



CENTRAL  
AUSTRALIAN  
ABORIGINAL  
CONGRESS  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION  
ICN 7823

# Board Communiqué

## ISSUE 42: JULY 2021

## Werte!

The following topics were discussed at the last Congress Board of Director's Meeting, held on 1 July 2021:

- Congress 2021-22 budget approved by the board
- Business Services and Finance update
- Human Resources and Safety
- Research Applications
- Congress Arrulenge - History Project Update
- **Updates from the CEO**
  - COVID-19 Update
  - Congress welcomes Sheralee Taylor as General Manager Child Youth and Family Services
  - Mutitjulu/Yulara headspace
  - Funding confirmed for Child Health and Development Centre
  - Next Congress Board meeting visits Yulara

The next Congress Board of Director's Meeting will be held on 2 September 2021

### Congress 2021-22 budget approved by the Board

The Congress Directors considered and approved the projected budget for the new financial year. This budget plans how funds will be managed for the year. This budget indicates an expansion from last year of \$5million, testament to the hard work conducted throughout the previous year across programs and services. The Directors commended the Congress team for this.

### Business Services and Finance update

The Business Services report indicated that the organisation is in a healthy financial position, with a solvency ratio of 1.8. Income from Medicare was lower than expected, potentially due to clinicians spending important time with patients discussing COVID-19 vaccinations, which often takes longer than the claimable time (20 minutes) to do thoroughly. In addition, we note that there are fewer presentations in clinics, a potential side effect of the pandemic and social distancing measures still keeping people away. Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) income has improved from previous periods. This payment is associated with us providing ongoing and tailored treatment plans to our clients with chronic disease, so the increase in payment reflects a job well done by clinicians.

### Human Resources and Safety

#### Recruitment:

Recruitment and retention of staff, especially remote clinicians, continues to be a challenge for the organisation. This is not a challenge that is faced only by Congress, but across the NT health sector. Congress

is committed to working on strategies that not only attract but retain this vital part of our workforce, focusing on both local and national candidate pools.

#### Work Health and Safety

In line with Congress' commitment to maintaining a safe work environment, the Directors were presented with an action plan. This plan follows a safety gap audit undertaken in 2020 that highlighted areas of importance. From this, the next steps have been formulated and a timeline set to complete actions with high priority action items targeted for completion first.

### Research Applications

Involvement in the following research project was approved by the Board:

- Climate Justice in Australia's Northern Territory: Barriers and Opportunities. Australian National University / Yale University

### Congress Arrulenge - History Project Update

It's been just over 48 years since Aboriginal people in central Australia held a big meeting to set up Congress. Neville Perkins, the founder of Congress and its first general secretary, has shared memories from that time:

*"We were working on setting up the legal service [CAALAS, now part of NAAJA]. And we talked about having another Aboriginal organisation that would represent the rights and interests of Aboriginal people generally, that would be a voice for Aboriginal people in Central Australia. I went around and spoke to a number of people in town and out bush. We had our*

first meeting, round in Bath St, at that old institute [IAD]. That was incredible! There was 80 to 100 people, from right around. In those days, eh?

First we had what we called an interim Central Australian Aboriginal Rights Council; that was just a working group to help set up the Congress and develop it and to draw up a constitution. And to start representing the rights of Aboriginal people in Central Australia; and we did that working in with CAALAS.

You might say it was like a revolution. All of sudden there were these Aboriginal people, a small group of us, trying to get this Aboriginal organisation going to try and change the world for the better for Aboriginal people.”

This revolutionary energy continued. Colonisation of central Australia had seriously damaged the health of very many Aboriginal people. A comprehensive approach was needed. Within three years, by 1976, Congress had developed a community development alternative health model in consultation with people at Papunya and Utopia. In Alice Springs, Congress had opened the doors of its first medical clinic and health service, in Hartley St on the site where Framptons Real Estate is today.

Now Congress is preparing for its 50th anniversary. The History Project team is working behind the scenes to make photos and stories from Congress history accessible to the community, draw up a timeline of Congress history and analyse how Aboriginal health has changed since the 1970s. You can contact the team on 08 8959 4734 or congress.history@caac.org.au.

## Updates from the CEO

### COVID-19 Update

Congress continues to work very hard in the COVID-19 area, with plenty of activity in advocacy, testing, vaccination and public education.



We were recently reminded of the threat of COVID-19 and how quickly and suddenly it can appear by our recent close call here in Alice Springs due to the Tanami mine outbreak. There are a lot of lessons to be learned about the way the NT responded to this outbreak. The most important is the need to ensure that primary contacts of positive cases are followed up, tested and results returned within 24 hours. Congress worked in close partnership with the Centre for Disease Control to ensure that all of the primary contacts of the index case who came into Alice Springs were traced and tested with results within 24 hours.

Congress has access to the Pfizer vaccine and is able to give this vaccine to Aboriginal people over the age of 16. This has led to a significant improvement in the level of vaccination in the community but the take up is still too slow due to vaccine hesitancy. We are working hard to get the message out that the vaccine is the best way to be ready for an outbreak. This vaccine works very well against all variants of COVID-19, and after 2 doses not only reduces how sick the virus can make you if you get it, but reduces the chance of contracting or spreading it.

At the time of printing, Congress has provided 3157 doses of vaccine with 1244 people fully vaccinated. This figure includes staff and the distribution of leftover Pfizer vaccines, given to Congress to make use of before expiry. These were first made

available to Congress clients then the broader community.

Of our Aboriginal clients, we have fully vaccinated 810 people (9.93% of our client population) and given 603 (7.39%) of our Aboriginal clients their first dose. This is behind the national rate where 12.9% people are fully vaccinated and a further 17.5% have had one dose.

We have had some good results though, including Utju community who had great success and we feel positive that town numbers will continue to rise as we partner with Tangentyere Council to conduct outreach vaccine clinics in town camps.

### Congress welcomes Sheralee Taylor as General Manager Child Youth and Family Services

Sheralee Taylor has commenced work as the General Manager of the Child Youth and Family Division. She has hit the ground running and is already showing that her extensive knowledge of the community and networks will be invaluable to the work of Congress. Welcome Sheralee.



### Mutitjulu/Yulara headspace

In the recent Federal budget a decision was made to fund the expansion of our headspace service into Yulara and Mutitjulu. This will fund the employment of a full time psychologist and an Aboriginal youth liaison worker in Mutitjulu. The service will provide a much needed boost to service for young people in both Mutitjulu and through the Voyages resort.

### Funding confirmed for Child Health and Development Centre

Congress Child Health and Development Centre has been funded for a further 3 years. This includes funding to continue the independent evaluation to measure the impact that this centre has on local early years clients and their families.

### Next Congress Board meeting visits Yulara

In line with Congress' strategic priority of supporting remote communities, the Congress Board of Directors are taking the next meeting remote! To be held on 2 September 2021, the Board looks forward to having important strategic discussions at the meeting at Yulara with the backdrop of sacred Uluru, hosted by our Anangu colleagues.

## NOMINATE TO BE ON THE CONGRESS BOARD

### MEMBER DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS OPENING

Nominations for four Member Director positions on the Congress Board of Directors including a Youth Representative Member Director position for Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation (Congress) are opening soon.

We are seeking nominations for four (4) member director positions which includes one (1) Youth Representative Member Director on the Congress Board of Directors to be voted on and appointed at the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

*All member nominees between 18 and 30 will be considered for the Youth Representative position first. After the Youth Representative is determined, the remaining member nominees aged between 18 and 30 will be considered as part of the general Member Director category.*

*All Congress members are invited to nominate to be on the Congress Board.*

**Nominations open Monday 23 August 2021 and close 5pm Friday, 10 September 2021**

Applications will be assessed by the Congress Board and Governance Subcommittee in accordance with the application form and guidelines.

In the event that there are more nominations than the vacant positions, members will be invited to vote by postal ballot prior to the AGM, with last minute voting also available one hour prior to the start of the AGM.

The application form and guidelines will be available from **[www.caac.org.au](http://www.caac.org.au)**, by emailing **[governance@caac.org.au](mailto:governance@caac.org.au)** or calling **(08) 8951 0919** from Monday 23 August 2021.

**The election result will be announced at the Annual General Meeting**

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