



Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | ICN 7823



BOARD COMMUNIQUÉ

ISSUE 10, August 2014

Board Meeting Wrap

At the last Congress Board of Directors meeting held 21 August 2014, the following was discussed:

- The Strategic Plan
- An Aboriginal Employment Plan
- Senate Select Committee Inquiry into Health
- New Anglicare MOU
- NT FASD Inquiry
- Review of Social and Emotional Wellbeing Service (SEWB)
- Risk Management Framework Implementation Plan
- Congress Dental Services
- Midwifery Group Practice Steering Committee
- Visit by President of Australian Medical Association
- Visit by First Assistant Secretary of Indigenous and Rural Health Division
- Re-establishment of the Congress Orientation program

The next Board meeting will be held 25 September 2014.

Strategic Plan Update

Congress has carried out extensive consultation with stakeholders in order to obtain community input into the development of the organisation's Strategic Plan.

The consultation discussions, which were facilitated by an external consultant, invited Congress members, members of the wider Aboriginal community and other organisations and services operating in the local community, to provide input into the plan.

As a next step, Congress will host consultations meetings for the Boards or the auspiced services and staff to also provide input.

The feedback obtained will be used to develop a draft Strategic Plan for consideration by Congress members when it is presented at the AGM to be held on 28 November 2014.

Congress' Aboriginal Employment Plan

Congress is working to increase the proportion of Aboriginal staff employed across all parts of the organisation.

As of 1 July 2014, the proportion of Congress' workforce identified as Aboriginal was 44.4% or 135 staff. This number has doubled since 2005, however, there remains a gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff.

Short to long term strategies to increase the proportion of Aboriginal staff at Congress, include:

- Continue to promote training opportunities to retain existing Aboriginal staff at Congress.
- Increase engagement with local and other Aboriginal people regarding employment opportunities.
- Work with staff to develop recruitment strategies, in particular, Aboriginal staff.
- Increase the rate of professionalization of Aboriginal staff across the workforce.

A Workforce Development Plan will concrete the organisation's commitment to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal people at Congress.



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Senate Select Committee Inquiry into Health

Congress will prepare a comprehensive submission to the Senate's inquiry into health policy, administration and expenditure in Australia, announced on 25 June 2014.

The submission will place particular emphasis on the possible impact of spending cuts to the health system on the health of Aboriginal communities, drawing on evidence from the Australian and international context.

The development of the submission is expected to provide a foundation for advocacy around broad health system issues for Congress and the community controlled health sector. This submission will be made available on the Congress website once finalised.



Regional Health Services

A new permanent GP has been recruited to WAHAC.

All GP positions are now filled.

NT FASD Inquiry

Congress has presented evidence based on its submission regarding the NT FASD Inquiry at a public hearing in Alice Springs.

This submission is available on the Congress website.

Anglicare MOU

The Congress and Anglicare Boards have established a formal MOU promoting greater collaboration between the two organisations' respective efforts to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The MOU addresses the basis for collaboration in the development of new services and programs that support Aboriginal self-determination and community controlled health services.

Collaborative efforts will extend beyond a focus on service delivery to the prevention of disease and illness through improved promotion of health.

To date there have been preliminary discussions on a range of service delivery areas that would benefit from a collaborative approach. Both organisations are presently exploring the idea of running a joint workshop to discuss Out of Home Care and ways in which this critical service sector can be improved.

Review of Social and Emotional Wellbeing Service

A review of Congress' Social and Emotional Wellbeing Service as part of a plan to inform the services 2014/15 Operational Plan continues and is approaching its final phase.

Workshops will be conducted with staff to determine which evidence based therapies are most suited to treat the different mental health issues faced by SEWB clients.

The review also aims to determine the most appropriate evaluation tools needed to ensure optimal evaluation of outcomes.

The review panel consists of Congress Treasurer Dawn Ross and external consultants Sue Cragg and Dr Marcus Tabart (psychiatrist).

The review will be finalised by mid-September.



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Midwifery Group Practice Steering Committee

A Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) Steering Committee is currently working to re-establish the Midwifery Group Practice at Alukura.

MGP Manager Raelene Carroll has provided the committee with the services' outcome data since it began five years ago.

The service has delivered 1135 babies of which 452 have been Aboriginal babies, demonstrating low induction rates and improved birth weights as well as a caesarean section rate of 18%, compared with the Alice Springs Hospital rate of 35% and a national average rate of 32%.

Congress agrees that the service demonstrates best practice in antenatal, birthing and postnatal care and anticipates that an MGP service at Alukura will improve outcomes for Alukura clients.

Visit by President of Australian Medical Association

New Federal President of Australian Medical Association (AMA), Brian Owler, visited Congress on 12 and 13 August 2014.

This purpose of the trip was to learn about the work being done by Aboriginal community controlled health services and discuss key issues in Aboriginal health to ensure he is well informed to lead the development of appropriate policy positions on Aboriginal health.

Congress Chairman, William Tilmouth and Director, Graham Dowling along with Acting CEO, Gavin Robins and Chief Medical Officer for Public Health, Dr John Boffa provided Mr Owler with an extensive orientation of Congress, visiting the Congress Clinic, Ingkintja Men's Clinic, and the Amoonguna health service.

Risk Management Framework Implementation Plan

A plan has been developed to implement the organisation's new Risk Framework.

This has included a revision of the Terms of Reference regarding the Safety and Quality Committee charged with implementing the Framework. This Committee has been renamed the Continuous Quality Improvement Clinical Governance Committee (CQI CGC) in order to emphasise a focus on clinical risk. This committee is comprised of staff from town and remote community services.

A new committee has also been established to ensure compliance with all non-clinical policies, procedures and other business processes as well as to oversee compliance with ISO accreditation obligations. This committee will be known as the Continuous Quality Improvement Business Services Committee (CQI BSC).

The Work Health and Safety Committee will work with both committees in the implementation of the Risk Framework.

Dental Services at Congress

Congress has revitalised its dental service since the departure of Dr Moon.

A new dentist has been recruited and is due to commence in September, with a series of locum dentists scheduled to fill the role in the interim.

A new X-Ray machine has also been purchased and installed. For the first time, the service is able to offer the full range of restorative dentistry, including root canal work, in addition to fillings and tooth extractions.

This service is now available on Saturday mornings in an effort to meet the increased need as a result of the wider range of services now provided.



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Visit by First Assistant Secretary of Indigenous and Rural Health Division

First Assistant Secretary the Indigenous and Rural Health Division (IRHD), Samantha Palmer and Director of NT Office of IRHD, Tania McInnes, visited Congress on 23-25 July to gain greater insight into Aboriginal community controlled health services and Aboriginal health.

Ms Palmer and Ms McInnes were provided a tour of the organisation including a visit to the Utju health service in Areyonga, as well as a broad overview of Congress and the context of Aboriginal health.

Ms Palmer and Ms McInnes provided positive feedback regarding the conditions and operations of the services.



Re-establishment of Congress' Orientation Program

Congress' Orientation Program has been re-established and an initial orientation day was well received by staff.

An initial session was led by the Congress Chairman, William Tilmouth who was supported by Director Graham Dowling, and provided an overview of the history of colonisation in Central Australia and the impacts on the development of the health care system, as well as an introduction to the Congress Strategic plan and board.

CEO, Donna Ah Chee also provided staff with an introduction to Congress and Aboriginal community controlled comprehensive primary health care, as well as an overview of policy changes in Aboriginal health that have led to health system improvements in the NT.

Other topics covered by Congress staff included:

- The political economy and social determinants of health
- Mandatory reporting requirements
- Client confidentiality and the proper use of electronic information.

The day will be offered to staff a minimum of eight times per year and plans for cross cultural training are also in motion.

Governance Subcommittee Report

The Governance Subcommittee has met and discussed processes for the management of applications for membership and mechanisms for dealing with nominations for appointments as a Director.

Guidelines for Nomination as a Director of Congress are currently in development. These guidelines will provide general information about Congress, describe who is eligible to nominate as a Director, the process for nomination as a Director, the criteria to be applied in the assessment of applications and the roles and responsibilities of Directors.

Guidelines for membership are also in development. These guidelines provide information about the nature and character of the membership base Congress wishes to develop, criteria for membership, the obligations and responsibilities of members, rights of members and the process for application for membership.

The Governance Subcommittee has also developed draft policies in respect of membership applications and nominations for appointment as a Director.

These documents will be uploaded to the Congress website on final endorsement by the Board.

Research Subcommittee Report

Congress' Research Subcommittee will soon meet with Prof Leonie Segal (University of South Australia, Division of Health Sciences) to develop a methodology for the economic evaluation of Congress.

The evaluation seeks to ensure that the benefits from Congress' health care programs are greater than the opportunity cost of such program and maximise the health and well-being of Aboriginal people.



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