



Central Australian  
**ABORIGINAL CONGRESS**  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | ICN 7823

## **BOARD COMMUNIQUÉ**

Issue 7, May 2014

### **Board Meeting Wrap**

**At the last Congress Board of Directors meeting held 15 May 2014, the following topics were covered:**

- New **Governance Charter**
- **Risk Management Framework**
- **Business Plan** Report
- Update from **Minister Nash**
- Focus on **Regional Health Services**
- Tender for **After Hours GP**
- Submission to **National Review of Mental Health Services**
- Congress and PAAC submission to **HoR Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs**
- **ANFPP** data workshop
- Implementation of **Remediation Plan** and **Organisational Review**
- Funding of **Safe and Sober Support Service**
- **APO NT** Forum
- **FASD** Inquiry

### **Governance Charter**

The new CAACAC Governance Charter has been finalised, describing the governance framework and guidelines for how the Congress Board operates.

Some of the important developments made at a governance level have been outlined in previous Board Communiqués.

“This Governance Charter documents what the board considers to be best practice governance for an Aboriginal community controlled health service. If this board and all future boards of this great corporation can implement this charter faithfully, then Congress will be in a very good position for years to come,” said Chairman of the Congress Board, William Tilmouth.

The Governance Charter will be made available to all staff and will be uploaded to the Congress website.

### **Risk Management Framework**

**Congress has developed a new Risk Management Framework outlining the way in which Congress manages risk across the organisation.**

Benefits of ensuring risk management at all levels of Congress include:

- effective management of adverse events that impact on Congress’ purpose and objectives
- ability to make informed decisions regarding management of potential negative effects
- improve planning and processes allowing Congress to focus on core business service delivery and implement organisational improvements
- ability to direct the most appropriate resources to risks with the greatest potential impact
- creation of a positive culture in which people understand their role in helping to meet Congress objectives

Executive Management will now finalise the supporting policies and procedures in order to implement the Risk Management Framework and will ensure staff receive the necessary information and training regarding the use of the new Risk Management system, ‘RiskMan’.

The Risk Management Framework will be made available to all staff and will be uploaded to the Congress website.



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## Business Plan Report

**A full Business Plan Report has been prepared in order to provide the framework for monitoring and reporting on access to and the quality of services provided by Congress.**

The report is prepared against core indicators contained in the current business plan. This includes both the NT Aboriginal Health Key Performance Indicators (NTAHKPIs) and the National Key Performance Indicators (nKPIs).

Several important conclusions drawn from the report include:

- There is continuous improvement in most indicators.
- There is increasing access to services and programs coupled with reduced waiting times.
- There has been improved child immunisation rates and timeliness.
- There have been improvements to care planning, blood glucose monitoring and glucose and blood pressure control amongst diabetic clients.
- A number of strategies have been implemented to improve low performing indicators such as Rheumatic Heart Disease Secondary prophylaxis (RHDSP) coverage rate for penicillin injections, sexual health outcomes, the rate of low birth weight (LBW) babies and anaemia amongst children.

A copy of the Business Plan Report will be made available to Congress staff.

## Update from Minister Nash

**Correspondence has been received by Minister Nash since her visit to Congress' Alice Springs and Mutitjulu Clinics in February, providing an update on the outcomes of her visit.**

Minister Nash said, "I am heartened about prospects for achieving real gains in Aboriginal health after seeing the great work organisations such as Central Australian Aboriginal Congress are doing. The concerted effort at the local level is the key to making real and lasting improvements and our focus as a Government is to support these efforts".

Minister Nash has asked the Department of Health to progress a project to assess the factors making the greatest contribution to the Aboriginal health gains that are only occurring here in the NT. Samantha Palmer, First Assistant Secretary of Indigenous and Rural Health Division will be the contact for this project. Ms Palmer will make her first visit to Congress in late July.

## Focus on Regional Health Services

**Since the last Board Meeting, CEO, Donna Ah Chee, and Acting General Manager of the Regional Health Services Division, Gavin Robins, visited Utju and Ntaria as part of a schedule of visits to each service.**

Positive feedback was provided by Marion Swift (WAHAC board member) and the community in general about the action Congress has taken in relation to other feedback already provided.

The Board Meetings for the auspiced services have been scheduled for the rest of the year. As part of Congress' commitment to supporting high level development and increased capacity of the boards of the auspiced health services, the Chairman, William Tilmouth and Director, Graham Dowling will attend these meetings whenever possible while Gavin Robins will provide high level executive support at each meeting including presenting the financial reports in person.

Following the Board meeting, a visit to Santa Teresa services was also made.

## Tender for after-hours GP

**During a recent strategic planning workshop with the board it was agreed that Congress should tender for the establishment of an after hours best practice primary health care service for the Alice Springs community, to be funded by NT Medicare Local.**

The aim would be to develop a sustainable service model that is affordable, accessible, and acceptable to all people in the community, both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal.

The service would be staffed by Congress and other interested local practitioners and would operate evenings and weekends based out of the Alice Springs Hospital.

The service will bulk-bill pensioners and all concession card holders while an appropriate fee would be determined for other patients that would optimise the complimentary nature of this service to existing day general practices.

Following the Board Meeting, it was confirmed that Congress was successful in its tender and it has since commenced planning the implementation of this project.



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## Submission to National Review of Mental Health Services

**Congress has provided a submission to an important review into the delivery of mental health services being conducted by the National Mental Health Commission (NMHC).**

Congress' submission has made three key recommendations:

1. Ensure that mental health services are fully integrated with other primary health care services through multidisciplinary teams, a single clinical information system, a new funding model that moves away from competitive tendering and towards pooled funding, and a typology of core mental health services to be developed and delivered by a core mental health workforce. Such an approach could ensure the equitable allocation of resources and corresponding availability of workforce and programs across all regions according to need.
2. Ensure funding for key evidence based early childhood programs as these are key to primary prevention of both mental and physical illness.
3. Ensure a core set of performance indicators is developed that measures both processes and outcomes and enables an assessment to be made of services working to improve outcomes for patients with mental illnesses.

## Congress and PAAC submission to HoR Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs

**Recently, Congress led the development of a submission regarding the committee's inquiry into the harmful use of alcohol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

The team comprised of Dr John Boffa, Professor Gray, Professor Wilkes and Anna Stearne from the National Drug Research Institute and Vicki Gillick, who managed the consultant Edward Tilton in developing the submission.

The submission was funded by the Peoples Alcohol Action Coalition which received a grant of \$30k from the Uniting Church to develop a major submission to the Inquiry. The submission is detailed and includes recommendations that are consistent with Congress policy on alcohol.

In addition to the PAAC submission, Congress also provided a submission in its own right to the inquiry. Both submissions will be made available on the Congress website once they are approved to be made public by the inquiry.



## The Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program data workshop

**Congress attended a national data workshop on the Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program in Canberra designed to consider ways in which data collection and evaluation of data can be improved.**

Congress gave a presentation at the workshop based on its program and the findings from a qualitative research project which involved interviewing the mothers taking part in the program. The presentation also provided an update on an independent evaluation currently being conducted by Professor Leonie Segal at UniSA.

The workshop stressed the point that studies have found that the program does not work well for pregnant women in extremely violent relationships and/or for pregnant women with severe alcohol and/or drug addictions.

These studies are consistent with Congress' own experiences, and the organisation is committed to thinking more about how the program might better attract and retain the most disadvantaged pregnant women.

## Implementation of the Remediation Plan and Organisational Review

**The development of the Governance Charter and Risk Management Framework along with the purchase and installation of all of the agreed new computer software in finance, HR and risk management, are now well advanced.**

The implementation of the new IT systems is connecting each of the bush clinics onto the one Congress system. These initiatives finalise the implementation of the remediation plan and organisational reviews and are already making a big difference to the quality of our administrative systems.

It has been decided that Dianne Bell, the consultant engaged to draft the Governance Charter and Risk Management Framework documents, will also complete the strategic planning process which will lead to the development of a new Strategic Plan.

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## Funding of Safe and Sober Support Service

**Congress is working to resolve the issue of the potential cessation of funding for its Safe and Sober Support Service.**

Congress received correspondence indicating that funding would cease, however, it is believed that the funding is ongoing as part of Stronger Futures National Partnership Agreement and Congress expects that this agreement between the Commonwealth and NT governments will be honoured so that funding will continue.

In the meantime, Congress has been permitted to use surplus funds to enable the program to continue at its current reduced form until December 2014.

## APO NT Forum

**The Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory (APO NT) NGO Forum was held in Alice Springs on 9 May.**

APO NT provided an opportunity for Aboriginal organisation's and mainstream NGO's to take part in a discussion about the best way to build on productive partnerships between the two sectors.

The forum was held in the days preceding the Board Meeting and showcased some examples of good practice, with participants sharing ideas regarding challenges and issues.

## FASD Inquiry

**Recent studies into the effects of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in the Australian and Aboriginal context found that an estimated 15.6% of avoidable intellectual disability in Aboriginal children is attributable to maternal alcohol use - twelve times the rate for non-Aboriginal children.**

More research is needed, however, and Congress will submit the following recommendations to the inquiry:

- FAS and FASD are not the only causes or perhaps even the main causes of alcohol-related cognitive impairment in the Aboriginal community.
- Harmful alcohol consumption in the family can have life-long negative effects on a child, irrespective of the presence of diagnosed FAS/FASD.
- Those whose harmful alcohol use has left them disabled or cognitively impaired require specialised disability support.
- There is no evidence to support criminalising women who drink during pregnancy.

## Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee Report

**A number of recommendations were made by the Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee for the Boards consideration and ratification.**

Overall, the finance report finds the operations of the organisation to be satisfactory including an improved solvency ratio.

The report placed increased emphasis on the analysis and reporting of surplus and deficit funds according to individual programmes with developmental work underway to match actual costs with services delivered.

This will provide the Board and managers with reports of a more detailed nature and more comprehensively define what outcomes are being achieved in contrast to the funds spent on service delivery.

## Human Resource Subcommittee Report

**The Human Resource Subcommittee Report focussed on the finalisation of the new Enterprise Agreement.**

Congress has been working cooperatively and collegially with unions and representative bodies for the past 6 months to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome for all parties concerned in the negotiations.

The Board noted that negotiations have been consistent with the good bargaining principles within the Fair Work Act and therefore, if there is a failure to meet a unified Agreement, this would not be a result of failure to negotiate in good faith.

The Board noted that the vote will commence on Monday 26 May 2014, being conducted over the period of one week to enable all staff the flexibility to vote in a manner that suits them.

END