



CENTRAL  
AUSTRALIAN  
ABORIGINAL  
CONGRESS  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION  
ICN 7823

# Board Communiqué

ISSUE 43: SEPTEMBER 2021

## Werte!

The following topics were discussed at the last Congress Board of Director's Meeting, held on 2 September 2021:

- 127 Todd Street Update
- Business Services and HR update
- Research Applications
- Congress Arrulenge - History Project Update
- Menzies MOU
- Celebrating our AHPs
- NAIDOC Award to Sabella Turner
- Arrernte name change for the Child Health and Development Centre
- Vaccines getting the intensive treatment

The next Congress Board of Director's Meeting will be held on 14 October 2021

This communiqué we are also saying “Palya!” in recognition of our meeting taking place at Yulara, hosted by our Anangu colleagues. The meeting was held there to acknowledge the strategic priority of supporting our remote communities.



### 127 Todd Street Update

Congress continues to work on the important project to develop the Congress headquarters and health hub at 127 Todd Street. Congress has continued to advance the project, with floor plans being developed revealing the buildings functionality and potential. The floor plans show the ground floor housing services who have client contact, and the first floor is for services with less direct client interaction. This has been designed to facilitate ease of access for our clients. The Directors approved the submission for the development application which we expect will be submitted in coming weeks. Applications such as this can take around three months and involve public notification of the project. The outcome of the application will be shared with members.



## Business Services Report

The final report for the financial year was presented to and approved by the Directors, with the CFO highlighting some good results despite reduced Medicare income, likely due to the pandemic. Our solvency rate is strong and cash savings reflect impending investment into the Todd Street project.

## Human Resources Report

Recruitment continues to be a challenge for Congress as it does across the sector, especially in terms of filling nursing vacancies. This is an ongoing issue impacted further by the pandemic creating workforce shortages. Our headcount of Aboriginal employees has increased, and we have more Aboriginal people employed at Congress than ever before. There is still work to do in increasing the number of Aboriginal people in degree qualified positions, which would impact the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees.

## Approved Research projects

The Directors approved its participation in the following new research projects.

- Co-Design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities to support healthy lifestyles (Part B). (Working Title: Diabetes in Pregnancy Co-Design (Parts B and C); Prof Louise Maple Brown, Menzies School of Health Research)
- Prevention and early detection of congenital syphilis in Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory; Dr Manoj Gunathilake, AMSANT
- Australian High Risk Foot Service Database: Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Diabetes related foot complications project.

## Congress Arrurlenge History Project Survey Results in!

As part of the History project, a survey was undertaken to show a baseline for change in awareness of the project over the next year. The survey was taken when the project was a bit more than half way into the two year time frame of its grant funding. The survey is proposed to be repeated in May 2022 to assess the impact of the project. The survey was also an opportunity for people to give specific anonymous feedback relevant to Congress history. Undertaking the survey is a requirement of the ABA grant (administered via NIAA) that part funds the project. In addition, the results are expected to be useful to guide the history project and to contribute ideas about how Congress might celebrate its 50 year anniversary which falls in June 2023.

### Result summary:

- 50 responses were received.
- 24 respondents are Congress members, 26 are not members
- 36 respondents are Congress staff or Board members; 14 are not; 2 did not want to say
- Most respondents are a little bit aware of the History project (rather than knowing nothing or knowing a lot about the history project) and respondents heard about the History Project via staff newsletter and/or word of mouth from Congress staff.
- Close to 60% of respondents want to know more about the history project!

## Menzies MOU

Congress has entered a second 5-year Memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Menzies School of Health Research. The first MOU assisted Congress to develop our research section with the secondment of Leisa McCarthy from Menzies to Congress, and other supports. The new MOU builds on this success and strengthens the partnership by dedicating experienced

researchers to work with Congress on our own research priorities and to assist Congress attract research funding. Examples of this happening are the new clinics model evaluation, the hepatitis B study, the COVID vaccination study and others. Menzies have created a new Primary Health Care Research unit which will further assist Congress in future years.

## Celebrating our AHPs

On Friday 6 August Congress celebrated the first ever National Recognition Day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners. Congress treated our valued AHPs and past AHPs and AHWs to a BBQ lunch. Of course, other staff, family and friends also came along to recognise this day and share a meal and a yarn. It was a great success with some wonderful speeches and a good time had by all.

## NAIDOC Award to Aunty Sabella Turner

Huge congratulations to Congress' very own lead Aboriginal cultural advisor, Aunty Sabella Turner who was announced the winner of the Mparntwe NAIDOC Female Elder of the Year!

This very well-deserved award was given to Aunty Sabella for her contribution to Congress and the community, including being part of the Strong Grandmothers from the Central Desert Region. Mwerre anthurre, Sabella!

## Arrente name change for the Child Health and Development Centre

Our Child health and Development Centre has a new name!

The centre was originally named *Arrwekele akaltye-irretyeke ampe* which was education focussed. In careful consultation with Cultural Lead Sabella Turner, and in line with its development focus, the centre is now known as *Ampe Rlterke Amangkeme*. This translates to Child Strong Growing Up.

## Vaccines get the intensive treatment!

Prompted by low vaccination rates in Central Australia, Congress has implemented an intense targeted six week program to ramp up vaccine rates and prioritise this for the organisation and community. Pfizer is now available for all Central Australians 12 years and older and Congress will target getting the vaccine to all Aboriginal people, who have some of the lowest vaccination rates at the moment.

It is only a matter of time before the SARS-CoV-2 virus gets to Central Australia, and the best way for us to prevent devastating outcomes for the community of infections of COVID-19 is to protect our community through vaccination.

Congress vaccine teams are working out in the community, including outreach to town camps and houses as well as a vaccine pop up at Yeperenye Shopping centre.

The targeted six week program includes partnerships with other Aboriginal organisations, especially Tangentyere, which is proving to be helpful in engaging people about the vaccine to help work through worries and questions that may be contributing towards vaccine hesitancy. We are also working hard to correct misinformation and reassure and answer worries for people in the community through radio, television, and social media.

Alongside the targeted six week program, Congress continues to advocate strongly for the protections needed by our communities to prevent the worst when an outbreak happens, as well as for much needed work by government and other stakeholders to increase the number of Aboriginal people who get the vaccine.

Governments across Australia have begun talking about the opening of State and Territory borders. Congress has joined AMSANT in advocating for a 90-95%



vaccination rate in our communities before borders open however it remains to be seen. Without a 90 – 95% vaccination rate, the impact that COVID-19 would have in our communities would be devastating. We have seen this already for our brothers and sisters in Wilcannia, NSW and really must do everything we can to stop this from happening here, and that means all of us who can, getting vaccinated.

## SAVE THE DATE:

**Congress' 2021 Annual General meeting will be held on 25 November**

**Mark it in your diary!**





CONGRESS  
VACCINE  
CLINIC

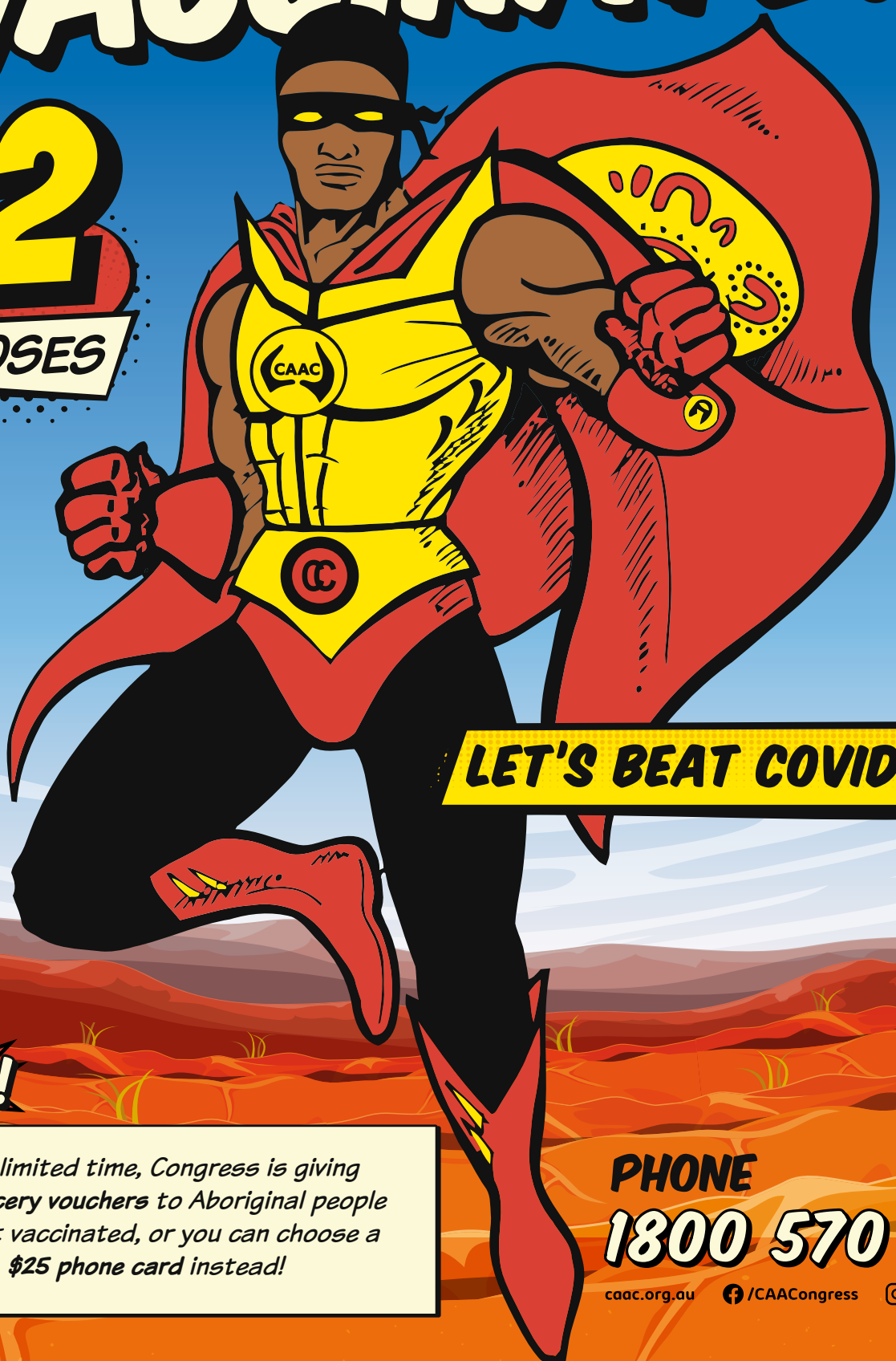
KEEP OUR COMMUNITY STRONG!

CUZ CONGRESS SAYS GET

VACCINATED

2

DOSES



LET'S BEAT COVID-19!

PLUS!

For a limited time, Congress is giving \$25 grocery vouchers to Aboriginal people who get vaccinated, or you can choose a \$25 phone card instead!

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