



CENTRAL
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CONGRESS
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
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Board Communiqué

ISSUE 55: NOVEMBER 2023

Werte!

The following topics were discussed at the most recent meeting of the Congress Board of Directors, 22 November 2023:

- Health hub Update
- Research Update
- Director Movements
- **CEO's Report to the Board**
 - Alukura Midwifery Group Practice
 - AMSANT and NACCHO Meetings
 - Referendum
 - 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM)
 - Merry Christmas

The next meeting of the Congress Board of Directors is on 29 February, 2024

Health Hub Update

The Directors were provided with an update of the Health Hub development. Demolition has been completed, with been some unexpected challenges along the way, including the discovery of two old wells on site which used to be used by the government monitor the aquifer. They've asked to keep one, but we can fill in the other. Additionally, the previous building was constructed on river sand, which does not compact and therefore without intervention, it is not able to be made strong enough for the building to stand on. The project has now been varied to ensure the sand is fit for purpose, which has added to the timing and expense of this part of the build.

Asbuild recorded a total 1042 personnel hours in October, with 785 of these hours being completed by Aboriginal personnel which is great to report.

Research Update

The following projects were tabled and supported by the Congress Board of Directors

1. Improving Childhood Vaccination Coverage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families: The Vaccine Barriers Assessment Tool (VBAT) *Dr. Bianca Middleton, Paediatrician and Researcher, Global & Tropical Health Division*
2. Asking the right questions: using mixed methods to determine and understand the impact of COVID-19 sequelae in First Nations Australians in the Northern Territory; *A Prof Jane Davies, Menzies School of Health Research*

3. Community Experiences of Research; *A Prof Michelle Kennedy | Assistant Dean Indigenous Strategy & Leadership; University of Newcastle*

Director Movements

This Board meeting was the last for **Director Joe Hayes** (Member Director) and **Director Taren Williams** (Member Director – Remote Representative). They had both reached the end of their current term and had decided not to stand again. The Board noted their contributions and thanked each of them for their service to Congress and the community.

Director Hayes' story is particularly remarkable as he is winding up after thirty years of service on the Congress Board. His wisdom and gentle approach to matters will be missed, but he is congratulated for such a great career in leadership, guiding Congress' strategic direction as part of the Board of Directors.

In addition to these farewells, Independent Director – General, **Leon Chapman's** term was extended for a further two year term until 24 November 2025.

CEO's report to the Board

The Board heard the following updates from Congress CEO, Donna Ah Chee:

Alukura Midwifery Group Practice

The new Alukura Midwifery Group Practice (MGP), in partnership with My Midwives, has had its first birth!

Congress welcomes a new partnership with My Midwives who are now delivering the model for Central Australian Aboriginal women, providing them the opportunity

to have their babies at the Alice Springs Hospital, supported by their Alukura midwife and with the security of cultural safety and continuity of care. This is an important progression for our provision of culturally responsive services, and a continuation of the strong, female-led advocacy that started Congress Alukura in the 1980's. The partnership is incredibly exciting news for the future of maternal and child health in our community.

AMSANT and NACCHO Meetings

AMSANT's AGM and Member's Meeting were both held in Darwin early in November. The AMSANT AGM saw the election of a new board including Congress CEO Donna Ah Chee as a director. The members meeting heard about the inspiring work that is being done across the sector as each member service gave their reports. Congress was very well represented at the meeting with two delegates from each of our remote health boards in attendance as well as Deputy Chair Dowling and Director Hayes from the Congress board. The Congress Deputy Chair delivered a speech to the general meeting in recognition of the many years of dedicated service of Director Hayes.

Congress Directors Janaya Kopp and Taren Williams represented the Congress Board at the NACCHO 2023 AGM, SGM and Members Meeting in Perth. The members meeting discussed some key policy issues for our sector including the referendum loss, our workforce challenges, prison health including youth detention, diabetes, sexual health, data and other issues. At the end of the series of meetings, NACCHO presented plaques acknowledging important milestones of services in the sector, including the recognition of Congress' 50th anniversary. CEO Donna Ah Chee was joined by Director Kopp in accepting this on Congress' behalf.

Referendum

Congress celebrated its 50-year community celebration in October, with an amazing line up of Aboriginal speakers and musicians performing for free at ANZAC Oval in Mparntwe. Through the event, the community was reminded of their connection to each other, to history and to the people who have gone before all to fight battles, some that are still battled today. It was hoped that it would also be a party to celebrate the nation saying YES to an Aboriginal Voice to Parliament enshrined in the constitution and to also recognise the oldest living culture on the planet. Although that wasn't the case, it was important that people were able to come together be surrounded by great Aboriginal people, leaders, musicians, and storytellers, and fitting that Congress provided this safe space.

Congress joined multiple other Aboriginal organisations and allies to participate in a media blackout immediately following the result, with no media or interviews being conducted in the 7 days following. This week of silence was to allow to for the grief about the result, which is still being felt among many of our people. Following this week of silence, Congress [released a statement](#) that gained media attention far and wide sharing the disgust at the "deliberate strategy of deception and misinformation adopted by prominent 'No' campaigners."

2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Corporation's AGM was held 23 November 2023 at 32 Priest Street, Alice Springs. Attendance was adequate with quorum reached. Members in attendance were provided with the corporation's annual reports which included the Chair's report (which was presented by the Deputy Chairperson, Director Graham Dowling), the CEO statement and the audited financials,

which were presented by the appointed auditors BDO.

The end of Directors Dowling's, Hayes', Kopp, Randall and Williams' terms saw five vacancies in the Board of Directors (three general positions and two remote representative positions). As five nominations were received, the following people were then appointed as Directors on the Congress Board at the AGM:

- Graham Dowling (General)
- Tanya Luckey (General)
- Roseanne Ellis (Remote)
- Dorethea Randall (Remote)
- Janaya Kopp (Youth Representative)

As they did not stand again, Directors Hayes and Williams were farewelled and thanked warmly for their service.

The AGM continued, with two special resolutions being passed by members regarding the term of office bearers (extending from one year to two years) and the office bearer election process (engaging independent director to have the casting vote in the event of a tied vote, amongst member directors). Those updates to the Rulebook have been approved by ORIC and will be shared in the updated edition. The meeting also heard updates about the Mparntwe Health Hub and Congress capital works projects in Santa Teresa and Mutitjulu.

The AGM provided a forum for good discussion from members on issues important to the running of the corporation. All members are encouraged to come along to future AGM's to ensure their involvement in the running of our community-controlled health service.

Merry Christmas

The Congress Board of Directors would like to wish you and your family a very safe and happy Christmas and New Year. We thank you for your support throughout 2023 and hope that 2024 is a positive year full for us all. Kele Mwarre.

