



# BOARD COMMUNIQUÉ

## Issue 4, August 2013

### Board Meeting Wrap – August

The August Board meeting of the Congress Board of Directors was held on August 1 2013, and the following items were covered:

- **Restructure of Branches and Recruitment of New Managers**
- Progress on the new **Strategic Plan**
- The **ISO Accreditation Action Plan**
- **NFPP Research Project** possible avenues
- A report on the **Lowitja Institute Stewardship Dialogues**
- The **NT Board of Inquiry into Alcohol**
- The **Central Australian Grog Summit**
- About the **Collective Impact on Justice**
- Response to the **Stronger Futures Workforce Development Strategy**
- Signing of the **Support Link MOU**

The next Board meeting will be held on September 26 2013.

### Restructure and Recruitment of the General Manager – Finance and General Manager – HR

**The restructure of the Senior Management Team agreed to at the last board meeting is being implemented.**

It has been replaced by two new Divisions: the Finance Division and the Human Resource Division, both of which are headed by two new General Managers. The position for General Manager Finance has been advertised and applications have now closed. The applicants have been shortlisted and the candidates will interview by a panel led by the CEO, external experts and Board representation. The HR General Manager position has also been advertised and will close soon.

With the appointment of the new Deputy CEO there has been a much greater focus on the performance of Branch Managers and the need to ensure that services and programs are being implemented and evaluated properly. Patrick Cooper is currently acting as the Services Branch Manager and is leading the implementation of some important changes that will ensure that the branch has a stronger focus on the clinic, its pharmacy, chronic disease management and dental.

### Strategic Plan

As previously discussed the Organisation's Strategic Plan 2008-2013, is in its final year and needs to be renewed.

We are currently developing a request for a quote from suitable consultants to work with the Board and Executive to develop Congress' new strategic plan by the end of this year. The draft project requirements are to:

- Work with the Congress Board to develop a strategic plan to meet the needs and vision of Congress and members of the organisation.
- Review background information and relevant reports to gain an understanding of the organisation's history, purpose and performance over the past few years.
- Design and facilitate a two day strategic planning meeting with Congress' Board and senior staff to create the vision, mission, core values, priorities, strategic goals, objectives and key performance indicators for the organisation.
- Design and facilitate a process of consultation with key external stakeholders and the Aboriginal community of Alice Springs and surrounding outstations.
- Develop the five (5) year strategic plan for the organisation.

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## ISO Accreditation

Congress is pursuing ISO accreditation and the position that had been created for this purpose is now dedicated to this task. Congress has been working with Barbara Schmidt, an ISO consultant, to develop a submission to the DoHA to assist with the ISO accreditation process. The submission will request additional funding for the project officer position as well as funding for the consultant to assist with the review of the Strategic Plan and some capital items needed to assist with accreditation. An ISO Accreditation Action Plan has been developed.

## NFPP Research Project

**For some time Congress has been attempting to obtain outcome data in relation to the Nurse Family Partnership Program, beyond the scope of what the national support service, JTA, can currently provide.**

Originally, the OATSIH funded national evaluation of the program was going to progress to include outcome data, but this has not eventuated for a range of reasons. The issue for Congress has been the capacity to do the work well in the absence of dedicated funding and the availability of key people. Initially we had hoped to employ Prof. Ross Andrews from Menzies School of Health Research with assistance from the support agency, JTA, to undertake the work but we simply did not have the necessary funds.

Earlier this year, Congress was approached by AMSANT as Dr Liz Moore, the AMSANT PHMO, had taken on a Public Health Medical Registrar as part of the faculty training program and that registrar, Dr Pasqualina Coffey, has a particular interest in early childhood and the Nurse Home Visitation Program. Required to undertake a major project as part of her training in quantitative and qualitative research, she was keen to work with Congress to assist with a more in-depth evaluation of the NFPP. She had already undertaken an extensive literature review on the Nurse Home Visitation Program and was very aware that there is significant opposition to the Old's Program from academics and researchers in Darwin. This persists in spite of the best efforts of Prof. Victor Nossler to educate about the benefits of the program through seminars and private discussions. One of the main sources of scepticism is the usual catch cry that "It might have worked in the US but it won't work in Aboriginal communities". We do need to be able to counter this with better evidence of effectiveness here in the NT.

In addition to this both Congress and AMSANT are also very aware of the other criticism that the program is simply too expensive. This needs to be countered with a cost / benefit analysis that takes into account the additional cost incurred with the inclusion of Aboriginal community workers and the nurse / family ratios etc. which are lower in Aboriginal communities than in the original studies. Both combine to make the program more expensive.

At about the same time as this AMSANT development, Congress was approached by Prof. Leonie Segal from UniSA who has wanted to work with Congress for some time, assisting to evaluate and document the work that we are doing. Prof. Segal is a health economist who has published volumes of work in the area of early childhood and has quite recently had a systematic review article on Home-Visiting Programs in the prestigious *Milbank Quarterly* (Vol 90, No 1, 2012). She has received a five year NH&MRC research grant that seeks to explore the cost effectiveness of PHC, the way that for CPHC the sum of the parts gives more than the whole, and the effectiveness of particular programs especially early childhood and family support programs. She is putting a formal proposal to the board at this meeting to work with us in these areas over three years. In the meantime, while this more comprehensive evaluation program is being considered by the Board, we agreed that she would be able to value-add a great deal to the design and implementation of the evaluation for the NFPP. She attended the initial meeting to consider what we might be able to do with the NFPP evaluation at Congress.

At this stage there has been an initial meeting but nothing has been finalised in relation to the proposed evaluation. If the proposed evaluation methodology is to require collection of information that goes beyond the scope of the original consent form and contractual agreement that Congress has used for this program, then a proposal will be presented to the board for consideration which will also need to go to the ethics committee. However, given that the original program was to include a formal outcome evaluation it is possible that the evaluation can be conducted within the scope of the original consents.

In addition to this evaluation, Congress was successful in obtaining a grant through the Lowitja Institute, to undertake a qualitative evaluation of the program. This will enable Congress to document the stories of the mothers and families that have been through the program to date, as this is one way of providing evidence of the programs' effectiveness. There are some fantastic stories to be told about how this program has helped to empower mothers in particular, to take greater control of their lives and care for their babies better.

### Lowitja Institute Stewardship Dialogues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

CEO Donna Ah Chee was invited to take part in Stewardship Dialogues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health organised by the Lowitja Institute.

The purpose of the Dialogues is, through robust, frank and safe discussion, to generate new options and approaches to break through the barriers to progress in Aboriginal health policy and program development and implementation. While it is recognised that it is impossible

to avoid issues relating to broader social determinants and intersectoral action, the aim was to focus the efforts as much as possible on the health system and health system policy (across the continuum from prevention to treatment). Key academics, senior current and former bureaucrats, and Aboriginal health leaders were invited, among them Dr. Wenitong, who has just commenced on our board. The roundtable was co-chaired by Mick Gooda and Dr. Norman Swan. There will be a second round table later this year and then a report will be produced on the outcomes.

### NT Board of Inquiry into Alcohol

**The Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT (APONT) have collectively called for a joint Board of Inquiry into Alcohol in the NT.**

The proposed Terms of Reference for the Board of Inquiry are:

1. To examine levels, patterns and trends in the supply and consumption of alcohol in the Northern Territory, including at regional and local levels, since 1990.
2. To assess the harm caused directly and indirectly by alcohol in the Northern Territory.
3. To identify, examine and evaluate all alcohol supply, demand and harm reduction measures taken in the Northern Territory since 1990.
4. To examine the role of the alcohol manufacturing, distribution, wholesale and retail industry in relation to alcohol policy in the Northern Territory since 1990.
5. To recommend supply, demand and harm reduction measures to further reduce alcohol consumption and harm in the NT.
6. To recommend demand reduction measures that address key social determinants of wellbeing and alcohol misuse identified by the Board of Inquiry.
7. To recommend appropriate evidence-based early childhood/childhood programs that will lay the foundations of a generational approach to minimising alcohol and other drug abuse in the future.

Since the last election, the current NT Government has taken a radical approach to laws relating to alcohol. This has included:

- a) the abolition of the Banned Drinkers' Register
- b) the defunding of the SMART Court

- c) the introduction of mandatory rehabilitation for people who are put into protective custody for drunkenness
- d) the proposed introduction of Alcohol Protection Orders [APOs] which allow the mandatory treatment and/or imprisonment for people apprehended under the influence of alcohol for criminal activities carrying a 6 month+ sentence

The Government has ignored all of the organisations that have pointed out that there is little, if any, evidence that mandatory rehabilitation can work and the funds would be better spent on other key priorities where there is more chance of an impact i.e. Education and Early Childhood. Likewise they have ignored criticisms that the APOs, in particular, will be a de facto recriminalisation of drunkenness—and take us back to the days preceding the Royal Commission into Deaths in Custody (or earlier for the NT as the crime of public drunkenness had been removed here in the 1970s).

To hold a "Board of Inquiry" will have strong political resonances with the *Little Children are Sacred* Board of Inquiry—which pointed out the central issue of alcohol, an element that has been largely ignored.

In a sense this is a political move to 'up the ante' on the discussion of grog in the Territory. It is highly likely the NT Government will reject the call, in which case APONT could push for the Commonwealth to take it up. With a federal election quickly approaching there is some chance of success here. If both levels of Government reject the move, we will have to reconsider our next approach. This will be a focus of the forthcoming Central Australian Grog Summit.

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## Central Australian Grog Summit

**APONT secured funding from the Minister to hold a follow up Grog Summit in Central Australia in accordance with one of the key recommendations of the Darwin Grog Summit held in November last year.**

The summit is being held on July 30 and 31 at the Yeperenye School hall. It will address the broad range of issues that relate to alcohol and will have presentations from Aboriginal communities from all over the NT as well as from the Fitzroy Valley and Aurukun. Congress will be presenting the Safe and Sober Support Program and invited experts will also be presenting.

The CLC have their Executive meeting on August 1 and it is planned that their executive will be able to attend the summit. It would be good for as many Congress Board Members as possible to attend. As mentioned above the summit will provide an opportunity to strengthen the call for the Board of Inquiry into Alcohol.

## Collective Impact on Justice

A Collective Impact on Justice has been established with all of the key stakeholders involved. The group will mainly focus on violence. Funding is being sought to support the group and a detailed project plan is currently being developed. Meetings of the group have been held at Tangentyere Council which demonstrates a high degree of commitment by Tangentyere to this group.

## Response to the Stronger Futures Workforce Development Strategy

The main aspect of the response is to strengthen the focus on Aboriginal Health Practitioners (AHPs) in the Strategy as there are many unfilled positions in the NT and not enough AHPs. Along with Rangers and Night Patrol workers, Congress suggested there needs to be a special focus on AHPs. In addition, Congress suggested a program similar to the original STEP – Structured Training and Employment Program needs to be brought back. This program offered real wages for Aboriginal people undertaking university degrees and was very successful. Although on the job vocational training is important, it is also vital that Aboriginal people are properly supported to go to university as well. Congress also suggested more focus needs to be given to the prospect of creating employment for Aboriginal people in small businesses such as shops, cafés and restaurants as well as working with major employers such as Coles and Woolworths to ensure greater Aboriginal employment.

## SupportLink MOU

**SupportLink provides a national referral and diversion gateway for police and other emergency services to participate in early intervention. The role of SupportLink is to:**

- Establish and support formal referral partnerships with government and non-government agencies for police to refer to.
- Provide a single referral and diversion gateway for operational police.
- Monitor and support the referral process for clients, agencies and police officers.

The aim is to see a reduction in crime, suicide, violence, substance abuse, family breakdown, juvenile offending and to establish improved support for victims of crime.

The SupportLink framework enables police to refer to appropriate service providers via a single electronic referral gateway imbedded within their systems and gives local, state and nationally based support agencies the ability to proactively target vulnerable clients, in a seamless and proactive manner. Police can also refer across states, as SupportLink encompasses a national framework.

SupportLink can also provide a new level of reporting for partner agencies and funding bodies through remote reporting portals within the referral system. It includes 24/7 live technical support, data storage within the Federal Government Gateway and highly trained social work teams who establish and support partner agencies and monitor all referral outcomes. It has a dedicated IT design and data management team, an in house legal service, quality assurance and project workers.

It seems like this new service will help to ensure that the Aboriginal people we serve will get better access to Congress services and programs. Congress has therefore signed an MOU with SupportLink and will begin receiving referrals and assessing what impact this has on the care we can provide for our clients. We will be able to continuously review the outcomes based on the feedback they provide to us on the referrals they have made.