



CENTRAL
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ABORIGINAL
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Board Communiqué

ISSUE 40: FEBRUARY 2021

Werte!

The following topics were discussed at the last Congress Board of Director's Meeting, held on 25 February 2021:

- In Memoriam: Kwementyere Carter
- About the Board
- From the Finance, Risk, and Audit Subcommittee
- COVID-19 Vaccinations have commenced

Updates from the CEO

- NT Primary Health Network AGM
- Submission to the draft National Children's well-being and mental health strategy
- Central Australia and Barkly Region Climate Justice Alliance

The next Congress Board of Director's Meeting will be held on 29 April 2021



In Memoriam: Kwementyere Carter

It is a very sad time for the Congress community as we acknowledge the passing of one of the great matriarchs of our organisation. Kwementyere Carter was connected to Congress in one way or another for all of her working life.

As a passionate, committed and idealistic young woman she was one of the very early board and council members, elected to represent Alice Springs on the Congress board in the late seventies.

In 1981 she began working for Congress as the staff development officer and soon progressed to being the deputy director, working under her all-time favourite director, John Liddle. JL was able to focus on the big picture strategic issues in Aboriginal health as he knew that Kwementyere would take care of the critical operational responsibilities for services and programs.

In this era the Board was known as 'cabinet' and the term 'director' was used for the operational head of the organisation. Together, JL and Kwementyere were a formidable partnership. They ensured that Congress thrived in an era plagued by constant hostility and opposition to our very existence from the conservative Northern Territory government, in power since self-government. Their tenacity, commitment and resolve led Congress through these difficult years and into the more supportive 'modern' era.

Kwementyere was one of the key leaders who helped organise the historic Birthrights meeting in 1984. This gathering of around 300 women from all over Central Australia developed a proposal for the establishment of Congress Alukura by the Grandmother's Law. The meeting led to the opening of the Alukura in 1986, following a two year struggle against major opposition. In her last few years of employment, she became the acting director while JL took leave to become the chairperson of the ATSIC regional council.

Following her retirement from paid employment, in 1996 she again became a cabinet member, ensuring that the wealth of knowledge and experience she had built up in Aboriginal health continued to lead the organisation for another 14 years until 2012. Following this she continued to be an active member attending annual general meetings and continuing her life-long stewardship of the organisation.

Farewell Kwementyere Carter, and thank you.

We offer our most sincere condolences and respect to her family, friends and beloved Anmetjere Ti Tree community. She will be sadly missed. May she rest in peace.



About the Board

At the first meeting of the year, the Member Directors must elect the office bearers for the year. We are pleased to announce that Graham Dowling has been elected to continue in the Chairperson seat, as has our previous year's Deputy Chair, remote Member Director Dorethea Randall. Congratulations to Graham and Dorethea.

Additionally, Member Director Ebony Miller appointed to both the Finance Risk and Audit Subcommittee and Clinics Subcommittee.

Externally, the Directors appointed remote Member Director Taren Williams to represent Congress' interests at the Centrecorp AGM held 4 March 2021.

Member Directors Ebony Miller and Joseph Hayes were nominated to attend the NACCHO AGM on behalf of the Congress Board of Directors. The NACCHO AGM had been postponed from 2020 due to the pandemic and included the election of deputy chairperson through electronic voting. NACCHO's constitutional reform meeting is set to take place in July 2021, and it is planned that meeting be in person.

The Board Performance review report for 2020 was accepted, with plans solidified for the internal review for 2021 as per Congress' commitment to good governance practices to have an annual review per its Board Governance Charter.

Directors have also locked in dates for governance training through the year with both ORIC and the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

An updated Whistleblower Policy was approved by the Board.



From the Finance, Risk and Audit Subcommittee

At every scheduled meeting, the Board of Directors considers the Business Services Report, including the financial report and risk report, as well as the Human Resources Report.

The HR report highlighted improvements in workforce stability, in particular the remote turnover figure has reduced from a very high 68% in 2019 to 34% in 2020. Turnover figures include how many people have been employed and left work at Congress during the year. Achieving a stable workforce is important in providing consistent, high quality health care and as such we are very pleased with the result.

In finance, the Board was provided with an update that indicated that the organisation is in good financial health, is solvent and compliant and tracking well to break even for the financial year.

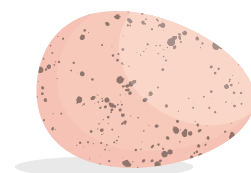
The board was advised about upcoming cyber-security sessions to be available for all staff to attend. The sessions are designed to empower staff to recognise attempts at theft and fraud in digital environment.

The internal audit schedule has been set for the year. Negotiations for a renewed Enterprise bargaining agreement are now underway.

COVID-19 vaccinations have commenced

We are pleased to say that the first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines arrived at the end of March. In preparation for our vaccination clinic opening, we commenced vaccinations for the first of our staff, including front line staff administering the vaccines, members of the leadership team, our medical director and more.

Congress has been very focused on directing good and helpful information to the community about vaccinations, including why they are important and why we should all have them. Director Michael Liddle along with CEO, Donna Ah Chee, Cultural Lead Sabella Turner and community member Paul Ah Chee were vaccinated with news crews present to help tell that story. Powerfully, the vaccinations were administered by Congress AHP Trainee coordinator, Lynnette O'Bree and local Aboriginal woman, Dr Jessica Johannsen. We are also continuing to share stories from our community which is full of people very keen to be vaccinated and to help get everyone protected against this dangerous virus.



There is a lot of bad information around about vaccines, so we recommend that you only listen to and share information from credible sources like the Congress website and Congress Facebook page, as well as other reputable Aboriginal medical pages like AMSANT or NACCHO, and NT and Australian government websites.

To book in for your vaccine call 1800 570 688 or drop into the special vaccine clinic, located at Gap Clinic. The vaccine clinic is open for bookings and walk-ins between 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday (except Wednesday which is open from 9.30am). It is closed weekends and public holidays.

Congress doctors, nurses and Aboriginal health practitioners will talk you through vaccine safety, what to expect after and when to come back for your next dose. For people living in remote communities with Congress clinics, vaccines are being distributed to the clinics, and will be progressively available within the next two weeks.

Vaccines are our way out of this coronavirus worry. Community immunity, here we come!



GET VACCINATED FOR COVID-19 AT CONGRESS

To access the vaccines in town:

- Call 1800 570 688
- Drop into the vaccination clinic, located at Gap Clinic
- Ask at your usual clinic at your next regular appointment

If you are remote:

- Ask your clinic about getting vaccinated. All community residents are eligible.

Congress Arrurlenge (History Project) update – Introducing ARRA

Arrurlenge Arntanta-areme (ARRA) is a group of Aboriginal Congress staff who watch over and look after the Congress Arrurlenge (History Project) by providing cultural safety advice. The current members of the group are Lazarus Gallagher, Angela Hampton and Sabella Turner. Raymond Walters has recently finished working at Congress, but will continue to contribute to ARRA as an invited guest. We would also like to acknowledge previous staff member, Glen Sharpe, who assisted in the establishment and strong growth of ARRA prior to Raymond.



Angela Hampton was born in Alice Springs and grew up a little bit here, and a little bit all over Australia. She settled in Alice Springs as a teenager, got married, had children and travelled through the NT before moving back permanently to Central Australia so her children could learn more about their family, culture and country. Angela thinks ARRA is important as it provides relevant input and guidance to the History Project. She has passion and belief in the values of Congress, and it being a pioneer in Aboriginal self-determination and empowerment. She thinks the rich history of Congress has significantly influenced the way that Central Australia is shaped today, and that we should be proud to show this history in a contemporary way that still values and respects the community.

Lazarus Pinu Janpijimpa Gallagher was born in Alice Springs and grew up in two communities (Nyirripi and Areyonga). Lazarus speaks both Warlpiri and Pitjantjatjara languages - which was a bit hard growing up but is really valuable today. He has fond memories of his big families in both communities. Lazarus believes that ARRA is very important to give good cultural advice because the Congress history is about all the different people of this area so it's important to tell the story in the proper way. He thinks the strong beginnings of Congress with marches and protests for indigenous health in Central Australia history is a really important story to tell.

Sabella Turner is a Central Arrernte woman working as Congress' Cultural Lead. Sabella and her own family grew up in Santa Teresa, Alice Springs and surrounding areas. She trained as an Aboriginal Health Worker at Santa Teresa and has worked at Tangentyere's Night Patrol and in Child Care, CAAMA, IAD language in schools and CLC. Sabella thinks this project is important because we need to show our kids that history is important and to document our stories for our future generations. Arrurlenge Arntanta-areme is the way to make sure that culture is in the history work. She particularly likes that men and women are in equal place on the ARRA, working together.

Raymond Walters Penangke is an Anmatyerre man with strong connection to

Arrernte, Warlpiri, Kaytetye and Western Aranda families. He grew up at Mt Nancy camp in Alice Springs, Ti Tree, Yuelumu and Yuendumu, attended Braitling and Ti Tree Primary and Yirara College, Billanook in Melbourne and completed high school in Darwin (St Johns College). He lived for a couple of years at Milikapiti on Tiwi Island, with one of his grandfathers who was taken from Coniston as a child during the stolen generation. Raymond thinks ARRA is important because it ensures a local culture and community lens across the whole history project. He believes the ARRA members shared knowledge from lived experience, knowledge of families and language groups, and established networks is essential elements connecting community and the history project. Raymond is excited to share and celebrate important stories from Congress' history such as the lunch program. The Congress lunch program supported families in need by providing recess and lunch to their children who were attending school to learn.

Updates from the CEO

NT Primary Health Network AGM

The AGM for the NT Primary Health Network was held in Darwin late last year. Having served the maximum time allowed, Congress CEO Donna Ah Chee has finished her role on this board but was able to pass the reigns to John Paterson, AMSANT CEO who was elected in her place. It was successfully argued that there needed to be an Aboriginal person from the Aboriginal community controlled health sector on the board as a key part of the board's skill matrix and this was accepted through the selection process. Dr John Boffa continues as a director for a further two years which is good news for Congress and Aboriginal health in the NT. The NT PHN remains an important institution for Aboriginal Primary Health Care and it is good that we are well represented.

Minister Worden visits Back on Track

Minister Kate Worden, in her capacity as Minister for Territory Families, made a site visit to the Congress Back on Track program in Railway Terrace, so she could see first-hand the important work this program is doing. The Minister was very impressed with the way we have been able to engage and support some very complex young people. This is a really important program that is making a difference in the lives of some young people and the Minister got a good insight into what it is achieving. We also discussed some of the current issues in and around town, including our recommendations around increasing the engagement of youth with complex issues into therapeutic services.

Submission to the draft National Children's well-being and mental health strategy

Congress welcomes the draft Strategy as a positive contribution to setting new directions for the mental health and wellbeing of Australia's children in general and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in particular. Congress submitted suggestions for strengthening or making more explicit some issues relating to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children based on previous board approved submissions on early childhood, family support and social determinants. This includes, in the section on colonisation, racism and poverty, that we would like the strategy to specifically mention the need to implement the "Uluru Statement from the Heart" including the establishment of the Voice to Parliament. We also think the strategy needs to address the need to ensure that unemployment payments are above the poverty line to enable all parents to have the resources to care for their children well. This means maintaining jobseeker at current levels and not reverting back to Newstart. We recommended the inclusion of a definition of

what Aboriginal community control means in the strategy and have put forward the NACCHO definition for inclusion. We have supported the need for integrated models of service delivery and suggested that they consider using the Congress model of integrated child and family services as an exemplar in the strategy. Finally, we have highlighted how the "fee for service" payment model of the NDIS is not working to ensure good access for Aboriginal children in remote areas and argue there needs to be some type of "cash out" of entitlements to provide grant funding to support services such as our Child Health and Development Centre and other services.

The full submission is available on our website.

Central Australia and Barkly Region Climate Justice Alliance

The newly formed Central Australia and Barkly Region Climate Justice Alliance has now formed and met twice. The participants have agreed that the alliance will only be of Aboriginal organisations as there already are existing mainstream alliances for climate justice and what has been missing is strong Aboriginal leadership.

The meetings have been well attended by Congress, CLC, Tangentyere Council, the Centre for Appropriate Technology, Anyinginyi Health and Julalikari Council. It was agreed to invite other key Aboriginal organisation to join the alliance if they want to and we have almost finalised a platform that makes clear what the alliance is for and will do. For Congress, it provides a way to able to work in partnership with other Aboriginal organisations to try and achieve the changes required to address this critical public health issue based on the board approved position on climate change.