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Director's Communiqué

Director's welcome

There is only really one topic of conversation in this introduction to my latest Communiqué. And I am sure I will drop all the clichés. The Coronavirus pandemic is 'unprecedented', a catastrophic worldwide health crisis of biblical proportions. But we are 'all in this together'. My apologies for the clichés but it *is* unprecedented and we *are* all in this together. I would like to pay tribute to all the front-line health workers throughout the world, many of whom have made the ultimate sacrifice.

For the hundreds of thousands who have died we are in a period of global mourning, grief that is exacerbated by our inability to come together to physically support one another. But in this time of extreme adversity, we have also seen the best of us. Historically in times of crisis, people 'pull together' and support one another and it has been truly gratifying to witness the solidarity and support throughout the world. Our politicians have shown a level of compassion, solidarity and leadership that I hope will reorientate our political landscape for decades to come. The relatively small number of people doing the wrong things are vastly outweighed by the good in us (good luck to those selling 1,500 toilet rolls and 100 litres of hand sanitiser!). To the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector workforce, peak bodies such as NACCHO and to everyday people in communities throughout Australia... thank you for your outstanding and inspiring leadership, dedication and compassion.

I also want to pay my respects and give thanks to my staff at the HealthInfoNet. Like many workers through the land we transitioned to home based work. I am extremely proud of the way that our staff responded. We seamlessly maintained the service in support of the health

sector workforce to the extent that I would be very surprised if users noticed any difference in the quality of support they have received over the last few weeks. One area where they would have noticed a difference is the establishment of our [Covid-19 Portal](#). The response from users has been very positive and I am delighted that we could play a small part in supporting the community during this difficult time. We have recently transitioned back to office-based work but again I would be surprised if users noticed any difference. We have proven to ourselves that we are a flexible and agile workgroup.

Finally, there is the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is clear that our recovery will be slow and at times painful. I am grateful for the show of support and trust offered by our funding partner, the Australian Government Department of Health. Our core funding has been approved for a further 3 years, the Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre for a year and the Environmental health section for a further 2 years. This indicates to me that while we are not an essential service like the thousands of frontline health workers, we are a vital service in support of our essential services. The funding provides certainty to our dedicated staff as they continue to work to make a positive difference to the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people and communities throughout Australia.

I hope this Communiqué finds you, your loved ones, friends and colleagues all safe and well.

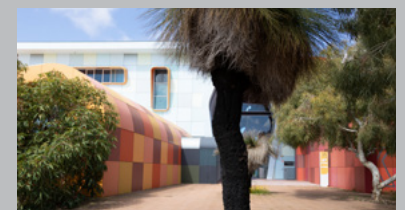


Cheers,
Neil

Professor Neil Drew

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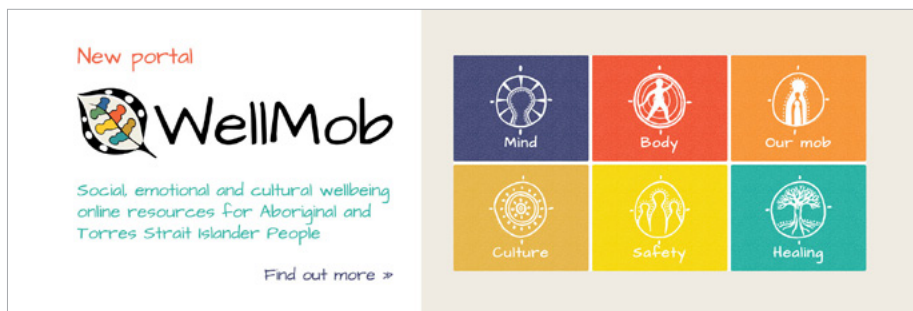
The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters of Australia and the Torres Strait. We respect all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—their customs and their beliefs. We also pay our respects to Elders past and present, with particular acknowledgement to the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nation, the traditional owners of the lands where our offices are located.

New WellMob website

I am delighted to announce the launch of a new website that we have developed in partnership with eMHPrac (eMental Health in Practice). eMHPrac aims to raise awareness of digital mental health resources. The WellMob website, wellmob.org.au, is the result of more than a year of collaboration and planning and involved many workshops and community consultations across the country. Working with the team at eMHPrac has been an absolute pleasure and I am delighted that the website is now live and operational.

WellMob was created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community health workers, including mental health, family support, education and youth workers to share with their clients. The website is a culturally safe place where workers can use the resources to address complex issues. It will also be useful for anyone working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in social and emotional wellbeing.

The WellMob collection includes a wide range of up to date online resources to support the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The website focuses on digital resources made by and for



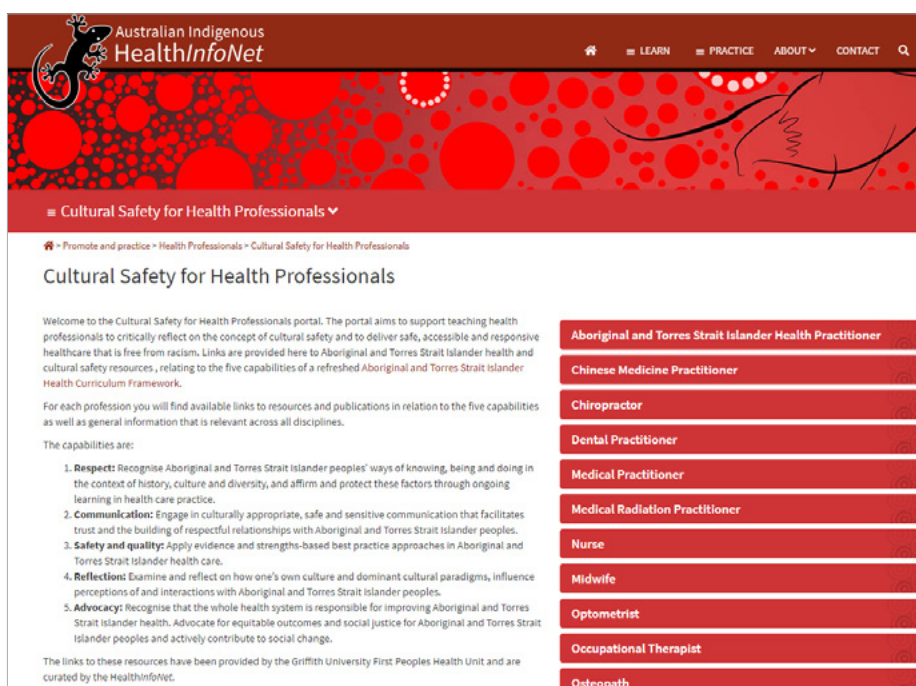
The WellMob Reference Group based in Lismore NSW. Other groups in Adelaide and Darwin guided the development of the new website. Image includes members of the HealthInfoNet and eMHPrac collaboration.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It includes websites, apps, podcasts, videos, helplines, social media and online programs. Funding for the website was provided by

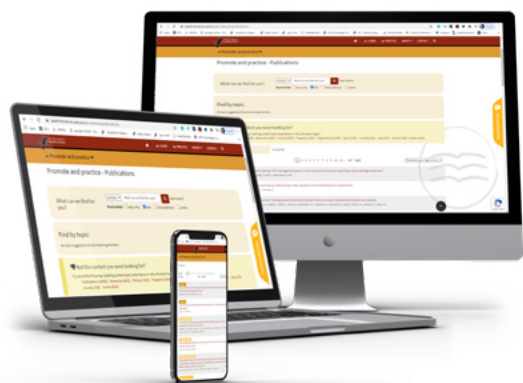
the University of Queensland through the eMHPrac (eMental Health in Practice) project.

[See a short video about the website](#)

New Cultural Safety for Health Professional portal



In April, we added a new portal to our site which was the result of a collaboration with Professor Roianne West, First Peoples Health Unit at Griffith University, to develop a new Cultural Safety for Health Professionals portal. The aims of the portal are to support the teaching of health professionals to critically reflect on the concept of cultural safety and to deliver safe, accessible and responsive healthcare that is free from racism. The new portal has had high numbers of visits <https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/health-professionals/cultural-safety-for-health-professionals>. We have worked with Professor West and her team on other projects to provide key resources to students as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health curriculum framework implementation at Griffith University, so it was a real pleasure to once again work with her on this important project.



Library milestone

In May, we reached the **milestone of 40,000 entries in our library database**. This is an extraordinary achievement. Our bibliography is the engine room of the entire HealthInfoNet. Virtually all our services draw on what we call our 'back end'. Our expert library staff, Graham and Aleina, have highly developed systems and processes for ensuring our database remains the most complete repository of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health information anywhere in the world.

New Tobacco review

In June, the Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre published a *Review of tobacco use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. The review said that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and education were critical to tobacco control and use.

The review was written by Colonna E, Maddox R, Cohen R, Marmor A, Doery K, Thurber K A, Thomas D, Guthrie J, Wells S and Lovett R, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Program, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University and the Menzies School of Health Research. The review shows that there have been significant reductions in tobacco use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but that the prevalence is still too high. was Also produced were a fact sheet and animated short film covering the key points from the review.

National award win for contribution to men's health

Uncle Mick Adams, our Senior Research Fellow, has won the National Award for Local Men's Health Hero awarded by the Australian Men's Health Forum. I am sure you all join with me in sincerely congratulating Uncle Mick on this prestigious award. I cannot think of a worthier recipient. Uncle Mick has been a researcher and advocate for boys' and men's health for many decades and has made a significant positive difference to the life of thousands with his work. He is recognised throughout the world for his commitment to this vital area of health and wellbeing. Uncle Mick is well-known for his work to ensure that male health issues are promoted and placed on the national and international agenda through advocacy, research, publication and health management

More than 5,000 people across Australia voted for the 2020 Men's Health Awards. The National winners for each category were decided by a judging panel from the Australian Men's Health Forum and



announced in a special event in June to celebrate all finalists during Men's Health Week. The Award is for an individual, male or female, who has made a significant difference by taking action to improve the lives and health of men and boys at a local level.



Tobacco review and knowledge exchange products





A review of our work in 2019

Already, 2019 seems a long way away. It was, however, another very productive year for the HealthInfoNet. Our 2019 annual review showcases our work in a visually engaging format. Information provided in the review includes: current projects, knowledge exchange products, primary research, publications, the Australian Indigenous HealthBulletin, Health Bibliography, engagement, conferences, social media, our partners and new art on the site.

[Annual review 2019](#)



Primary research news

Uncle Mick is a Chief Investigator, and I am an Associate Investigator on a UNSW project with Professor Susan Rees and Lyndon Reilly looking at improving the mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents. The project is funded for \$1.68 million dollars and his involvement is testament to Uncle Mick's standing and

reputation as a research leader and scholar. In June, Uncle Mick and I were part of a successful consortium of ECU researchers funded by the WA Government to undertake Covid-19 research. Our project will focus on gaining a better understanding of how knowledge about Covid-19 is 'activated' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

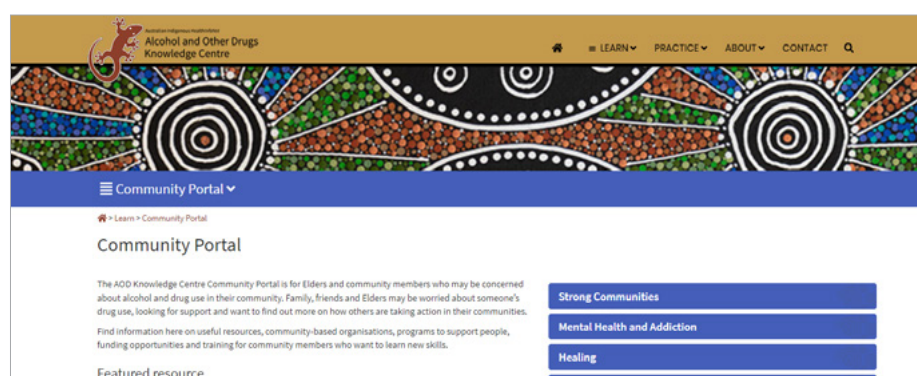
communities. We will focus particularly on the role of natural helpers who are at the crucial interface between community members and the services that support them. We are joined in this project by Jason Barrow from Kurungkurl Katitjin and Associate Professor Stuart Medley, both from ECU and Professor Richard Osborne from Swinburne University.

AOD Community portal refresh

The *Community Portal* on the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet Alcohol and other Drugs Knowledge Centre has recently been updated to better meet the information needs of Elders and community members working to reduce harms from alcohol and other drug (AOD) use in their communities.

The redevelopment of the Community Portal was guided by focus groups in Adelaide and Darwin as well as feedback from a national user survey which found that people wanted to see a web resource that was strength-based, easy to use, and had a more visual format.

The portal has refreshed its content with a focus on strength-based resources, information on healing and trauma and up front, factual information on mental health and addiction. The collection of health promotion resources for each topic has



a visual format which is easy to use and navigate. The refreshed portal also now features the artwork of Aboriginal artist, Melanie Robinson, with a vibrant piece about families coming together on the land.

Family, friends and community members are often the first to respond to people who may be in crisis or distressed. The expanded

content on the Community Portal includes more information on events, courses, funding and programs to support community members who may be seeking training, resources, or services to address AOD issues in their community.

[Take a short tour](#)

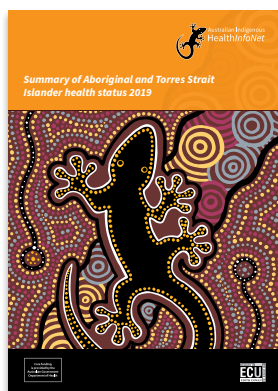
Release of plain language summaries

As part of our commitment to knowledge exchange, we have produced several summaries which provide the information from our reviews making it easy to access the key facts. While our summaries have always

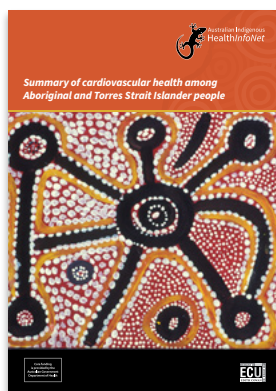
used plain language, this year we have made these even more visual and engaging based on feedback from our user survey conducted last year. As always, we pride ourselves on being responsive, accessible and relevant to the

needs of our users. Summaries are particularly useful for health workers and those studying in the field as a quick source of information.

Recently, the following summaries were produced:



The Summary of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status, is a plain language version of our annual *Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status*.



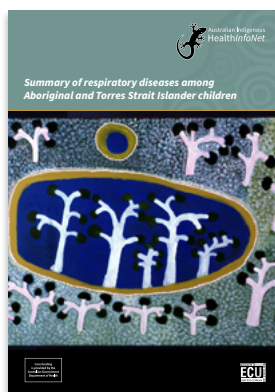
The Summary of cardiovascular health among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a plain language summary based on the *Review of cardiovascular health among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*. It describes the extent of cardiovascular disease among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also describes the management of cardiovascular diseases and risk and protective factors.



The Summary of cancer among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a plain language summary based on the *Review of cancer among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*. The summary provides key information about the extent of cancer among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and outlines what has, and is, being done to reduce the impacts of cancer on individuals and communities.



The Summary of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a plain language summary based on the *Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*. It provides a comprehensive overview of key information on food, diet and nutritional health among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. The summary outlines the incidence and prevalence of diet-related conditions, as well as morbidity, mortality and burden of disease. It highlights the importance of nutrition promotion and the prevention of diet-related disease.



The Summary of respiratory diseases among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is a plain language summary based on the *Review of respiratory diseases among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*. It provides information about respiratory diseases and risk factors among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



The Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre has released the *Summary of methamphetamine use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*. This summary is based on the *Review of methamphetamine use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*. The summary provides key information about methamphetamine use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander It is particularly useful for health workers and those studying in the alcohol and other drugs field.

Our webinar series

Our webinars continue to attract a wide audience. Recent webinars include:

View our latest
AOD Knowledge Centre
webinar recording

with guest presenter
Dr. Jane Fischer
National Centre for Education and Training
on Addiction, Flinders University

Alcohol and the social determinants of health: an equity lens on interventions

[Find out more »](#)

Alcohol and the social determinants of health: an equity lens on interventions presented by Dr Jane Fischer from the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction.

Register now for the
upcoming AODKC webinar

with guest presenter
Dr. Julia Butt
National Drug Research Institute,
Curtin University

What do we know about the impacts of cannabis use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

Thursday 21 May 2020
10:00am (AWST)

[Find out more »](#)

What is known about the prevalence of recreational cannabis use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by Dr Julia Butt from the National Drug Research Institute.

View our latest
webinar

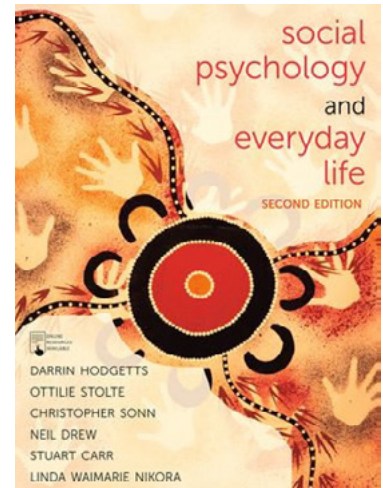
with guest presenters
**Sarah Fordham,
Shelley McRae,
and Sandy Duxbury**
from the Heart Foundation WA

Heart Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People During COVID-19

[Find out more »](#)

Heart health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people during COVID-19 presented by Sarah Fordham, Shelley McRae and Sandy Duxbury from the Heart Foundation WA.

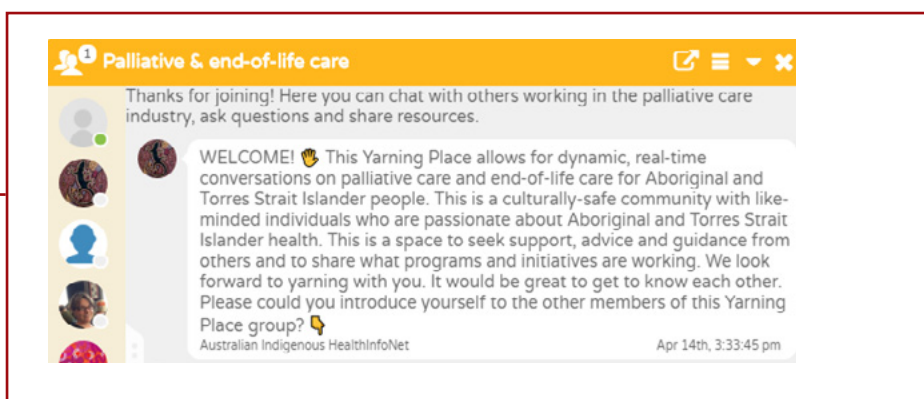
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are particularly vulnerable to severe COVID-19 complications because of higher rates of underlying chronic disease, including heart disease. The presenters discussed important considerations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heart patients during this period.



Psychology text 2nd edition now available

I am really proud to announce the release of the second edition of *Social Psychology and Everyday Life* (2020). The book resulted from a collaboration of not only valued colleagues but also good friends. We have been talking about the state of social psychology in the world for decades and this book is the product of many late night conversations. We have been particularly gratified that the book is resonating with people and scholars from a diverse range of cultural groups and backgrounds. As one of the contributing authors of this important text, I'm delighted the second edition is now available.

"As a social psychologist, former child refugee, and as an adult belonging to several stigmatised groups, I have struggled to recommend social psychology textbooks to my students. Too often, they treat decolonisation, social and material justice as tagged-on perspectives, providing no more than basic lip-service to their existence and influence. I have often thought that I might be searching for the impossible. This book has made the impossible possible. It will be responsible for educating and transforming future generations of social psychology students?" – Masi Noor, Keele University, UK



An example of our new look Yarning Places HealthInfoChat now available on the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet and AOD Knowledge Centre websites.

HealthInfoNet Yarning Places just got bigger

Have the conversations you need to have, when and how you want to. There are now more yarning places to choose from. Launched on 22 June, the new yarning place provides another way to connect with people working in the same area for example palliative care.

HealthInfoChat is now available on the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet and AOD Knowledge Centre websites. There are now 21 chat groups across many topics. These include Palliative and end-of-life care, Cancer, Diabetes, Heart health, Kidney health, Respiratory health, Sexual health, Social and emotional wellbeing Environmental health, Healing, Health Workers, and WA state. On

the Alcohol and other drugs website, there are Tobacco, Alcohol, Amphetamines and cocaine, Cannabis, Opioids, Volatile substance use, Prescription drugs and Kava chat groups.

HealthInfoChat is free to access and you can engage in dynamic, real-time conversations with others working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, online. It is a culturally safe community for people who are passionate about improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You'll be able to share ideas on what's working and what's not and seek advice and feedback. Start yarning today, [watch a short video](#) of the benefits of HealthInfoChat as well as a [how to video](#).

Final word: HealthInfoNet Director acknowledged

The HealthInfoNet team is delighted to share that in June our Director, **Professor Neil Drew, was named a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2020**, for significant service to tertiary education, to behavioural science, and to Indigenous health.

A few words from Neil:

I want to thank everyone most sincerely for your emails and calls of congratulations on my being made a Member of the Order of

Australia (AM) in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours. I am humbled and honoured to receive the award. I acknowledge the hundreds, perhaps thousands of passionate, generous, courageous, inspirational, wonderful people who I share this award with. They have nurtured, guided, mentored and lifted me up over the years to be the best that I can be. I am extremely grateful to have been invited into their lives and communities. In my current role, I want to acknowledge the wonderful team at the

HealthInfoNet, our Advisory Board, our consultants, funders, partners, supporters and communities we serve throughout Australia and the world. In accepting this award, I particularly honour the memory of Professor Neil Thomson, the visionary founding Director of the HealthInfoNet, in whose giant footsteps I am extremely proud to walk. I would also like to thank, of course, my partner Clare and daughters Amy and Kate for their unconditional love and support.