



Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | ICN 7823

BOARD COMMUNIQUÉ

Issue 1, March 2013



Message from the President

As the new President of the Board, I am a firm believer in accountability to the people who fund us. I am also a firm believer in accountability to the people we serve.

I believe the vision of the founding members is paramount. In my role as President, I am committed to strive to guide the organisation in the strategic direction set by its founding members.

Since Congress has become registered through ORIC and under the CATSI Act, it is a requirement under the Act that we hold a general meeting within three months of registration. This is one of the compliances that we must meet as the new Board.

The Board has recently held our first meeting, which was quite enlightening. We as a board are very dedicated to working together to achieve the overall goals of better health services and outcomes for our people.

Mr William Tilmouth, President

Introducing the New Board

The General Meeting held in December 2012 saw the election of a new Board for Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. Pictured from left to right are:

- Chansey Paech (Youth Representative)
- Donna McMasters
- Dawn Ross (Treasurer)
- Chippy Miller
- Joe Hayes
- William Tilmouth (President)

Recruitment will also commence for three independent (non-member) directors to hold specialist positions in **Primary Health Care, Finance, and Governance and Administration**. The President, William Tilmouth, will sit on each recruitment panel, along with the following Board members: Chansey Paech (Primary Health Care), Dawn Ross (Finance), and Donna McMasters (Governance and Administration).



Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation

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Governance Training by ORIC

The first board meeting included a two-hour governance in-service training session. This training was provided by Robert Turner, Manager of the Alice Springs Regional Office of the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC), along with George Donaldson. Topics covered included an overview of ORIC, the main people in a corporation, duties and responsibilities of directors and working with the corporation's rule book.

Sub-Committees Formed

Discussion was held around the proposal to form a number of sub-committees within Congress for the Board to sit on.

The decision was made for the CEO to establish the following sub-committees:

- Clinical (*Donna McMasters*)
- Research (*William Tilmouth*)
- Finance (*Dawn Ross*)
- Aged Care (*Joe Hayes*)
- Youth (*Chansey Paech*)

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee maintains communication between the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Corporate Services Manager (CSM), CEO and the Board in relation to financial matters and compliance. The Treasurer is the chair of the Finance Committee and the finance-specified independent director will also be part of this committee.

Approved Policies

During the first Board Meeting, approvals were made on the following new or updated policies:

- **Novated Leasing Vehicle Policy**
This policy provides clarity in regards to eligibility for obtaining a Novated Lease, as well as guidelines around Novated Leasing for both leased pool vehicles and privately-leased vehicles.
- **Social Media Policies**
Two social media policies were approved by the Board: *Employee Private Use of Social Media Policy*, and *Corporate Use of Social Media Policy*. These policies provide a guideline for accounts that are created to represent Congress in an official capacity, and the rights and responsibilities of staff who engage in the private use of social media.

FPP Research Project

Alukura (women's health branch) was successful in receiving a small grant from the Lowitja Institute to undertake a project to research and record the stories of women who have participated in the Family Partnership Program over the past three years that is has been operating in Alice Springs.

The study aims to identify and document the effects, benefits and/or disadvantages of participating in the FPP from the perspective of the female Aboriginal clients and FPP staff, with the ultimate aim being to improve overall health outcomes for Aboriginal women and their children. Board members Donna McMasters and Dawn Ross will share the role on the steering committee of the project.



Closing the Gap Strategy

A presentation was made to the Board by Dr John Boffa, Public Health Medical Officer, on *The Social Determinants of Aboriginal Health in the NT: Where are we at now and what is needed to further close the life expectancy gap*.

In this presentation, Dr Boffa briefed the Board on the health status of Aboriginal people in the NT and the fact that the NT is the only jurisdiction on track to Close the Gap by 2013.

This is largely due to the collaborative needs-based planning approach of the NT Aboriginal Health Forum and an increase in per capita spending on primary health care from an average of \$600 per Aboriginal person to more than \$2,500 per Aboriginal person. These resources are now equitably distributed on a population basis.

Within the context of these improvements, Congress continues to focus on and advocate for measures to address the social determinants of Aboriginal disadvantage in order to continue to Close the Gap. These are documented in our 2011 paper, *Rebuilding Family Life in Alice Springs and Central Australia: the social and community dimensions of change for our people* and these include:

- Better access to primary health care
- Early childhood
- Improved educational attainments
- Reduced use of alcohol and other drugs
- Greater levels of employment and income
- Reduced overcrowding

These determinants have been recognised by the World Health Organisation as being crucial to addressing the life expectancy gap.

Congress' 40 Year Anniversary

In 2013, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress celebrates its 40-year anniversary, having been founded on 9 June 1973. This was a pivotal time for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in Alice Springs; along with Congress, Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service was formed, and the early stages of Central Land Council also came into being at this time.

Some preliminary ideas were presented to the Board around possible events and celebrations to be held throughout the year, including a family day celebration, a march, events to showcase each branch, and an inaugural annual lecture.

The Board endorsed the establishment of an organising committee. An invitation has been extended to the Executive Management for those interested to join the working committee.

Branch Overviews

During the first meeting, presentations were made to the Board by Branch Managers, giving an overview of a number of Congress branches, including:

- Services Branch
- Alukura
- Ingkintja
- Social & Emotional Wellbeing
- Regional Health Services Division
- Corporate Services

A presentation was also made on the 2011/12 Congress Business Plan in order to provide an overview Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Draft Governance Charter

A briefing paper was presented to the Board by CEO Donna Ah Chee and Corporate Services Manager/ Company Secretary Peter Solly surrounding a draft Governance Charter.

The Charter sets out a framework for good practice in corporate governance, and clearly articulates the legal and moral responsibilities of the Board.

When finished, this document becomes an official document that clearly sets out these responsibilities.

The draft Charter covers the following items:

1. Responsibilities
2. Responsibilities of the Board
3. Expectations of Directors
4. Governance policies
5. Finance committee terms of reference
6. Board processes
7. Responsibilities of CEO
8. Delegation of the CEO
9. CEO's authority
10. CEO's remuneration
11. CEO's performance assessments
12. CEO's delegation policies

The Board agreed that the current draft was a very good work in progress and a final draft will be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

Compliance Register

A Compliance Register was tabled and discussed by the Board. The updated Register increases the capacity of the previous register in order to provide a schedule of reporting, compliance or reporting and a record of compliance to funding bodies.

The Compliance Register will be submitted to the Board on a quarterly basis, for the Board to review and endorse.



2011/2012 Financial Audit

Chief Financial Officer, Alan McLaughlin, presented a Representation Letter relating to the 2011/2012 financial audit report. It was made clear that the current Board cannot form a view on the previous financial year, as they were not the Board at that time.

A letter will be prepared to send to the funding body that outlines the remediation plan in response to the report by the Funds Administrator.

General Meeting

Part of the requirement of becoming registered under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act) is that a new corporation must hold a general meeting within three months of registration.

This meeting, to be held on Thursday 21 March 2013 at 9am at the Congress Westpoint Training Room, will allow an opportunity for an update to be given to members, following the most recent general meeting in December 2012.

There will also be one resolution to be put forward at the meeting: *The membership of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation resolve for the purposes of the CATSI Act 2006 and the Rule Book of the Corporation to accept the Board of Directors Entitlements policy.*