment to strengths based approaches. In the conclusion to the Overview I also made some comments about some other key areas that I believe ought to be part of our thinking around the Closing the Gap Refresh so please have a read and let me know what you think.



Births and pregnancy

There were 20,400 births registered in Australia where one or both parents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in 2017 [12]. This accounts for 7% of all births in Australia for that year.

Compared with non-Indigenous women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women had more babies and had them when they were younger [12].

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers in 2017 [12]



25.6 years was the median age (the median age of non-Indigenous mothers was 31.3 years)



20-24 years was the age-group with the highest levels of fertility



13% of mothers were teenagers

Birthweight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies

In 2016, babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers weighed an average of 3,216 grams, 125 grams less than babies born to non-Indigenous mothers [13].

Low birthweight is a birthweight of less than 2,500

grams. Babies with low birthweight are a concern because they are at greater risk of health problems and death during infancy [14]. Around 12% of babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers were of low birthweight [13].



There was a small decrease in the proportion of low birthweight babies between 2006 (12.4%) and 2016 (11.6%) [13].



The levels of low birthweight of babies varied by remoteness, from 11% of babies in major cities to 15% in very remote areas [13].



There are many factors that can have a negative impact on a baby's birthweight, one of which is smoking tobacco [14]. In 2016, 43% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers smoked during pregnancy (compared to 12% of non-Indigenous mothers) [13].

A positive trend is the decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers who smoked during pregnancy, which has decreased from 50% in 2009 to 43% in 2016 [13].



Good news

Antenatal care is care from health professionals that women receive during pregnancy. Antenatal care helps pregnant women by monitoring their health, doing blood tests and screening, and providing information and support [15]. It is recommended that women make at least seven to ten visits. Between 2010 and 2016 there was an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women attending antenatal care in their first trimester (from 41% in 2010 to 60% in 2016) [13].

Uncle Mick Adams is new Safer Families Ambassador



Uncle Mick Adams

It was a great pleasure to hear that Uncle Mick has been offered a role as a Safer Families Ambassador.

A great honour that once again reinforces what a privilege it is to have a person of his stature and reputation here at the HealthInfoNet. The purpose of the Safer Families Ambassador is to promote the work of our CRE in the broader community within the context of positioning family violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as central to the CRE's work. Uncle Mick's role will work to guide and promote the CRE's approach to Aboriginal research, promote the CRE's safe families objective, act as an advocate for addressing family violence in communities, and to champion and be a spokesperson for the Aboriginal focus across the CRE.

Conferences we attended

- NRHA - Hobart (we also ran a workshop for the AOD Knowledge Centre)
- AHCWA conference - Perth
- Ninti One workshop - Alice Springs
- Closing the Gap for Vision - Alice Springs
- National TIS Workers Workshop - Adelaide



Nadia Clements, Avinna Trzesinski, Millie Harford-Mills and Heather Wilson

National Close the Gap Day

As we do each year we held an event for our staff on 21 March and invited a guest speaker from the sector. WA State President, Michael Berry from AASA

(WA) joined us and spoke about the challenges Social Workers face when removing children from their families.



Jo Hoareau and Emma Neil from the HealthInfoNet with Michael Berry



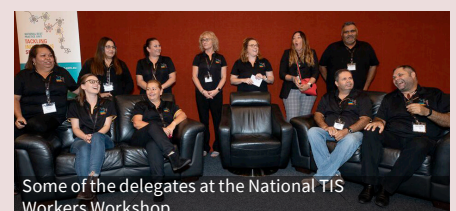
Emma Neil at the AHCWA Conference



Ninti One TIS staff at the NRHA conference in Hobart



Group CTGV19 Alice Springs



Some of the delegates at the National TIS Workers Workshop

New CATSINaM CEO visits us



CATSINaM CEO pictured centre front with some of our staff

Melanie Robinson joined us for morning tea in April while visiting Perth. It was also a great opportunity to hear about her work and plans for CATSINaM.

New partner



WACOSS
WA COUNCIL of
SOCIAL SERVICE

Ways to make a difference

West Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) is our newest partner. The WACOSS mission is to advocate for social change to improve the well-being of Western Australians and strengthen the community services sector that supports them. By challenging systems, behaviours and

attitudes that create poverty, inequality and exclusion, they strive to make the lives of all Western Australians better. As the peak body for the community service sector in Western Australia, they collaborate for meaningful action to end poverty, inequality and social injustices. They represent three hundred member organisations and individuals and approximately five hundred organisations involved in the provision of community services to the Western Australian community.

New project

We met with EMHPrac staff for a day to discuss a new SEWB project and collaboration. I'll share more about this in my next Communiqué.



David Edwards and Heidi Sturk pictured back centre with some of the HealthInfoNet staff.

Plain language version of the harmful use of alcohol review

In February, the Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre released the Plain language review of the harmful use of alcohol among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The plain language review aims to provide an easy-to-understand overview of the harmful use of alcohol among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

<https://aodknowledgecentre.ecu.edu.au/healthinonet/getContent.php?linkid=617196&title=Plain+language+review+of+the+harmful+use+of+alcohol+among+Aboriginal+and+Torres+Strait+Islander+people&linkid=617196&title=Plain+language+review+of+the+harmful+use+of+alcohol+among+Aboriginal+and+Torres+Strait+Islander+people>



Yarning place focus groups

Our Social Media Coordinator, Emily Lloyd, has completed a series of interviews with members from around the country to understand what they need from our Yarning places and how they can be revamped to provide a better experience for members. She was also demonstrating (and getting positive feedback) on a new platform for bringing like minded people together to share experiences and information. She is currently sharing what she has learned with our research staff to get their input and expects to be pilot testing the new Yarning Places in the next couple of months.

Admin staff news

Congratulations to Monique Cumming (our Administrative Assistant). She has just graduated, completing a Certificate III in Business Administration. Monique has done this through AFL Sportsready, Education & Employment. The graduation ceremony was held on the 9th of April.



Monique Cumming receiving her Certificate

Primary research news

Uncle Mick and Jesse Fleay have travelled to Darwin and Broome as part of their Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Men project <https://www.lowitja.org.au/young-men>. I had the pleasure of accompanying them on the Broome leg of their field trip and was delighted with the opportunity to meet some of the amazing people working hard to deliver positive outcomes for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. This project is in its final stages and I believe will offer valuable insights to guide our thinking and engaging with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, to provide them the best possible opportunity to realise their full potential and become the leaders of the future.



Uncle Mick in Darwin



Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service

Workshops

Below are some photos of workshops we conducted.



CAAMS



AADANT



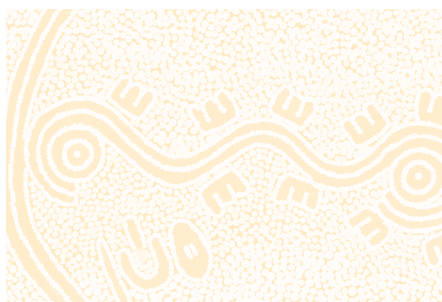
Westside Medical Perth



Sunrise Centre - Darwin

New staff member

We have a new Library Technician, Aleina Humphreys. Aleina has got off to a great start focusing on identifying and fixing broken links. As those of you who regularly use websites, broken links are an almost insurmountable problem so I am sure you will all appreciate her efforts, along with those of her colleague Senior Library Technician Graham Barker.



Impact and evaluation

The HealthInfoNet Impact and Evaluation Team in partnership with the Fred Hollow Foundation has completed the data collection phase of an important project to assess the impact of a range of knowledge exchange research products and resources. A series of interviews were conducted with the team involved in the development of the resources and with a wide range of people who have used the resources in their everyday work. We are in the process of analysing the data and already some fascinating findings are beginning to emerge.

<https://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-topics/eye-health/>



Social media update

Following the appointment of a Social Media Coordinator last year, we have been busy refining and focusing our social media presence. Our new strategy has seen the number of followers on our channels grow by 34% and the number of messages, comments and replies increase significantly.

New review looks at kava use and supply

The Australian Indigenous Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre published a new *Review of kava use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* with a particular focus on Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Kava use is restricted to a handful of communities in Arnhem Land in the NT. While most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people don't use kava, the amount of kava consumed in these communities tends to be at harmful levels and mainly by men.

The latest review, written by Dr Julia Butt from the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University, includes detailed information on the many regulation changes relating to kava in Australia, including the impacts that regulation has had on communities. This timely review also incorporates the recent proposed changes to legislation in the NT.

Other Knowledge Exchange tools for those who want the key facts and updates in a different format include a factsheet and a video, with a plain language Summary to follow. <https://aodknowledgecentre.ecu.edu.au/learn/specific-drugs/kava/>

