

Strong Futures

Newsletter of the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Health Partnership
Issue 2, August 2009

Rio Tinto Aboriginal Health Partnership - Project Update

The second round of consultations took place throughout March and early April 2009 across the three project sites. The team travelled to the Pilbara (Karratha and Roebourne); East Kimberley (Kununurra) and within the South Metropolitan district of Kwinana to hold focus groups sessions and interviews with Aboriginal Health Workers, Community Nurses, as well as people working specifically in the area of Aboriginal health within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Government agencies. Service Provider Surveys were also sent to each of the Project sites.

See the full report pages 2 & 3 ►

The Project team also met with students enrolled in the Certificate IV Aboriginal Primary Health Care course at Marr Mooditj Aboriginal Health College to talk about the development resources proposed from this Project and to help ensure that they would be transferable to other Aboriginal Health Services located outside the Project's sites.

Indigenous Reference Group

The Indigenous Reference Group has an important role in guiding the interpretation of results from the consultation, implementation and evaluation stages of the project, the transfer of results into dedicated activities and products, and the dissemination of the results back to Aboriginal communities.

The Group held its first meeting on March 18, 2009. At this meeting the group elected Mr Ken Wyatt AM, Director, Office for Aboriginal Health as Chair of the Group. See Ken's profile on page 3 ► Membership of the Group also includes:

- Darryl Kickett, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Health Council of WA
- Margaret Quartermaine, Chief Executive Officer, Marr Mooditj Training College
- Jenny Poelina, Director, KAMSC School of Health Studies
- Graeme Cooper, Chief Executive Officer, Ord Valley Aboriginal Medical Service
- Joyce Trust, Chief Executive Officer, Mawarnkarra Health Service
- Stephenie Carroll, Chair, WA Aboriginal Health Worker Association
- Colleen Hayward, Head of Centre, Kurongkurl Katitjin, Edith Cowan University and representing HealthInfonet

Capacity building workshops

The Project team is currently working on a 'How to' manual. The contents of this manual is the result of feedback received during the community consultations. The main aim of the manual is to build the capacity of Aboriginal people to undertake their own research and design programs which will help them to deliver effective child and maternal health services.

Following the development of the manual, the Project team will conduct capacity building workshops in the Pilbara (Karratha and Roebourne); East Kimberley (Kununurra and surrounding areas); and South Metropolitan area (Kwinana) in order to provide Aboriginal Health Workers with support in relation to the development and implementation of the manual.

The workshops will provide a forum to enable Aboriginal Health Workers, and those working in the area of Aboriginal health to engage with the contents of the manual. A copy of the 'How to Manual' will be provided to all workshop participants.

If you would like more information about the workshops, please email enquire-kulunga@ichr.uwa.edu.au

Community consultations: a summary of our results

The second stage of community consultations involved focus group session and a service provider survey, which aimed to find out what people thought about a range of issues related to Aboriginal child and maternal health. This stage of the consultations also aimed to identify the needs of Aboriginal Health Workers and their communities and workplaces. The focus group questions were:

1. **What are the key issues surrounding Aboriginal child and maternal health in your community?**
2. **What resources could be developed to better support Aboriginal Health Workers to address these issues?**
3. **What are the training needs of Aboriginal Health Workers in general?**

Focus Group Sessions

What are the key issues surrounding Aboriginal child and maternal health in your community?

In response to this question, focus group discussions focussed on:

- Maternal mental health
- Nutrition in pregnancy
- The breakdown of family, and
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

What resources could be developed to better support Aboriginal Health Workers, and/or build the capacity to address these issues?

- Participants discussed the limitations of training opportunities associated with the higher cost of accommodation and transport and the subsequent increased expenditure to run programs, particularly in regional areas.
- Participants raised their concerns over the application process for funding and conceded that funding opportunities are limited and the application process is generally 'just too difficult'.

In terms of resources to better support Aboriginal Health Workers to deal with the issues surrounding Aboriginal child and maternal health, participants suggested a range of resources and strategies:

- Participants discussed the need to develop a range of health promotion materials. These could include: take home booklets; videos/ DVDs; interactive components; or flip charts.
- Participants discussed the lack of promotional material or even programs to help inform young people about what alcohol and drugs are going to do to their body in the long-term.
- Participants discussed the importance of customising resources for the local population, and where possible using local images and language. Participants also stressed the need to listen to the local people and to be careful of being tokenistic.
- Participants suggested the importance of cultural considerations.
- Participants recommended that materials should include pictures for those who can't read.
- Participants also discussed the need for information regarding good quality resources, specifically information on how they can be accessed.

What are the training needs of Aboriginal Health Workers in general?

- Participants discussed the importance of the role of Aboriginal Health Workers and the need to provide them with greater support.
- Participants discussed the difficulties in retaining Aboriginal Health Workers and some of the reasons this may be the case.
- Participants also raised their concerns about the perceptions on the local community of an Aboriginal medical service with more non-Aboriginal people employed than local Aboriginal people.

Service Provider Survey

What factors relating to Aboriginal child and maternal health are most relevant to your community?

In the Service Provider Survey, five issues emerged as the most important. These were:

- Social maternal stress
- Alcohol use during pregnancy
- Cigarette smoking
- Teenage pregnancy and sexual health, and
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

What is the quality of the services relating to Aboriginal child and maternal health that are currently available in your town/community?

Child health services and antenatal services received the highest ratings, though none of the services in this question were consistently rated by participants as being excellent.

How accessible are the Aboriginal child and maternal health services in your town?

Child health services and general community services were rated as the most accessible, though it is important to note that none of the services were consistently rated as being accessible. Private hospitals were rated as the least accessible.

Sincere thanks to everyone who participated in a focus group, or completed a service provider survey -

Thank you!!

Which factors relating to Aboriginal child and maternal health are in most need of resources/support in your town/community?

Three issues were rated as very important by more than 80% of participants. These were:

- Home visits
- Sexual health, and
- Aboriginal-specific programs.

A further four factors were rated as very important by at least 70% of participants. These were:

- Substance use during pregnancy
- Infant care/parenthood
- Self care, and
- Nutrition during pregnancy.

Which methods of design and presentation are most important when developing effective resources for use with Aboriginal people?

- Participants rated the use of clear, simple and culturally specific language as being the most important factor when developing effective resources for use with Aboriginal people.
- Posters, flip charts and fact sheets were thought to be the best format, and most participants thought that resources should be user-inclusive/interactive.
- In terms of presentation, the use of photos of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal paintings were rated as the most important.

What is the quality of the training, resources and support services that are currently available for Aboriginal Health Workers in your town/community?

Training programs received the highest rating in this question, though it is important to note that participants did not consistently rate any of the services in this question as being of excellent quality.

Which training, resources and support services for Aboriginal Health Workers are in most need in your town/community?

- Participants rated on-site training opportunities, guest speakers and training programs as being the services most in need.

Profile

Ken Wyatt AM

Indigenous Reference Group (Chair)

Ken Wyatt AM has a strong Noongar, Yamatji and Wongi heritage and believes that education and access to the knowledge society involves life-long learning and is the key to change and making informed decisions of choice.

Ken recently held the position of Director of Aboriginal Health in the New South Wales Department of Health from 2003 and has returned home after being appointed the Director, Aboriginal Health with the Western Australian Department of Health. His leadership at the national level and within New South Wales is widely acknowledged and appreciated by many.

Prior to leaving Western Australia, Ken held the position of Director of Aboriginal Education at the Department of Education Western

Australia from 1992 until June 2002 where the focus of his work was on improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

He also held the position of Pro Chancellor at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia for a period from 2001-2003 when he relinquished the role to take up his appointment in New South Wales.

In 1996 he was honoured to receive an Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours List and in 2000 The Centenary of Federation Medal for his efforts and contribution towards improving the quality of life, firstly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and secondly to mainstream Australia society in education and health.

Ken has been actively involved with numerous committees associated with Aboriginal Affairs, Education, Health and the Aboriginal Lands Trust at the community, State and National levels and with ATSIC as a Regional Chair.

Ken is committed to working towards achieving better outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous Australians and Australian society.

◀ Mr Ken Wyatt AM is the Chair of the Project's Indigenous Reference Group



Scholarships help Aboriginal Health Workers Lyn and Sarina

Aboriginal Health Workers Lyn Cheedy and Sarina Morgan have each received a scholarship worth up to \$5000 to undertake the Diploma of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Practice) in 2009.

The Scholarship is designed to assist with payment of course fees, uniforms, related study expenses and some employment costs.

Lyn Cheedy (pictured above), works at the Marnwarnkarra Health Service, Roebourne. She is undertaking her studies at Marr Mooditj Aboriginal Health College in Perth. Lyn has been working at the Marnwarnkarra Health Service for seven years.

"I see a lot of needs in my community and doing this course will build my knowledge and confidence to be able to address all these health needs," Lyn said.

Lyn also hopes to further her studies so she can enrol in the Diploma of Nursing.

Sarina Morgan (pictured below) works as an Aboriginal Health Worker at Wyndham Community Health in Wyndham. Sarina is attending the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service Council's (KAMSC) School of Health Studies in Broome.

Sarina has been an Aboriginal Health Worker since 2006. She became a Health Worker because she wanted to make a difference.

"I really enjoy meeting lots of people and helping them any way, and this position allows me to do this," Sarina said. "I really appreciate the support I have received through this scholarship. It has helped me to gain access to a laptop.



▲ Lyn Cheedy, Aboriginal Health Worker at the Marnwarnkarra Health Service, Roebourne

"The tuition fees have also been helpful as it means it doesn't come out of my own pocket.

"I had committed myself to further my studies," Sarina said, "but the scholarship has been a huge help."

Marr Mooditj Aboriginal Health College and the KAMSC School of Health Studies have a long term commitment to the education and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, to empower them to competently deliver and manage health care and community service programs in a culturally appropriate manner to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.



▲ Sarina Morgan, Aboriginal Health Worker at the Wyndham Community Health, Wyndham

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Aboriginal Health Partnership National Symposium

The Rio Tinto Aboriginal Health Partnership National Symposium will be held in April 2010.

The Symposium will be targeted at Aboriginal Health Workers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and those working in Aboriginal health programs.

The Symposium will aim to explore training and capacity building, success stories, share knowledge and resources as well as showcase the Partnership and its activities.

Expressions of interest are now sought from those interested in attending the symposium as a participant, or presenting either a successful program, research project or policy document in the area of capacity building, particularly in maternal and child health.

For additional information on the Partnership, please visit:

www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga

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This newsletter has been designed by Tracey-Lee Edwards

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