



# Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | ICN 7823



## BOARD COMMUNIQUÉ

ISSUE 13, April 2015

### Board Meeting Wrap

The following topics were discussed at the last Congress Board of Directors Meeting held **23 April 2015**:

- The six monthly Congress Business Plan Report
- Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding for early childhood services
- Plans for After Hours Youth Services in Alice Springs
- NTML funding for Congress
- Minister Elferink visit to Congress
- Aboriginal Staff Advisory Committee and Cultural Orientation Program
- Central Australia Academic Health Science Centre
- Congress presentation on Early Childhood at Melbourne University symposium
- Alice Springs Alcohol Management Plan
- Governance priorities
- Human Resources developments
- Congress involvement in research projects
- Developments at Congress clinics in Alice Springs

The next Board Meeting will be held **Thursday 18 June 2015**.

### Congress Business Report

**The Congress' Business Report for the period 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2014 has revealed significant progress across key performance indicators as well as improvements in the quality of data being assessed.**

It is the first time that data on all clinics has been analysed in a common way for Alice Springs and remote services.

Notable improvements in performance have occurred at Congress remote sites Mpwelarre Health Aboriginal Corporation (Santa Teresa Health Service), Mutitjulu Health Service and Areyonga (Utju) Health Service.

All town and bush services have reported improved rates of low-weight births in babies due to fewer premature births. The rate is now between 6-8% across all services which is a great development.

Smoking rates have remained constant at around 48% which is disappointing, and iron deficiency anaemia in children has remained a significant issue.

Areas requiring further improvement will remain a focus as Congress revises its business plan for 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016.

### IAS funding for Early Childhood services

Congress' Preschool Readiness Program has been refunded through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) following successful negotiations with Prime Minister & Cabinet (PM&C) as well as the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion.

In addition, Minister Scullion has given a strong indication that funds will be provided to Safe and Sober Support Services (SSSS) following the positive findings of an independent review of the program.

### After Hours Youth Service

**The Chief Minister has announced that Congress will receive funding to re-establish an After Hours Youth Service in collaboration with the Alice Springs Town Council.**

The decision was made in response to lobbying carried out by Congress and other local agencies and following the tragic death of a young boy in late 2014, which occurred after-hours as a result of chroming. This was compounded by problems created by young people in the CBD following the recent Lightning Carnival.

The Chief Minister has announced that the Alice Springs Town Council Ranger Program would be extended to provide foot patrols in the CBD at night and that Congress would be funded to provide additional case management, with the two service providers working closely together to achieve shared objectives.

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## NTML funding for Congress

The Northern Territory Medicare Local (NTML) consortium was successful in its tender to establish the Northern Territory Primary Health Network (PHN) from 1 July 2015 which will assist to ensure continuity of services provided by the former NTML.

In the past, Congress has received over \$2 million of funding per year from the former NTML for vital services including the renal dialysis PHC service, chronic disease care coordinators and the After Hours General Practice service at Alice Springs Hospital and is now hopeful that these funds will be ongoing following the forthcoming Federal Budget.

Funding prospects for the Alice Springs After Hours General Practice remain uncertain despite Congress' lobbying efforts, alongside NTML and key Commonwealth bureaucrats.

## Minister Elferink visit to Congress

Minister Elferink's visit to Congress on Friday 10 April discussed the important links between early childhood and long term physical and mental health outcomes and the need to fund an Abecedarian Educational Day Care Centre in Alice Springs as an evaluated trial.

At the meeting, Minister Elferink agreed that there is an important need to deliver high quality early childhood services to improve the development and later academic achievement of children from at-risk and under-resourced families.

At the meeting, Minister Elferink provided an update regarding his successful budget submission that has provided \$3 million per year for new mental health services, and his plans to place psychologists in the courts as "court clinicians" in order to support the large number of people engaged in the criminal justice system, who experience mental health issues.

Minister Elferink confirmed that he is open to negotiate the placement of these positions in the primary health care sector, including at Congress. Congress is already involved in supporting people with mental health issues engaged in the criminal justice system.

Minister Elferink also indicated his commitment to try to ensure that the Safe and Sober Support Service and the Targeted Family Support Service were able to continue with NTG funds.

## Aboriginal Staff Advisory Committee and Cultural Orientation Program

**The Aboriginal Staff Advisory group has led the development of the Congress Cultural Orientation program, currently being trialled with staff.**

This is the first time Congress has developed its own cultural orientation in-house, to be delivered by Congress staff.

The content aims to address the training needs of new staff in relation to local protocols.

## Central Australia Academic Health Science Centre

**Chief Minister, Adam Giles has indicated NT government, including Cabinet support for a proposed research centre, to be referred to as the Central Australia Academic Health Science Centre (CAAHSC), to partners of the proposal, including Congress, Baker IDI, Menzies School of Health research and others.**

With the support of the NTG a delegation travelled to Canberra to lobby for Commonwealth funding. Partners are now optimistic about funding prospects for the Centre.

## Congress presentation on Early Childhood at Melbourne University symposium

**Congress delivered a keynote address at an Early Childhood symposium convened by Onemda at Melbourne University on 2 April, on its experience implementing programs and services in Early Childhood.**

The meeting, which was attended by a range of policy makers, academics and service providers, sought to build a core knowledge base by combining insights from scientific research, program evaluation and on-the-ground experience, on the importance of conditions during the 'First 1,000 Days' and the impact of these on an individual's long-term health and wellbeing, and to encourage collaboration in the development of research activities focussed on this issue.

It was agreed that a major research grant should be sought to establish a number of Abecedarian Educational Day Care Centres across Australia, including Alice Springs.



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## Alice Springs Alcohol Management Plan

**The Alice Springs Alcohol Reference Panel (ASARP) has finalised the draft Alcohol Management Plan with input from a range of selected organisations, including Congress and Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT).**

The draft plan is consistent with Congress policies on alcohol with the exception that there was opposition to include reference to a minimum price on alcohol.

The draft plan will now go to government departments for their feedback over the next four weeks and any suggested changes will be considered by the ASARP.

Pending government support, the plan will then be subject to public consultation.

A full briefing and copy of the final draft plan will be presented to the Congress Board for consideration and approval at the next Board meeting in June and any suggested changes will be fed into the consultation process.

## Governance Subcommittee Update

**Proposed changes to the Rule Book have been discussed in detail. The key matters under consideration for reform include:**

- Employee membership and rights
- Increased clarity in respect of the description of directors (elected) and independent directors (Board appointed) and composition of the Board
- Youth and Remote representation
- Appointment of office bearers
- Modernisation of language and intent

The Subcommittee will continue the development of the proposed amendments for final submission and discussion with the Board.

The Governance Subcommittee has commenced preparations for the imminent nomination of new specialist, non-member directors to occur later this year, as part of its role to assist the Board in ensuring best practice governance of the corporation.

While members of Congress are advised annually of director vacancies, called upon for nominations and invited to elect the corporations member directors at each annual general meeting, the appointment of non-member subject or expertise specific Independent Directors is facilitated by the Governance Subcommittee.

The role of the Governance Subcommittee is to recommend to the Board, suitable candidates, each of whom is assessed on their individual merits, qualifications, experience and expertise.

In order to assist the Board, the subcommittee has introduced a skills matrix to be applied to Independent Directors to help identify specific subject matter expertise and experience gaps to be addressed through the nomination of the subsequent non-member directors.

## Human Resources Subcommittee Update

**Congress' Human Resources Subcommittee has reported on recent achievements related to Aboriginal employment and workforce development priorities.**

A major highlight was found to be the recent improvements to the orientation of new staff, developed by the Aboriginal Staff Advisory Committee (see pg 2).

The employment of three Aboriginal people into trainee positions has also occurred. All trainees will complete on the job training and undertake certificate level studies within their first year of employment, in the following positions:

- Dental Assistant
- Human Resources Assistant
- Administration Officer

Further to this, three current Aboriginal employees have successfully gained entry to a Bachelor of Business (Management) degree with Charles Sturt University and are being supported by Congress to complete their studies on a part-time basis. These three employees are long term Congress employees and have been identified as persons with capacity to develop into leadership roles within Congress.

In regards to general HR business, the General Manager Human Resources has commenced visits to each of the remote sites. The subcommittee recommends that an annual calendar of visits from HR staff to sites across Congress, including all bush clinics to ensure that staff are familiar with and comfortable accessing HR services and to ensure tailored HR services to best support all Congress staff.



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## Research Subcommittee Update

**Congress' Research Subcommittee has reported on general progress regarding improved process for participation in relevant and important research activities as well as an overview of recent requests.**

Improvements have been made to Congress' research project register, which now provides clearer summary of projects, start dates and end dates and requires updates to be recorded at agreed checkpoints.

The board has approved Congress' involvement in a research project relating to the effectiveness of the community controlled health care model to be carried out by Global Reconciliation. The next step will be a planning workshop in Alice Springs, involving AMSANT and other Aboriginal health services.

The board has endorsed Congress involvement in an Aboriginal Birth Cohort Study (ABC), a prospective, life course study of Aboriginal newborns, investigating the causes of non-communicable chronic diseases, with special emphasis on early causes and preventative interventions.

With the participant's permission, Congress will be provided with data collected e.g. height, weight, blood pressure, and blood count, as part of a well person health check. Congress will provide the researchers with a clinic room to follow up with those members of the cohort located in Alice Springs.

A formal non-binding, five year agreement between Congress and Menzies, the largest research institution in the Northern Territory, has been drafted and aims to determine a coordinated and collaborative approach to developing and implementing research activities. Menzies has already provided Congress with "in kind" support of one of its best Aboriginal researchers, Leisa McCarthy. Leisa has assisted Congress to build its capacity in research and provides support to the Research Subcommittee.

For more information regarding Congress participation in current research projects contact the new Research Coordinator, Elizabeth Hemphill on (08) 8958 4898.

## Clinics Subcommittee Report

**The Clinics Subcommittee has provided an update on key developments occurring at the Congress Clinics in Alice Springs, including progress on modifications to the Main Clinic Service, waiting times, the redevelopment of the dental clinic, a review of Ingkintja Male Health Service and progress on the review of the Social Emotional Wellbeing Service (SEWB).**

Draft plans for the Main Clinic Service upgrade are receiving modifications. The Clinics Subcommittee will review the revised drawings once these have been received.

Average waiting times for the main clinic through January to March were 11 minutes for clients with appointments and 44 minutes for clients without an appointment. Maintaining and improving waiting times remains a constant priority task for management.

Redevelopment of the Dental Clinic commenced 27 April following the board meeting. The service has been momentarily relocated to Flynn Drive while arrangements on the gifting of a fully equipped dental bus are also under consideration.

The Terms of Reference for a review into the Ingkintja Male Health Service is finalised. A consultancy will be put to tender in the near future.

The SEWB review committee met late March to discuss an Implementation Plan following the SEWB review. A draft plan will be tabled at the next board meeting.

END