



CENTRAL
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CONGRESS
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
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Board Communiqué

ISSUE 47: APRIL 2022

Werte!

The following topics were discussed at the last Congress Board of Director's Meeting, held on 14 April 2022:

- Business Services Report
- Centrecorp AGM
- Approved Research Projects
- Todd Street Update
- Annual Board Performance Review
- Dental Services
- Five Year Action Framework Report
- Approved Research Projects
- Congress Founder Visit
- **CEO's Report to the Board**
 - COVID-19 Update
 - Congress Pharmacy
 - AMSANT Update
 - NACCHO AGM
 - Transition to Community Control Update
 - CDU Workforce Symposium
 - Stronger Futures Legislation
 - CDU Medical School Strategic Board Meeting
 - Central Australia Academic Health Science Network (CAAHSN) Update

The next Congress Board of Director's Meeting will be held on 9 June 2022

Meeting Summary

The Congress Board of Director's Meeting was held on 14 April. Interstate based independent non-member directors Leanne Milligan (Finance) and Leon Chapman (General) attended in person, and Professor Peter O'Mara (Primary Health Care) attended via Zoom. Congress founder, Neville Perkins, also attended the meeting as part of his visit to Mparntwe for the Congress Arrulenyne (History Project). You can read more about his visit in this communiqué.

Business Services Report

The Business Services Report up to 28 February 2022, was tabled and accepted by the Board. Congress continues to be solvent and compliant.

Centrecorp AGM

Congress is a shareholder of Centrecorp and Director Joseph Hayes was nominated to attend the Centrecorp AGM scheduled for 22 April 2022 as the Congress delegate.

Todd Street Update

The Todd Street development project continues to progress as planned. Consultant Geoff Hayter attended the Board meeting and gave a presentation to the Board about the latest design of which 50% is now complete.

Annual Board Performance Review

In accordance with the Board Governance Charter, the Congress Board is committed to an annual performance review of the board and directors. These reviews are either conducted internally or externally and, following an internal review in 2021,

the Board has agreed to engage an external review for 2022, to be scheduled for later in the year.

Dental Services

The Board has agreed to approach Central Australia Health Service (CAHS) to discuss options for a joint dental services with Flynn Drive Dental Clinic that meets Congress service needs, including those of our remote clinics.

Five Year Action Framework Report

The Board was presented with a progress report against the Five Year Action Framework. The Framework is the way in which Congress meets the Strategic Plan. Their key achievements in the last 12 months included:

- Leading the way through the COVID pandemic,
- Obtaining substantial increased funding for new programs totalling \$6.2m across a wide range of areas,
- High level of client satisfaction with Congress services despite the impact of COVID-19,
- Continued high levels of community engagement in health promotion events,
- Increasing Aboriginal workforce with 218 Aboriginal staff employed in January 2022, making up 44% of all our staff,
- Speaking out strongly on a wide range of matters that affect the health of Aboriginal people in Central Australia,
- Continuing progress on the redevelopment of the Todd Street property,

- Formal achievement of NDIS accreditation and maintenance of ISO, AGPAL and Childcare accreditation,
- Additional funding to complete Congress Arrulenyé History Project,
- 95% of controlled documents (policies and procedures) are up to date, and
- Significant funding obtained and/or dedicated to repairs and maintenance.

Approved Research Projects

The Directors approved Congress' participation in the following new research projects:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study Surveys 2022-23
- Alternative Health Sector Employment Pathways for Regional NT Youth
- Humanitech 'Lab for Healthy Media': Vaccines and Communications Technologies

Congress Founder Visit

Congress founder, Neville Perkins, visited Congress as part of Congress Arrulenyé (History Project). Neville Perkins was born and grew up in Mparntwe, and was just 21 years old when he founded Congress in 1973. He worked with people in town and from bush communities to get the Aboriginal Legal Service (CAALAS, now part of NAAJA) established in 1972, then Congress in 1973.

During his visit he spoke to staff about Congress in the early days. Joining him was Geoff Shaw, Eileen Hoosan and Dawn Mack Ross, some of the original staff members. They talked about the importance of history: "when heading to the future you have to take the past with you". Congress was established of the people, by the people and for the people. There was a lot of racism and opposition to overcome and unity was critical. Community people had the dream of having an Aboriginal run health service. 49 years on we are a health service of the people, by the people, for the people.



Neville Perkins, Congress founder (third from left), with Dawn Mack Ross, Eileen Hoosan and Geoff Shaw, some original Congress staff members.

CEO's Report to the Board

COVID-19 Update

Since the last communiqué, Omicron outbreak figures reduced however, over the last few weeks it has again been increasing, due to a new variant. Positively, hospitalisations have remained lower than at the peak with only a handful in ICU and requiring oxygen. Vaccination and new oral treatments continue to make a big difference, although tragically deaths are still occurring, even if at a very low rate.

Congress continues to advocate for public health measures to the COVID-19 pandemic that are achievable, and which create freedom for all members of the community.

There has been a recent significant change in vaccination policy in Australia. All Aboriginal people over the age of 50 are now eligible for a fourth dose at least four months after they received their third dose. This is good news, as vaccination is the best way to avoid becoming very sick from COVID. If you are not sure when you are due your next dose, or want to talk about getting your first or second dose, it isn't too late.

Please contact your local clinic by calling our switch on freecall 1800 142 900.

Congress Pharmacy

A planned review of the Congress Pharmacy contract with Northpharm's Iron Pharmacy Group was conducted. In the five years working with Northpharm, supply of medicines and the quality of dispensing has been extremely good with a very efficient service provided, in addition to significant savings. Northpharm remains committed to delivering pharmacy services in partnership with Aboriginal community controlled health services.

AMSANT Update

The AMSANT Board, AGM and general meetings were held via Zoom in early March. New directors were appointed, welcoming the new Danila Dilba CEO, Rob McPhee as well as the new Anyinginyi CEO, Leisa McCarthy. CEO Donna Ah Chee was nominated and accepted the position of Chairperson of the AMSANT Board. COVID was the major issue of discussion at these meetings, as well as a number of research

projects, the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum, the Children and Families Tripartite Forum and the Closing the Gap Steering Committee.

NACCHO AGM

This meeting was held in March via zoom after initial delays. Congress delegate, Director Greg Drew attended with support from the CEO. NACCHO reported significant new recurrent funding for the sector as well as for major capital works and maintenance. Congress CEO Donna Ah Chee, who has previously held a director position with NACCHO, did not stand for re-election after accepting the position of AMSANT Chairperson.

Transition to Community Control Update

The internal transition working group for a community controlled health service model for Yulara, Kaltukatjara and Imanpa is meeting regularly. In addition, regular meetings with NT Department of Health have been occurring, with the main topics of discussion being workforce, IT transition and communications. The community consultations planned for March had to be cancelled due to sorry business and were re-scheduled for late April.

CDU Workforce Symposium

Charles Darwin University held a one day symposium: *Better Health Futures*, in Mparntwe on 8 April. This focused on current workforce challenges being faced in the NT and featured several good keynote presentations. Congress' contribution, provided by CEO Donna Ah Chee, focused on employment of Aboriginal people at all levels of our health services, discussed addressing the barriers that prevent employment and made some practical suggestions; especially for increasing the numbers of Aboriginal Health Workers and Practitioners. The crisis shortage of nurses to work in primary health care in Central Australia was also raised. This crisis in the nursing workforce has been slowly building

for a long time but has been dramatically worsened during COVID.

Stronger Futures Legislation

There has been a lot of recent media activity recently, and AMSANT, NAAJA, AHANT and the CLC have written to the Chief Minister and Federal politicians urging them to extend the alcohol-related provisions in the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act 2012*. If the alcohol related provisions were to lapse, many of the gains made as a result of the NT Government's alcohol reforms could be lost, with devastating effects on population health and wellbeing in terms of alcohol related harms. Congress has joined the voices asking for consideration about how this is approached, urging for an opt-out rather than an opt-in to restrictions for communities, and an extension of the Alcohol Protected Areas (APAs) for two years to allow meaningful consultation and decision making by communities. You can read Congress' recent media release [on our website](#).

CDU Medical School Strategic Board Meeting

The second meeting of the Board overseeing the development of the NT Medical School was held in early April. The school will primarily focus on direct entry and access for local students, especially Aboriginal people. Excitingly, the curriculum is being developed to ensure that rural and remote health, primary health care and Aboriginal health are all core elements.

Central Australia Academic Health Science Network (CAAHSN) Update

The new Aboriginal Executive Director, Peter Riley, has commenced and has been busy putting key systems and processes in place that will greatly enhance the way CAAHSN operates. He is also managing the development of the new contracts and the CAAHSN Constitution has now been signed by most organisations and is on track to commence with the new fully incorporated organisation by 1 July this year.



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KEEP OUR COMMUNITY STRONG!



CUZ CONGRESS SAYS GET

VACCINATED



LET'S BEAT COVID-19!

Being fully vaccinated is the best thing you can do to stop COVID making you very sick - and even dying.

Fully vaccinated means:

- 2 needles for kids 5 to 15 years old
- 3 doses if you're aged between 16 and 49
- If you are over 50 or at risk, you should get your 3 needles THEN an extra one 4 months later

Not sure when you're due? Call 1800 142 900 and talk to a clinician at Congress

PHONE

1800 570 688

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