

ReconciliationNews

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Stand up for equity, justice and reconciliation

Reconciliation Australia
Stands With Adam

Celebrating nine years of RAPs

Garma 2015

*Building our Future,
Strengthening our Lives*

The Purple House

helping remote communities
live healthier for longer



Reconciliation
AUSTRALIA

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Reconciliation Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to elders both past and present.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.

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Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. Your active contribution and financial support helps us develop innovative programs and resources.

This magazine is compiled by Reconciliation Australia to share reconciliation stories, issues and opinions. Feedback and story ideas are always welcome along with names and addresses of people who would like to receive the newsletter. Please email us at: enquiries@reconciliation.org.au

Cover image: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with Elsa Nova Napananka (the chook) at the Western Desert Dialysis. Image by the Western Desert Dialysis.



CEO's message

The last few months have been an eventful time in the reconciliation space. We saw the nation stand up to say no to racism following the booing of AFL great Adam Goodes; we had the nation's most influential leaders convene at the Garma Festival in Arnhem Land; Indigenous Leaders met with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to discuss the next steps for Constitutional Recognition; and our own Australian Reconciliation Barometer revealed that there is a lot of good will for reconciliation.

All of these achievements show that there is much positivity surrounding reconciliation and that we are taking small steps toward it every day. However, it is abundantly clear that there is still a lot of work ahead for our organisation if we are to achieve our vision for reconciliation.

I believe much of what we need to achieve for a reconciled nation will come through better health and education outcomes for our people. During my career I have worked in a number of organisations focused on improving the lives of Australia's First People's, including the Academy of Sport, Health and Education, Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and NACCHO – each of these experiences have reinforced my thinking that better health for our mob will contribute to stronger education and employment outcomes, financial security, social participation and respect – fundamental elements of reconciliation.

Now, as CEO of Reconciliation Australia, I believe it is my role to advocate for improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through a framework of reconciliation.

This edition of Reconciliation News highlights some of our achievements here at Reconciliation Australia and shines a light on some of the great work that organisations and individuals are doing to improve health outcomes for our people.

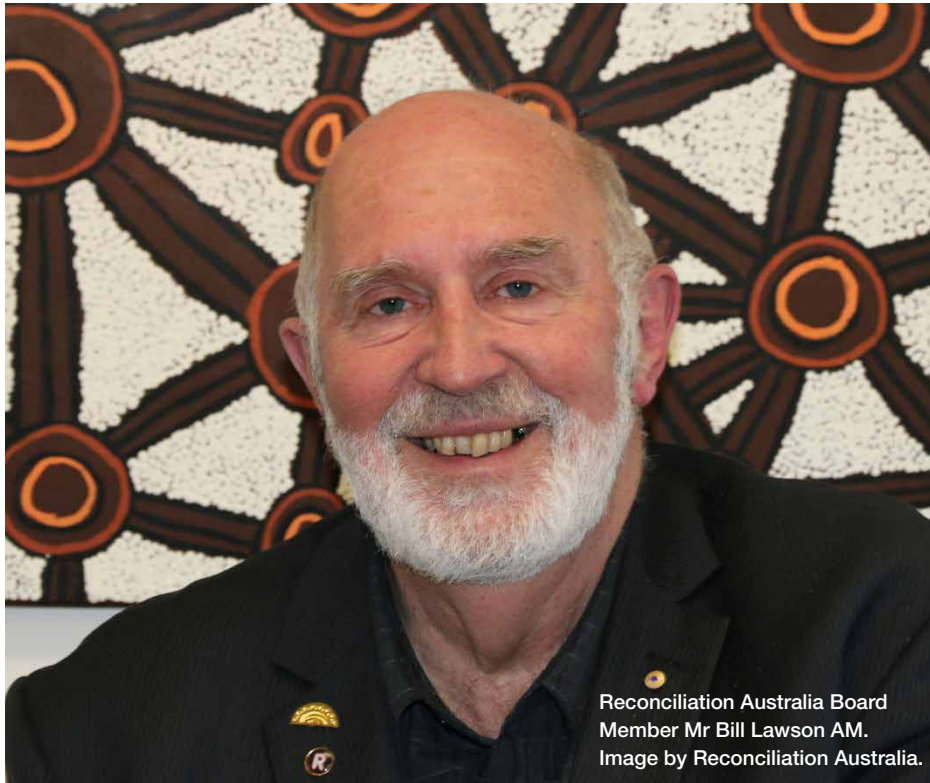
This is the work that will play a key role in building a reconciled, just and equitable Australia for everyone.

Justin Mohamed
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



Justin Mohamed. Image by Hilary Wardhaugh.

Bill Lawson joins the Board



Reconciliation Australia Board
Member Mr Bill Lawson AM.
Image by Reconciliation Australia.

Mr Bill Lawson AM has joined the Reconciliation Australia Board. Bill is Chairman of the Beacon Foundation, an organisation he set up in 1988 to help young Australians to discover, understand and realise their potential.

Over the past 15 years, Bill has become increasingly involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues with a specific focus on helping communities, especially young people, to overcome disadvantage. In 2011, Bill was appointed to the Prime Minister's Expert Panel for the Constitutional Recognition of First Australians.

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Bill and looks forward to working with him as we continue to inspire and enable all Australians to contribute to reconciliation and break down stereotypes and discrimination.

Reconciliation Barometer shows evidence of goodwill

Since 2008, Reconciliation Australia has used the Australian Reconciliation Barometer (ARB) to measure the progress of reconciliation throughout Australia.

The 2014 ARB, due for release later this year, shows that Australia is making progress and there is a lot of good will for reconciliation, but we still have a long way to go before we all wake to a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.

The ARB shows that the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians is considered important, with 86 per cent of the general population and 96 per cent of the Indigenous population believing this to be true.

Education has been identified as a key driver in shifting negative attitudes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.



The ARB highlights that non-Indigenous Australians' level of history and cultural knowledge is low. However, we're hungry for more knowledge, with 83 per cent of non-Indigenous respondents believing it is important to know about the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. We also believe this knowledge

Medibank participant Karen Oldaker and Djapirri Mununggirritj at the 2015 Garma Festival. Image by Reconciliation Australia.

should be supported by the Australian education system, as, 77 per cent of the general community believe Indigenous histories should be a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

Australia's got the Goodes

By Justin Mohamed



After watching and listening to the stories surrounding racism and Adam Goodes unfold in July, I began to think that our vision for reconciliation was well out of our reach. But Australia showed me I was wrong.

Like many Aboriginal people, I know first-hand what racism is and what it feels like. I know the impact it can have on social, cultural and emotional wellbeing. So it was disappointing to see one of Australia's AFL greats suffering from racist taunts and booing.

Like me, people all across the nation wanted to take action and looked for ways to show their support. Leading this call to action was the AFL. Their true colours were displayed in response to the treatment of Adam Goodes in the game. AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan spoke out against racism. Richmond Football Club made the decision to wear their 2015 Indigenous Round guernsey in the clash against Hawthorn. Shortly after, Western Bulldogs did the same thing. Melbourne Demons players taped the three colours of the Aboriginal flag around their forearms – a simple yet very symbolic show of support. Players, managers and coaches from across the league came out in a strong sign of support for Goodes.

It wasn't just the AFL community that responded in vocal support of Adam Goodes. People stopped cities with flash mobs, children across the country took out their markers and wrote Goodes' number 37 on their upper arms and many Australians started conversations about the far reaching issues of racism and reconciliation. Reconciliation Australia joined with other not-for-profit organisations and corporate leaders to voice their support in a joint statement and social media was flooded with the hashtags #IStandWithAdam and #AFLMANYCOLOURS.

That support for Adam was echoed where I was, far away from the urban football ovals at the annual Garma Festival in North East Arnhem Land. Like many other Garma attendees, I was surprised and filled with pride to see the Gumatj men and boys painted up

in support of Goodes. Their chests were emblazoned with the red and white 'V' from the Swans guernsey and the number 37 was painted on their backs.

To me, this is really what reconciliation is about. An Aboriginal man displaying the oldest continuing culture in the world, that is shared by a nation made up of hundreds of nationalities, should be celebrated. We must call out racism wherever and whenever we see it. What we stay silent on as a nation is the standard we accept. It will only be through calling racism out, by educating people on racism and its effects, that we will be able to truly call ourselves the country of the fair go.

'Through this event, Australians of all backgrounds showed what the spirit of reconciliation is. This is what our nation should be proud of.'

The issues faced by Australians over the past couple of weeks are not simple. I doubt very much that they are over. In fact, I believe this is a conversation we need to continue as a nation. Instead of writing this off as something that has passed, we need to reflect on this moment and use it as a starting point for continued conversations in boardrooms, classrooms and around dinner tables as we all work toward reconciliation.



Reconciliation Australia Co-Chair Professor Tom Calma AO, Professor Patrick Doddson, Business Council of Australia's Indigenous Engagement Task Force Chair Michael Rose and Founder and Director of Cape York Partnership Noel Pearson at the 2015 Garma Festival. Image by Reconciliation Australia.

Garma – Building our future, strengthening our lives

On the traditional lands of the Yolngu people, on a far-eastern corner of Arnhem Land, people gathered under the gum trees as the sound of the yidaki (didgeridoo) called them together for the beginning of the 2015 Garma Festival.

Garma creates a space for politicians, community and business leaders to come together and discuss current issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. The importance of culture, family and history is woven through all these discussions. Garma highlights that closing the gap and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people cannot happen without acknowledgement and recognition of the cultures that have survived and thrived over 60,000 years on this continent.

‘Garma creates a space for politicians, and community and business leaders to come together and discuss current issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.’

In 2015, Reconciliation Australia joined with the Business Council of Australia to hold the first Business Leaders Program at Garma with a group of 13 CEOs and senior leaders from prominent Australian corporate and Aboriginal-led organisations. Reconciliation Australia Board Director and Yolngu Traditional Owner Djapirri Mununggirritj hosted the group, and drew everyone together with stories of language, culture, and community. By building trust and sharing stories, the experience helped to build greater appreciation of the issues facing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people among leaders in Australia's business community.

This year's Garma theme of *Building our Future, Strengthening our Lives* encapsulated the focus of ensuring a better future for younger generations, while highlighting the need for immediate action. Seminal moments were plentiful, such as when Gumatj clan leader Galarrwuy Yunupingu was presented with the University of Melbourne's highest honour, an Honorary Doctor of Laws, in full academic regalia at the bunggul ground. Discussions focused on economic futures, and the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control within their communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders told the group that ultimately we will be faced with a choice: do we, as

Australians, want to ensure the survival of thousands of years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, or do we not?

Reconciliation Australia believes that we do. We believe, like so many others, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures enrich Australia as a nation, and that we should join together to enshrine this in Australia's founding document. At Garma, we embraced the opportunity to have this, and many other, discussions with Australian leaders to broaden the circle of reconciliation advocates. Garma is the perfect opportunity to do so, because as the senior holders of the Yolngu songlines share with Garma guests their stories of manikay (song) and bunggul (dance), the Garma Festival offers all Australians the opportunity to come together and discuss how we can build a future together as a reconciled nation.

'At Garma, we embraced the opportunity to have this, and many other, discussions with Australian leaders to broaden the circle of reconciliation advocates.'

Michael Rose, Reconciliation Australia Board Member Djapirri Mununggirritj and Reconciliation Australia CEO Justin Mohamed at Garma 2015. Image by Reconciliation Australia.





RAP Program turns 9



On 25 July 2015, the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program turned nine years old. The program was launched in 2006 by Professor Mick Dodson and then Prime Minister John Howard, as part of the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. At the time of launch, we had just three RAPs and three statements of commitment.

Since then, we have collectively built respectful relationships and created opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through RAPs for almost a decade. There are now 600 organisations with an endorsed RAP and a further 500 in development. This impressive growth is maintained and supported by a small team of 10.

The RAP program's growth sees it achieving more and more success each year. The latest RAP Impact Measurement report, released earlier this year as part of National Reconciliation Week, highlights the impact RAPs have on the social and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Since the beginning of the program, our RAP organisations have collectively:

- Employed 29,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- Purchased \$20 million worth of goods and services from Supply Nation accredited businesses
- Contributed \$55 million towards education scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Provided \$42 million worth of pro-bono support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or communities.

At the forefront of this social change are the 11 dedicated organisations to have launched an Elevate RAP. These are the organisations that have embedded reconciliation as part of all that they do. Below we share the success of four very different Elevate RAP organisations.

Richmond Football Club during the Dreamtime at the 'G' match. Image courtesy of Richmond Football Club.

AIATSIS

During NAIDOC Week, AIATSIS marked one year of Elevate RAP status with a unique celebration of achievements and sharing of learnings. The organisation brought together their Elevate RAP counterparts, secondees and reconciliation friends for a ceremony, and a behind the scenes tour.

As the first government body to launch an Elevate RAP in 2014, AIATSIS has shown great dedication and leadership in taking reconciliation beyond business as usual. Part of that leadership is demonstrated through AIATSIS' interactive RAP progress report, launched at the celebration to ensure their RAP remains a living document and a blueprint for the way the organisation approaches their day-to-day work.

AIATSIS has learned that being leaders in this space is not always easy and have committed to being open and to meeting challenges head on. It is this dedication that has seen the organisation achieve so much in the first year of its Elevate RAP, including investing in the wellbeing and career progression of its employees and building meaningful relationships with communities across Australia.

Transfield Services

Adelaide-based Elevate RAP partner Transfield Services celebrated the launch of their third RAP, and second Elevate RAP, on 21 July. Since launching their first RAP five years ago, Transfield has worked hard to build strong relationships and partnerships between the business and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

One of those fruitful partnerships was on display at the RAP launch, with Transfield unveiling a specially wrapped Department of Transport bus, featuring a unique Aboriginal artwork. The bus is operated by Transfield Services from the north-east suburbs into Adelaide city and was wrapped as part of Transfield's Elevate RAP commitment to leading reconciliation.

Transfield organised for the artwork to be created by staff and students from the Immanuel College in collaboration with local Aboriginal artist, Allan Sumner. The artwork depicts the dreaming story of Tjilbruke and the seven coastal spring sites that are connected to the dreaming story. Tjilbruke was a great ancestor of the Kaurana nation—a Lore man skilled in the art of making fire.

Crown Resorts

Crown Resorts launched their Elevate RAP on 31 July at an event in Melbourne with James Packer, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews and a number of other RAP partners and leaders.

Crown's latest RAP commits to employing 2,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the next six years and purchasing \$500,000 of goods from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses. These impressive targets build on Crown's work to date in building career paths for First Australians, having created more than 450 employment opportunities since 2009.

Crown's launch event also showed the key role RAP organisations have in influencing the national conversation around reconciliation and urging others to take action. At the event, held in a tough week for reconciliation, James Packer declared his support for Adam Goodes and called on all sides of politics to support Constitutional Recognition.

Richmond Football Club

In early June, Richmond Football Club became the first sporting organisation to commit to an Elevate RAP. Their commitment follows a long history of reconciliation action, officially beginning in 2005 with their involvement in the first Dreamtime at the 'G' match against Essendon.

Since then, the club has been dedicated to building reconciliation among its supporter base, in the AFL community and beyond. Richmond's innovative Korin Gamadji Institute is just one example of the positive impact of their RAP initiatives. The Institute is a unique educational facility supporting leadership and employment pathways for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander people. Since 2011, the Institute has delivered 21 leadership camps to more than 200 individuals.

As part of their latest RAP—an Elevate RAP—the club is taking the lead to maintain and grow the RAP Industry Networking Group for AFL Clubs; to strengthen the Richmond Emerging Aboriginal Leadership (REAL) program at Korin Gamadji; and to inspire all AFL clubs to make the Indigenous Round and Dreamtime at the 'G' celebrations bigger than ever. These actions demonstrate the potential our Elevate RAP partners have to create meaningful change for all Australians and to lead and motivate others to take action to build reconciliation.

RAP reporting

With input from all of our RAP partners, we can paint a picture of the collective achievements of the RAP community. Submitting a RAP impact measurement questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia on an annual basis is a minimum element for all RAPs and helps us to highlight the work of RAP organisations across Australia.

By now all RAP contacts would have received a link to the online RAP impact measurement questionnaire, which expires on 30 September. This questionnaire should be used to report on the implementation of your RAP across key areas in the past 12 months.

If you have any questions about reporting, please email raps@reconciliation.org.au.

Crown Resorts have created more than 450 employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since 2009. Image by Cole Bennetts.



Inclusion and diversity: Paving the way at pre-school



Wiradjuri Preschool. Image Reconciliation Australia.

Located in Canberra, the Wiradjuri Preschool is a leader in education. In 2014, the preschool received an 'Excellent' rating, the highest rating a service can achieve under the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) National Quality Framework. One of the reasons Wiradjuri received this rating was because of its ongoing commitment to delivering a curriculum that incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Reconciliation has been a value of the preschool for decades says Carmel Richardson, Educational Leader of Wiradjuri Preschool, "We have had a long time philosophy of inclusion and diversity informed by social justice principals and a strong commitment to reconciliation for many years — it has always been a priority of Wiradjuri."

It is widely known that schools and early learning services across the country are making significant contributions to reconciliation within classrooms, schools and early learning services and local communities. Ms Richardson said that their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), developed through the *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation*

in Schools and Early Learning program was a simple step in formalising what actions the centre takes. The recently completed RAP is now used as a tool to induct staff.

"Our RAP enabled us to have a record of the things that we do which we can readily use to induct new staff and to show to families to share with our community to say we are actually doing reconciliation work at our centre," Ms Richardson said.

"Although *Narragunnawali* is primarily designed for implementation by the educators, the children at Wiradjuri are heavily engaged in the reconciliation process." The children are involved in reconciliation because of the work we do with them on a day to day

basis. They are definitely part of the RAP because our primary focus is the education of young children. Each and every day we Acknowledge Country with the children.

Ms Richardson said that the ACECQA standards that often challenge early learning services are those relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, not because of a lack of willingness but because educators are fearful of getting it wrong. Ms Richardson said that using the *Narragunnawali* RAP Developer alleviated some of this anxiety. "I think if we really want to move towards authentic reconciliation sometime in the future we have got to do this work now," says Ms Richardson.



Healing with love and laughter in the Western Desert

By Sarah Brown

Sarah Brown and Patrick Tjungarrayi at Western Desert Dialysis. Image by Justin Brierty courtesy of The Centralian Advocate.

Western Desert Nganampa Walyja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation or Western Desert Dialysis, as it is affectionately called, was established by Pintupi people to improve the lives of people suffering from kidney disease in the remote Western Desert region. Here, CEO Sarah Brown shares their story and why Walytja (Family), Tjukurrpa (Dreaming), Ngurra (Country) and Kuunyi (Compassion) are central to everything they do.

Did you ever hear about the mob from the most remote part of Australia who painted some beautiful paintings, had an auction at the art gallery of NSW and raised a million bucks to get dialysis out bush? That was 15 years ago this year.

There are probably some things you need to know first for this story to make sense. After living on their country for many thousands of years and working hard to survive in the desert, Pintupi people from the Western desert of the Northern Territory and Western Australia were moved to the large settlement of Papunya in the 1960s and 70s. They tell stories

of lining up for rations and of missing their sacred sites and hunting grounds further west. Famously, they started painting their stories on the doors of the school and then any other material they could find with the encouragement of Geoffrey Bardon, school teacher. The Western desert art movement was born and Papunya Tula Artists Inc. established. During the 1980s, people successfully fought for the right to move back to their own country. Proud to be back on their land, painting their stories and teaching their grandkids, a new challenge emerged—people started to get sick from kidney disease.

The treatment for kidney failure is dialysis, which usually entails being hooked up to a machine for five hours every second day whilst it cleans your blood. At the time, dialysis machines were only available in Alice Springs, 550 kilometres away from Pintupi country. People who had fought so hard to return to their lands were now having to relocate to Alice Springs for life saving dialysis. They were 'poor old' dialysis patients, forced to live on someone else's country, waiting for their next dialysis day, and waiting to die.

For Pintupi people, this made little sense. Why couldn't they have a machine out bush

and look after people themselves? They were unable to get government support and so with the help of Papunya Tula Artists, Sotheby's and Hetti Perkins they painted some magnificent paintings and held an auction. To the surprise of everyone, over a million dollars was raised. This was independent money and provided the chance to come up with a model of care which took into account cultural priorities and helped people to get well and get home. In 2003 Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation was incorporated.

Now in 2015, that idea of a machine in Kintore has grown into a vibrant holistic community controlled service with many facets, including 22 dialysis machines in 10 locations.

There is now a hub in Alice Springs affectionately known as the 'Purple House' where dialysis patients and their families can come for dialysis, do their washing, have a meal, catch up with each other, cook a kangaroo tail on the fire, and have a sing. And, in 2012, with the help of Medicines Australia we designed and built the 'Purple Truck' — a mobile dialysis unit which can go to communities for a few weeks at a time to help people to see their families.

We also have a social enterprise, making bush balms and soaps which can ensure that knowledge is passed on. The enterprise provides employment to patients and their families and helps us to share our story in a different way.

As a result of our work, people in ever increasing numbers are returning home to their remote communities to have treatment with the help of their nurses. Word is spreading and Pintupi people have helped other communities across state and territory borders to establish services.

The model proved so successful we were able to get some government support, but we still raise around 30 per cent of our annual budget through philanthropy, community monies and odd jobs like making 100 litres of pumpkin soup for the Alice Springs beanie festival.

People often ask us what makes us different and our chairperson Marlene Nampitjinpa Spencer sums it up perfectly when she talks about how workers should act. Marlene says, "It is really important for workers to be kind,

'The enterprise provides employment to patients and their families and helps us to share our story in a different way.'

friendly and gentle. They need to care about doing a good job—it's not about money. You need to be straight and honest and look after people. Talk to them and look after them. We are all helping one another and working together... Sharing story—Aboriginal way—listening to what people are saying."

Our strategic plan also shows strong leadership and a holistic vision for our organisation. We are not just passive recipients of care but we ensure that Walytja (family), Tjukurrpa (dreaming), Ngurra (country) and Kunnyi (compassion) are central to all that we do and say. Additionally our strategic plan says that; we will be strong, clever, brave and determined to make life better for our people; we will think deeply, plan wisely and take action to improve service and enhance wellbeing; we will share our experiences and knowledge with others so that we all can learn; and we will foster understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

This year, already we have published a book *Patrick Tjungarrayi - Beyond Borders* edited by John Carty and being distributed through University of WA press; launched the Purple House Fund to continue our ability to help other communities; sent a nurse to help Miwatj Health in the Top End run a service in Arnhem land; established a dialysis unit in Santa Teresa; started work with the help of Woden Rotary in Wanarn Western Australia and fired up a couple of extra dialysis machines in Yuendumu.

Of course our absolute hope is that one day our organisation will be redundant. Hopefully one day, environmental, social and economic conditions in remote communities will be such that few people get kidney failure. Hopefully too, there will be improvements in transplantation and renal replacement therapies so that treatments become easier, cheaper and more effective. We have a role to play in helping people to understand what keeps their kidneys healthy, demystifying dialysis and keeping people as healthy as possible for as long as possible. For now though, with the number of Indigenous people requiring dialysis treatment continuing to rise and there being a real fear for communities if people have to move away to regional centres to access services, it looks like we will be pretty busy for a while yet.

Patrick Tjungarrayi on dialysis in Kiwirrkurra. Image by the Western Desert Dialysis.



Growing our doctors

By Kathleen Denigan, Australian Indigenous Doctors Association



Medical students at the AIDA 2014 Conference.
Image by Australian Indigenous Doctors Association.

“Seeing my family and friends experience the health disparities that are so common to our communities was a major motivator to studying medicine,” says second-year Aboriginal medical student, Justin Cain. “We need more medical professionals who can apply a deeper understanding of cultural awareness in the health care setting so our people can access the health care they need.”

After completing a Bachelor of Science, Justin is now back at the University of Wollongong studying medicine.

“The hardest part so far is just keeping up with the volume of work. The content itself isn’t difficult, it’s the volume that can overwhelm you,” Justin said. “Med school has been a challenging, yet really rewarding time in my life. Having role models such as Dr Kelvin Kong, Professor Ngiare Brown and other members of the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association (AIDA), makes the enormous challenge of becoming a doctor an achievable goal for me.”

Dr Tammy Kimpton, President of AIDA, agrees. “Growing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors plays a key role in improving health and life outcomes for our communities,” says Dr Kimpton. But while acknowledging the great strides that have been made, she admits there is a long way to go.

“The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical doctors has continued to grow since AIDA was formed in 1998,” she said. “We now have more than 200 Indigenous doctors, who are members of AIDA, but to reach population parity we need close to 3000.”

With each year, another cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students complete their medical degrees and join the ranks of Indigenous health professionals working to improve the health of Australia’s first people.

“There are currently around 310 Indigenous medical students like Justin, who are following in our footsteps,” said Dr Kimpton. “It’s a tough journey into medicine, and they need the support of those who have travelled that road.”

For Dr Stephanie Trust, also a Director of AIDA, it is a road that has taken her full circle back to her community. “I always knew how important it was to have Aboriginal doctors, but it didn’t hit me until I got back home. As an Aboriginal doctor working in community, you have so much background knowledge. Taking the time to learn about



Dr Tammy Kimpton. Image by James Henry.

Aboriginal culture and history is important for medical students because it will make them better doctors.”

Associate Professor at the University of Queensland Noel Hayman—whose daughter Gemma has followed in her father’s footsteps and become one of the first inter-generational Aboriginal doctors—has witnessed the change within the medical profession first hand.

“Back when I was a medical student there were few Indigenous doctors and only a small number of Aboriginal academic role models,” he said. “In fact, in my early days it was non-Indigenous academics such as Professor Ernest Hunter of the University of Queensland who mentored and guided me. In those days, medical schools didn’t pay much attention to Indigenous health, but now I give lectures on Indigenous health to packed lecture theatres in medical schools, and I’m an Associate Professor.”

Dr Elizabeth Mowatt, Chair of the Australian College for Emergency Medicine’s Indigenous Health Sub-Committee herself an associate member of AIDA, recognises the need for non-Indigenous doctors to play a part in closing the gap in Indigenous health.

“Working in Alice Springs was my first experience in Indigenous health,” she said. “It made me realise how much more we

need practitioners in this area, and how it requires specific skills. It is challenging for non-Indigenous practitioners and they need to get on board to improve their skills and competence in cultural safety to help close the gap.”

Dr Mowatt first joined AIDA when she attended AIDA’s 2013 conference. She found AIDA’s annual networking event to be a source of inspiration, not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and medical students, but for non-Indigenous doctors as well.

“I felt so inspired, and try and do the little bit I can,” Dr Mowatt said. “I always feel I should give away all my other roles and focus on Indigenous health, because it needs more. Then I meet someone from AIDA, and they’re so much busier than I am, it gives me energy to try a little harder.”

For Aboriginal medical student, Justin Cain, that ambition is one he shares.

“I’m keen to follow in the footsteps of doctors like Dr Kelvin Kong,” he said. “I’m really focused on surgery, particularly cardiothoracic surgery. I would like to be a surgeon at a hospital that has a cardiothoracic service and provide an outreach clinic to Aboriginal communities. Having role-models like Dr Kong has given me something to aspire to and I’m looking forward to achieving my dreams.”

A vision to improve Indigenous health in Australia

By the Fred Hollows Foundation



Dennis Jefferies during his post-op eye exam.
Image by the Fred Hollows Foundation.

The Fred Hollows Foundation (The Foundation) is inspired by the work of the late Professor Fred Hollows. Fred was an eye doctor, a skilled surgeon of international renown and a social justice activist. Fred was committed to improving the health of Indigenous Australians and to reducing the cost of eye health care and treatment in developing countries.

The Fred Hollows Foundation's Indigenous Australia Program (IAP) is working hard to continue Professor Hollows' commitment to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote and under serviced communities have access to eye health services to prevent avoidable blindness.

In Australia, 94 per cent of vision loss among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is avoidable. The power to see can transform the life of an individual, a family and more often than not, an entire community.

IAP Manager Jaki Adams-Barton, says the work of The Foundation with its dedicated partners, is about delivering real and tangible results in addressing trachoma, diabetic retinopathy, refractive error and cataract management.

"We have been so lucky to be invited into a number of remote and underserved communities to continue the work of Professor Fred Hollows. We have directly seen the impact on people's lives when they have access to quality eye health services. Through our partnerships, we have seen eye health begin to be integrated as a part of overall health care in remote and underserved communities," said Ms Jacki Adams-Barton.

Last year, The Foundation worked in conjunction with the Lions Eye Institute to access eye surgery and support eye health screening and patient transfers from remote communities in the Pilbara to Port Hedland area.

This is where the team met Dennis. Through the Indigenous Australia Program, members of the team supported Dennis throughout his entire patient journey and witnessed a very relieved man emerge from his surgery. Dennis has now returned home to Jigalong with improved vision.

"Now I can see better. I was feeling nervous but I heard about Fred Hollows and I just wanted to try it out. I feel a lot better now," said Dennis following his surgery.

In Australia, 35 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not had

an eye examination. Ms Adams-Barton says this is a key issue when working with communities to ensure eye health is an individual and medical priority. She believes that part of the role of the Fred Hollows Foundation is to support education from the grassroots level.

"Not having regular eye exams is where a lot of eye problems turn from manageable to complicated and sometimes irreversible conditions. Eye health isn't always on the top of a priority list in terms of health care, and we understand that. It isn't life threatening and often people don't know that it is preventable or treatable. We need to start addressing and integrating eye health into general health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

Since 2012, the Foundation has supported the employment and training of Aboriginal Community Based Workers in a number of remote and under-served communities across the Northern Territory. The workers are community residents who provide a bridge between external medical and health promotion services and Aboriginal community members. They play a critical role in raising awareness about the causes and prevention of trachoma, and increasing participation rates in community based trachoma screening and treatment initiatives.

"The Aboriginal Community Based Workers are fabulous. We can't go to somebody's house or a community as a complete stranger and ask them to take medication—we need someone who is locally trusted to explain what the medication is for and why," says , Gabrielle Watt, Northern Territory Government Health Department's Trachoma Program Coordinator.

IAP Manager, Jaki agrees that the involvement of the community is essential in the success of the Fred Hollows Foundation programs in Australia.

"It's not just us trying to improve health literacy in remote and underserved communities; instead we have community members working with us. We now have people coming back for cataract surgery for their second operation or they are bringing back their partners to get their eyes done too. These people are our champions. They have been brave enough and trusted the system enough to get their eyes done and then go back to their communities and encourage others to access the eye health services too."

As Australia continues to work toward closing the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider Australian community, The Fred Hollows Foundation works to ensure Fred's vision becomes a reality—a world in which no person is needlessly blind.



Craig, a young boy who was able to have eye surgery during an Intensive Eye Surgery Week in Alice Springs. Image by the Fred Hollows Foundation.

Caring for our health

By Martin Lavery



The Royal Flying Doctors providing care to a patient. Image by the Royal Flying Doctors Service.

Martin Lavery is the CEO of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Flying Doctor) of Australia. He is currently developing a Reconciliation Action Plan for the Flying Doctor with the help of Reconciliation Australia.

Dentists, doctors, and other health professionals have known for decades of the correlation between poor oral health and poor overall health. Studies show causal links between oral health and avoidable illness, including gum disease being a risk factor of cardiovascular disease and oral infection being linked to kidney disease.

In the past year, the Flying Doctor provided dental treatment to 7,000 patients. Oral health services are at present only a small focus of our work, but this is set to expand as evidence of need continues to emerge about the poor state of oral health in remote areas.

Not well known for dental services, the Flying Doctor across Australia is working to deliver oral health care because people in some communities, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities simply miss out.

As I move about the country and talk to people in both cities and the bush about the work of the Flying Doctor, I've come

to realise there is a fair bit about the Flying Doctor that people don't know about.

The basic facts are this. The Flying Doctor is an 87-year-old charity. It delivers aeromedical and primary health care services across all states and territories, except the Australian Capital Territory. A fleet of 63 operational aircraft are nationally spread across 22 airport bases. One thousand, one hundred staff including doctors, pilots, nurses, engineers, allied health professionals, fundraisers, administrators, dentists, researchers and educators help run the service.

Importantly, generous donors, volunteers, corporate supporters, and governments contribute resources to keep the service operating. When we do the final tally in a few weeks' time, I expect we'll have seen around 300,000 patients in the last year. In recent years, roughly half of the patients the Flying Doctor cares for are Indigenous Australians.

In March 2015, the Flying Doctor published a research report that showed that the life

expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is 10 years lower than for non-Indigenous children. Our research found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are three and a half times more likely to have diabetes than non-Indigenous Australians, and are five times more likely to die from endocrine conditions.

While half of the people we care for are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Flying Doctor is committed to not just closing the gap but also having deeper engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in how we help close the gap.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan and its health service priorities is just one component of this ambition. The other will be listening and engaging with Australia's First People to make sure the Flying Doctor plays its part in advancement of improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.



An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child attends the Royal Flying Doctor Service health clinic NSW. Image by Royal Flying Doctors.



**We've updated our RAP Hub website
to make it easier for your
organisation to turn its
good intentions into real actions**

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