



**Central Australian  
Aboriginal Congress**  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | ICN 7823



## **BOARD COMMUNIQUE**

### **ISSUE 22, JUNE 2017**

#### **Board Meeting Wrap**

*The following topics were discussed at the last Congress Board of Directors Meeting held 15 June 2017:*

- **Business Plan 2017/18**
- **Resignation of Independent Director – Governance and Administration**
- **Governance Project**
- **Appointment of Independent Director – Primary Health Care**
- **Finance Risk and Audit Subcommittee report**
- **HR Subcommittee report**
- **Governance Subcommittee report**
- **Clinics subcommittee report**
- **Research Subcommittee report**
- **Women's Subcommittee report**

*The next meeting will be held on 10 August 2017*

#### **CEO's report**

- Central Australia Academic Health Science Centre recognised as a Centre for Innovation in Regional Health
- Submission to Territory Families Strategic Planning Process
- The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory
- Arrwekele akaltje-irretyeke ampere – Congress' Early Childhood Learning Centre
- NACCHO submission to the National Human Rights Commission Children's Commissioner inquiry on Young Parents and Children
- NT Expert Reference Panel on Early Childhood and presentation to Children's Subcommittee of Cabinet
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan Implementation Advisory Group
- Australian Nurse Family Partnership program national meeting
- Tackling Indigenous Smoking National workshop
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

#### **Business Plan 2017/18**

*The business plan for 2017/18 was adopted by the Board. It was noted that this plan proposed key elements in line with the Strategic Plan 2015–18.*

The business plan identified 20 key elements, with a wide range of outcomes including:

- Seeking accreditation of the 2 childcare centres.
- Reviewing of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Service to increase placement of staff in the clinics.
- Maximising Medicare Claiming from Allied Health.
- Establishing a Northside Clinic.
- Finalising the pharmacy at Diarama Village.
- Renewing the Strategic Plan for the 2018–23 period.
- Investigating a Satellite Clinic for Southside.

#### **Resignation of Independent Director – Governance and Administration**

The Board received and accepted the resignation of Ms Kerryne Liddle, Independent Director – Governance and Administration. The Congress Board thanked Ms Liddle for her contribution.

#### **Governance Project**

*Work to clarify existing governance arrangements between Congress and the Remote Community Health Aboriginal Corporations is continuing.*

Congress engages with these corporations whilst delivering primary health care services to our serviced remote Aboriginal communities (Utju, Mutitjulu, Santa Teresa, Ntaria (Hermannsburg and Wallace Rockhole) and Amoonguna). The purpose of this project is to ensure that the best governance arrangements are in place moving forward with appropriate representation on the Congress Board from both the Alice Springs area and the remote communities.

#### **Appointment of Independent Director – Primary Health Care**

*The Board noted that Professor Peter O'Mara was appointed to the Congress Board of Directors on 8 June.*

Professor O'Mara brings his skills and experience to the Congress Board as Independent Director – Primary Health Care. Professor O'Mara has also been appointed by the Board to both the Research and Male Health Subcommittees.

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## Finance Risk and Audit Subcommittee report

### Business Services Report

***The Board noted the Business Services Report for the period ending 30 April.***

This report detailed the financial positions of specific programs, as well as the organisations solvency ratio of 1.81. This ratio means that Congress continues to remain solvent and in a strong position to meet its liabilities when they are due.

### Congress Childcare Accreditation

Final steps are underway to gain accreditation for the Congress Childcare centre. This is an important source of funding for Congress and will allow childcare places to be subsidised and remain affordable for our clients.

## HR Subcommittee report

***The HR Subcommittee was pleased to report a rise in Aboriginal employment to 51%, with 27% of Aboriginal people employed in management roles. Staff turnover remains at 39%. Although, this seems high, it is quite normal for Central Australia.***

Congress is focussing on efforts to identify and implement strategies aimed at promoting training opportunities and cadetships through Congress.

## Governance Subcommittee report

***The Board noted the report of the Governance Subcommittee.***

Work is currently being undertaken to review the rule book for changes to be proposed at the 2017 AGM in November.

## Clinics Subcommittee report

***The Board noted the report of the Clinics Subcommittee.***

An update was provided on the progression of plans for the Gap Road Clinic restructure and Northside Clinic development.

The Board supported the recommendation of the Clinics Subcommittee to integrate Social and Emotional Wellbeing services across town Clinics. This would increase accessibility for all town clients to these essential services.

The Deadly Choices Health check incentives were reported on, with results continuing to be good and more clients continuing to receive health checks.

## Women's Subcommittee report

***The first week in September has been nominated for the Alukura 30 Year Anniversary Celebration event and planning is underway for this celebration.***

Results from the last 6–12 months were reported on including:

- An increase to the number of episodes of care was reported across town Clinics in the past 12 months.
- There were about 1500 more visits to Alukura in 2016 compared to 2015. One reason for this is that better practices with engaging clients, and there are now more home visits and referrals from the hospital.
- Antenatal care episodes have also increased in the past 12 months. Alukura staff try to see mums about 4 times during their pregnancy.
- Waiting times for appointments at Alukura have reduced with the implementation of the appointment system.

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## Research Subcommittee report

*The Board noted the report of the Research Subcommittee.*

The Board resolved to support an application to be made to obtain funding from the Lowitja Institute for a research officer to carry out research translation work to coordinate and show how research outcomes can be translated into services and an evaluation officer to carry out the evaluation of the Aboriginal Health Practitioner Trainee program.

The Board also resolved to support:

- Participation in the project entitled "Supporting Alcohol Prevention and Treatment," Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney, Ms Kristie Harrison.
- Participation in the project entitled "The Remote STI Project: The Blood Borne Viruses & Sexually Transmissible Infections Prevention and Education Program," SAHMRI, Associate Professor James Ward, with conditions around not being responsible for recruiting youth peers; recommend new outcome measure for STI rates; and recommend an evaluation of youth peers.
- Development of the proposal with input from the Health Promotion Team for the overall project entitled "Understanding what influences smoking uptake for young Aboriginal people and identifying opportunities for prevention," Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, Ms Christina Heris (PhD Student), and requests the applicant to return with the proposal and a new application once developed and provide further details on her PhD.
- Development of the proposal entitled "Central Australian Aboriginal Male Attitudes Towards Sex: HTLV-1 Community Screening Survey, A Qualitative Study (CAAMATS)," Baker IDI Heart, Mr Ricky Mentha, and requests that the applicant involve the Male Health Subcommittee and Steven Bell and requests the applicant to return with the proposal and a new application once developed and provides further details on his PhD; and
- The use of \$35,000 of unspent ANFPP budget to complete the evaluation of Congress' Family Partnership Program.

## Central Australia Academic Health Science Centre recognised as a Centre for Innovation in Regional Health

Exciting news was announced for Congress and translational health research in Central Australia with Ken Wyatt, Minister for Indigenous Health and Minister for Aged Care, attending to launch the Central Australia Academic Health Science Centre (CAAHSC) as a Centre for Innovation in Regional Health (CIRH).

CAAHSC is an unincorporated partnership between research institutions, Aboriginal health services and the Central Australian Health Service. Congress was the lead partner in the group's bid to receive the vital CIRH recognition and associated funding.

The CAAHSC is a community driven partnership, whereby Aboriginal people have taken the lead in identifying and defining viable solutions for the health inequities experienced in Central Australia.



*Congress director and Baker Heart and Diabetes Research Institute Research Officer Ricky Mentha, addressing the audience at the CIRH announcement*



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## Arrwekele akaltye-irretyeke ampere – Congress' Early Childhood Learning Centre

Congress' Early Childhood Learning Centre is progressing very well with about 20 children now attending regularly and continuous improvement occurring in the engagement of other children and parents. The number of children attending the centre is likely to increase and, to accommodate this, plans have been made to install a demountable unit.

After gaining ethics approval, evaluation of the program will be taking place around measures on attendance and exposure children have to one-on-one sessions with educators.

In other news for the centre, the steering committee approved an exciting mural project that involved the participation of parents and local Aboriginal artists working in collaboration with the two mural artists. The outcome, a mural and sculpture, provided a fun and exciting opportunity for children and parents to make the centre their own.



*Congress Arrwekele akaltye-irretyeke ampere staff adding the final touches to the mural*

## The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT

On Monday 15 May, Congress' CEO, Donna Ah Chee gave evidence to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT as part of a panel with Andrew Walden (Tangentyere Council) and Lisa Balmer (NPY Women's Council). Media coverage highlighted the following points raised by the panel:

- Kinship care is not being properly explored by the child protection system before our children are given to non-Aboriginal foster carers.
- Kinship carers, who are already caring for some of our most disadvantaged children, are poorly paid and supported. It is only in the NT that carers with a Family Day Care registration may be employed as "professional" foster carers and able to earn big money. This is a form of institutional racism and needs to stop.
- The need to fund an Aboriginal Children's Commissioner for the NT.

## Submission to Territory Families Strategic Planning Process

Congress was asked to attend a stakeholder workshop to provide input into Territory Families Strategic Plan 2017–2020. Drawing on previous Congress submissions and evaluations of Congress programs, Congress made the following recommendations to Territory Families:

1. Commit to addressing the social determinants of health and wellbeing.
2. Implement a Differential Response Framework (DRF) across the NT.
3. Commit to funding Family Support Services as key components of the DRF.
4. Commit to increasing the capacity of child protection services.
5. Clarify roles and responsibilities for funding services between Territory Families and the Commonwealth Government.
6. Develop a comprehensive strategy to address Out of Home Care for Aboriginal children in the NT including the establishment of Family Group Conferencing.
7. Implement a therapeutic approach to youth justice rather than a criminal approach.
8. Provide culturally secure, trauma informed services.

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## **NACCHO submission to the National Human Rights Commission Children's Commissioner inquiry on Young Parents and Children**

Congress was asked to assist NACCHO to develop its submission to the National Human Rights Commission, Children's Commissioner Inquiry, on Young Parents and Children, as it is recognised that Congress is leading the sector in this area of service development. The submission was based on previous submissions that Congress has written and included the need to implement the nurse family partnership program across Australia, Early Childhood Learning Centres, 2 years of pre-school, family support programs, Multi-Systemic Therapy, Parents Under Pressure and dedicated adolescent health services.

## **NT Expert Reference Panel on Early Childhood and presentation to Children's Subcommittee of Cabinet**

Congress CEO, Donna Ah Chee, and Chief Medical Officer Public Health, Dr John Boffa, were appointed to the Expert Reference Panel on Early Childhood after being nominated by the Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT. Congress CEO, Donna Ah Chee, was appointed co-chair of the group. The work of this group is nearing completion, with the development of a strategic plan progressing well and incorporating key elements from the Congress paper on the Integrated Model for Child and Family Services. This paper also informed the core early childhood services model approved by the NT Aboriginal Health Forum which has been endorsed by the Expert Reference Panel.

Congress CEO, Donna Ah Chee, was invited to present the Congress model of integrated child and family services to the Children's Subcommittee of Cabinet which includes the NT Ministers for Health, Education, Territory Families, Housing and Finance. The presentation was very well received and the Ministers gave a directive to ensure that the NT Department of Health clinics adopt the same service model. They are also expecting the recommendations from the Early Childhood reference panel to support this service model.

## **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan Implementation Advisory Group**

The latest meeting of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan Implementation Advisory Group was held in Canberra on 9 June.

The meeting focused on the development of an implementation plan on the social and cultural determinants of Aboriginal health to compliment this existing implementation plan on the health system. There has been extensive consultation on the development of the plan and it is coming together very well with all of the appropriate areas for strategic focus being addressed including racism, strengthening culture, housing, education, employment, alcohol and other drugs and others.

A meeting was recently held between Congress and the new Deputy Assistant Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Professor Ian Anderson, in Alice Springs. Professor Anderson has been tasked with developing a new 10-year strategy for the Council of Australian Governments to adopt that will replace the current Closing the Gap strategy. This strategy will be developed over the next 8 months and will include commitments to addressing the social and cultural determinants of health.





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## Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program national meeting

The national conference of the Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program was held in Brisbane over May 16–17. For the first time, the 5 new sites joined the meeting including the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health in Brisbane and sites from the Top End of the NT.

The qualitative evaluation of the program's workforce issues was presented which included recommendations to:

- Improve the recruitment and retention of nurses.
- Clarify the role of the Aboriginal community worker which is one of the major cultural adaptations to the program working in Aboriginal communities.

There was also discussion about a possible new data reporting system to enable better ongoing evaluation of the program. Finally, a proposed Randomised Controlled Trial was outlined for the Brisbane region along with the need for more quasi-experimental evaluations using a control group like the one that Congress is doing with UniSA.

## Tackling Indigenous Smoking national workshop

The national workshop on the Tackling Indigenous Smoking program for CEOs and program coordinators was held in Adelaide on 11 May. Congress CEO, Donna Ah Chee, attended along with Jenna Pauli, Congress' Tobacco Health Promotion Manager. The workshop heard that the decline in smoking rates amongst Aboriginal people in urban areas is not being matched by similar declines in remote areas. There is a need to focus our efforts especially with population level health promotion initiatives.

## The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

An important meeting was held at Congress with the leaders of the NDIS, including an expert consultant in Early Childhood.

This meeting was valuable in informing how Congress' strategic agenda can be aided by the scheme. Potentially, this could include access to funds for population level programs that work with children with developmental delays prior to a diagnosis. Services and programs set up for these children can also be accessed by other children so this may be a mechanism to provide on-going funding for universal programs such as our preschool readiness program and Early Childhood Learning Centre. This was recognised by the NDIS and is an exciting development.

The other option is for Congress to be recognised as a provider of services to people with a diagnosed long-term disability, which has the potential to greatly enhance our services in the areas of speech pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. This will include enhanced services to children with a diagnosed developmental delay such as Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or autism.

In addition to this, the NDIS is looking to fund care coordinators to assist eligible clients to access services. This is a service that Congress could deliver.



*The next meeting of the  
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Board  
will be held on 10 August 2017*