



# Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | ICN 7823



## BOARD COMMUNIQUÉ

ISSUE 15, October 2015

### Board Meeting Wrap

The following topics were discussed at the last Congress Board of Directors Meeting held **8 October 2015**:

- Adoption of the Audited Financial Statements 2014/15;
- Building and Facility Review;
- One-off funding boost for Early Years Improvement Plan;
- Combined Aboriginal Organisations initiative;
- Presentation to Departmental Secretaries and First Assistant Secretaries in Canberra;
- Delivery of health services to Ntaria and Wallace Rockhole areas;
- Changes to Congress' Education and Training Service;
- The Stolen Generations Service;
- Tackling Indigenous smoking funding;
- Ingkintja Male Health Service Review;
- AOD Certificate IV Graduation;
- AMSANT Board and General Meeting Alice Springs;
- Joint remote board meeting at Utju;
- Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum Meeting;
- Congress Chairman on Congress values;
- Human Resource Subcommittee Report;
- Research Subcommittee Report; and
- Clinics Subcommittee Report.

The next Board Meeting will be held **Thursday 26 November 2015**.

At the commencement of the board meeting, the Chairman, Mr William Tilmouth led a minutes silence in recognition of the passing of Mr Kwementyere Kantawara and acknowledgement of his leadership qualities as the Chairman of the Western Aranda Health Aboriginal Corporation. He will be sadly missed.

### Adoption of the Audited Financial Statements 2014/15

The board adopted the Audited Financial Statements for the 2014/15 financial year, the statements were audited by RSM Bird Cameron Partners and an unqualified audit report was issued.

The feedback from the auditors indicated that Congress has actively improved policies, procedures and controls to bring them in line with best practice procedures for the size of the organisation.

The overall result for the organisation was a profit of \$343,225 which is a strong result and indicates that Congress, as a whole, has worked well to reduce under expenditure in grant programs.

The completion of the financial statements and the associated audit is a big hurdle each year for finance and is a job well done!

### Building and Facility Review

**During the last two (2) months staff have been working hard to complete a review of building and facilities.**

The aim of this review for Congress is to own its own facilities, improve access to clients, reduce leasing costs, improve remote housing, and gain efficiency by reducing the number of premises and to limit building expenditure that is not strategic in nature.

The review was completed and presented to the board and dealt with the following main topics:

1. Congress is spending approximately \$3 million per year on premises, of this \$1.3 million relates to leases. A move of all staff into Congress owned facilities could save as much as \$1.7 million per year;
2. The investigation of premises in Sadadeen and Larapinta for satellite clinics, which would house GP's, nurses and ancillary staff; and,
3. The investigation of greenfield and already constructed options for purchase which would provide a location for part or full co-location of staff.

As part of the presentation, a large number of property options were presented to the board and after in-depth discussion two (2) options were adopted for further investigation, and for a further decision at the November board meeting.

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## One-off funding boost for Early Years Improvement Plan

**The board approved one-off funding of just over \$600k to improve service delivery at Ampe Kenhe Apmere Congress Childcare, in order to fully implement the Early Years Improvement Plan.**

The plan, which was initiated in March 2015, was developed in response to an increase in attendance by children with clinical, behavioural and/or emotional disorders.

The one-off funding will be allocated to:

- an additional staffing compliment of six (6) educators and one (1) part-time dedicated project lead (this is above National Quality Standards (NQS));
- four (4) child-free (shut-down) days per year to allow for professional development; and,
- further improvements to indoor and outdoor areas (this is outside the scope of an existing capital upgrade plan to be funded by Department of Social Services (DSS)).

The plan is led by a steering committee, established to provide expert guidance to Congress executive management on the operational direction of the childcare centre to ensure high quality services and access.

The steering committee is independently chaired by Professor Collette Taylor, Chair of Early Childhood Education and Care at Melbourne University Graduate School of Education. The Department of Children and Families is also represented as a member on the committee.

Major refurbishments funded by DSS have commenced and plans have been made to ensure minimal operational disruption with regular progress updates provided to parents and guardians.



## Combined Aboriginal Organisations initiative

The Board has supported the re-establishment of the Combined Aboriginal Organisations (CAO) including the draft Terms of Reference with a minor amendment.

This follows a recent meeting held of the CAO, called to ascertain the level of commitment to re-establish the CAO as a continuing forum in Alice Springs and Central Australia.

First established in the early 1980's, the CAO is a collective of major Aboriginal organisations in Central Australia representing Aboriginal people on matters concerning them.

## Presentation to Departmental Secretaries and First Assistant Secretaries in Canberra

Congress CEO, Donna Ah Chee and Chief Medical Officer Public Health, Dr John Boffa travelled to Canberra last month to present on key issues in Aboriginal health to departmental secretaries and first assistant secretaries in Indigenous and population health, indigenous affairs, drug strategy, mental health, social services, education and workforce development and training.

The presentations discussed key priorities in Aboriginal health including; early childhood, mental health, AOD policy, and the importance of comprehensive primary health care.

The presentations were well received and it is hoped that this will lead to policy changes in early childhood, mental health and AOD treatment.

## Delivery of health services to Ntaria and Wallace Rockhole areas

The WAHAC Board of Directors will hold a community consultation meeting to discuss proposed plans to improve service delivery in the Ntaria and Wallace Rockhole region, by transferring primary health care service delivery from a dual to a single provider arrangement.

The meeting will provide explanation regarding the proposal to see a single provider of primary health care services through community control arrangements, as is the case at Utju and Ltyentye Apurte communities.

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## Changes to Congress' Education and Training Service

**Congress' Education and Training Service has undergone a restructure, with Congress entering into a new MOU with Bachelor Institute of Technology and Education (BITE) to see this essential service expanded.**

New Senior Aboriginal Health Practitioner (AHP), AHP Educator and Nurse Educator positions have been created to support the new structure, and will be based at Congress' Main Clinic Service overseeing the clinical placements and support, while BITE will deliver all classroom training.

## The Stolen Generations Service

**Congress was invited to submit a tender to provide the Stolen Generations service in Alice Springs, previously provided by the Central Australian Stolen Generations & Families Aboriginal Corporation, following the unfortunate closure of the service.**

The tender was developed with the support of former directors of CASG&FAC and in consultation with SG Top End and SA offices.

The tender builds on the link-up and family genealogy work carried out by Congress' Social Emotional Wellbeing Service (SEWB) staff, in particular, Gerard Waterford and Franny Coughlin and includes the continuation of key aspects of the former service.

The service will continue to engage with the CASG&FAC leadership as their active participation is vital to make this a success.

## Tackling Indigenous smoking funding

**Congress has completed a major select tender for the refunding of its former Healthy Lifestyle and Tobacco Cessation Program, to be provided under a new name to reflect a specific focus on smoking cessation.**

Congress has requested the reinstatement of ten (10) positions as per the program's original format, with seven (7) Tobacco Action Worker positions to be based at five (5) remote clinics, and another two (2) at the Main Clinic.

The three (3) remaining positions will support health promotion and will be based within the Public Health Division, assisting with online social marketing, community education and other population health activities.

## AMSANT Board and General Meeting Alice Springs

**The AMSANT Board and General Meeting was held at Congress in Alice Springs on 2-3 September.**

Topics discussed at the meeting included; NT representation of the NACCHO board, the regionalisation process, the new primary health care funding formula, the NT KPI data report and the development of dialysis services through the Purple House.

## Ingkintja Male Health Service Review

A review of the Ingkintja Male Health Service carried out by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) is almost complete.

The findings of the review will be examined by the male health subcommittee and executive management, and a report including recommendations will be provided at the November board meeting.

## AOD Certificate IV Graduation

**Five (5) Aboriginal staff from SEWB successfully completed a Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) through RMIT University, with a graduation ceremony held at the Alice Springs Desert Park last month.**

These staff were; Debra Maidment, Lynette Stuart, Ryan Mallard, Dorrie Wesley and Dylan Trindle. Kim Gorey, a former Congress AOD worker also completed the course while still with Congress.

Congress CEO, Donna Ah Chee presented the keynote speech, congratulating the students for their hard work and achievement, and addressing the graduation ceremony on the importance of Aboriginal trained AOD workers in the sector.



## Joint remote board meeting at Utju

A joint meeting of the remote health boards was held in Utju on 18 August.

Issues discussed included:

- ICE use and support services;
- the Alice Springs Alcohol Management Plan;
- the tender process for Tackling Indigenous Smoking funding;
- the restructured remote AOD service;
- the NTAHF working group on the funding formula for primary health care services; and,
- CQI focus areas.



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## Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum Meeting

**The NT Aboriginal Health Forum (NTAHF) Meeting was held at Congress in Alice Springs on 25 - 26 August to discuss key issues in Aboriginal Health.**

The meeting was attended in person by Maria Jolly, former First Assistant Secretary of the Indigenous Health Division, and Dr Brendan Gibson Director, Assistant Secretary Health Division Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC).

In the meeting, Dr Gibson, who is responsible for the allocation of AOD funds within PMC, explained that funds for the remote AOD program in the Northern Territory will be allocated according to the NTAHF planning and needs analysis process. In line with this, Congress will receive funding for four (4) positions.

The additional funding, combined with funds received by NT DoH, has meant Congress' town based AOD program is more secure for the next 12 months.

## Congress Chairman on Congress values

**The Congress Chairman attended the last staff meeting to recognise and encourage a continued commitment by staff to persevere in their work contributing to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people.**

The Chairman placed emphasis on the fact that such vital service provision should be seen as a privilege and never a chore.

The Chairman presented a new poster which will reinforce the corporation's commitment to service, its purpose and its values. The poster will be on display at all Congress town locations, and in all Congress consult rooms.

## Human Resource Subcommittee Report

**The board noted updates made to Congress' Code of Conduct, Workforce Engagement and Development Plan and HR reporting.**

Updates made to the Code of Conduct have been reviewed by the HR subcommittee, who ensured that the policy is aligned with Congress' values outlined in its Strategic Plan 2015-2018. The reviewed policy will be circulated to staff for feedback, before a final updated draft is provided to the board for approval at the meeting in November.

As part of the Workforce Engagement and Development Plan job descriptions have been updated to reflect a commitment to workforce development and recruitment processes have been updated to facilitate internal transfer opportunities. The HR Subcommittee is aiming to progress work on career paths for the next meeting.

The subcommittee is also working on developing HR KPI's as identified in the 2014/15 Business Plan.

## Governance Subcommittee Report

**The board endorsed the seven (7) candidates recommended by the Governance Subcommittee for three (3) member director board vacancies created as a result of the expiry of their two (2) year term.**

As there were more nominations than vacancies a ballot will be held to enable corporation members the opportunity to vote for their preferred candidates.

Voting will commence on Monday 2 November 2015 and members will have the opportunity to vote by postal vote or in person by lodging their Reply Paid Envelope in person at Congress Head Office, 14 Leichhardt Tce Alice Springs NT 0870 no later than 5:00pm CST on Tuesday 24 November 2015.

Members may also lodge votes in person on the day of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) from 9:00am until 10:00am CST at the Congress WestPoint Training Room (Kmart Complex, entrance next door to Sportspower). The AGM will commence at 10:30am.

A draw was held to determine the order in which the seven (7) candidates would appear on the Ballot Paper:

1. Joseph Hayes
2. Michael Liddle
3. Ricky Mentha
4. Tony Satour
5. Louis (Chippy) Miller
6. Dorrelle Anderson
7. Graham Dowling

The board also endorsed the recommendation of the Governance Subcommittee that recruitment of the independent non-member director specialising in governance and administration, immediately commence following the appointment of the member directors at the November AGM.

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## Research Subcommittee Report

**The board endorsed three (3) new projects recommended by the Research Subcommittee subject to CAHREC clearance including:**

1. Alcohol use in pregnancy and the National Maternity Data Development Project, Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Alukura;  
The Australian Institute for Health and Welfare has commissioned Murdoch Children's Research Institute to undertake a consultation with antenatal care services, to explore perspectives from mothers and maternity workers. Questions regarding maternal alcohol consumption will be added to the perinatal data collection form.  
The researchers aim to hear considerations voiced by Aboriginal people and will collaborate with Congress Alukura to ensure the study's objectives are addressed, while benefitting the local community.
2. Impact of My electronic Health Record (MeHR) on population health and health system efficiency evaluation, NT Government;  
The Commonwealth Department of Health, NeHTA and NT Government Department of Health would like to move to Stage 2 of the evaluation of the MeHR by evaluating the impact of the MeHR on population health outcomes and health system efficiency.  
The MeHR evaluation would pose benefit to Congress, as the system provides useful and important details about clients i.e. discharge summaries and hospitalisations etc and the evaluation is likely to demonstrate this so that the system continues.
3. An audit of Antenatal screening for sexually transmitted infections in the NT Public Hospitals, 2014-2015, Institution: Centre for Disease Control, Northern Territory Department of Health.  
This project is a historical audit of antenatal STI testing aimed at examining the current practice and compliance with set guidelines, and may lead to findings assisting with the control of the current syphilis outbreaks and the prevention of congenital syphilis.  
There are currently 33 active projects on Congress' research register. At present, seven (7) projects require full operational involvement with funded positions including:
  - Aboriginal Research Officer Positions in Research Services [More Options for STI Testing, CASSE Men's shed model, Self-harm Discharge Summary Audit, Validation of the ASQ3-TRAK developmental screening tool for use with Australian Aboriginal children, Internal project (client feedback and Alcohol survey)].
  - Retinal Imager and Project Officer – single position (TEAMSNET – finishing December 2015).
  - One (1) day per week for Practice Manager and Aboriginal Health Worker for 12 weeks commencing October 2015 (APHQ-9 Depression tool validation study).

- Clinical Healthy Kids nurses (ASQ3-TRAK developmental study – now finished).

The title of each project and the institutions involved are available in the research section on the Congress website.

## Clinics Subcommittee Report

**The board noted discussion points from the Clinics Subcommittee Meeting held on 29 September 2015.**

Dispensary waiting times during the week prior to the board meeting had improved by one (1) day. Earlier in the month, the wait time had extended to a week due to new pharmacy staff training occurring. Congress employed additional resources to address the wait time.

Extensions are also being carried out to improve working conditions and space, and to accommodate a new packing machine to automate the packing of multiple tablets into sachets. At present, the dispensary is packing an average of 75 Webster packs daily. A pharmacy working group continues to meet fortnightly to monitor the dispensary's performance, and plan for improvements to the service.

Average wait times at the Main Clinic Service for this quarter remained at nine (9) minutes for pre-booked appointments and 40 minutes for walk in appointments. The next meeting will report on Alukura, Ingkintja and dental clinic wait times. Clients are encouraged to book up to two (2) weeks in advance for an appointment.

Negotiations are also currently underway to secure optometry services at the Main Clinic for one (1) week in every month.

Congress is currently recruiting to a second dentist position. The second dentist will service all Congress remote sites as well as the Main Clinic.

21 Gap Road will become a dedicated space for child health programs within the Child and Family Service, accommodating the Preschool Readiness Program, Child Health Outreach Program and the Melbourne University Early Childhood Project (the Healthy Kids Clinic will remain at the Main Clinic for universal access). A clinic consult room has also be installed. The exterior of the building will be repainted in inviting child friendly colours.

Congress is working to identify opportunities for AHPs to build on their existing career pathways through accessing higher duties experience as well as training. For example, recently, AHPs have relieved the Cardiac Care Coordinator and Main Clinic Practice Manager position during leave. An Utju AHP trainee has recently graduated from the AHP training.

Dr David Allen has been appointed as Senior Medical Officer (Remote) and will commence 2 November. Dr Allen has worked as a locum at Congress' Main Clinic and has extensive experience working in remote Aboriginal communities in the Cape. His appointment followed an interview process that included members from two (2) remote boards.

The Clinics Subcommittee has agreed to extend subcommittee membership to include other interested consumers of Congress health services.