

Strong Futures

Newsletter of the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Health Partnership
Issue 1, March 2009

Welcome to the first edition of '**Strong Futures**'. Inside this edition:

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What is the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Health Partnership?

The Rio Tinto Aboriginal Health Partnership is an undertaking between Rio Tinto and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research through the Kulunga Research Network.

Building on the success of a previous five year Aboriginal maternal and child health partnership, the **Rio Tinto Aboriginal Health Partnership: Strong Foundations, Sustainable Futures** responds to a call from Aboriginal community health workers for greater training, development and support opportunities in the area of maternal and child health.

Based on research and community consultation in the **Pilbara, Kimberley** and **Kwinana** from mid-2008, this two year project will provide practical tools and activities to help close the gap in Aboriginal health outcomes.

These activities include:

- A maternal and child health toolkit;
- Regional workshops;
- Education scholarships;
- Online learning; and a
- National symposium.

More information on the Partnership or its activities can be found at:
www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga or by contacting us on 08 9489 7777.



Staff Profile



Heather Monteiro is a Senior Research Officer in the Kulunga Research Network and leads the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Health Partnership project.

Prior to joining Kulunga, Heather was part of the Division of Population Sciences within the Institute, where she had been Communications Manager since 2002.

In 2006, she completed a Master of Public Health at the University of Western Australia.

Before commencing with the Institute, Heather worked predominately in the area of health for organisations such as; Activ Foundation, St John Ambulance and Ronald McDonald House.

Community Consultation Continues

Initial consultations with community and organisational representatives in each of the regions involved in the project have commenced. This involved members of the research team making contact with a number of key representatives from organisations and communities to provide information about the Partnership and the project.

Many people expressed an interest in being involved with the project's activities and provided extensive feedback about the many issues and needs of Aboriginal Health Workers and organisations in the regions.

The second round of consultations will be taking place in late March through to early April to further explore these issues, which will inform the content development of the capacity building toolkit.

Indigenous Reference Group established

The governance of the Partnership will be directed by an Indigenous Reference Group. The Reference Group will play a determining 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.

Membership of the Reference Group includes:

- Aboriginal Health Council of WA,
- Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, ECU
- KAMSC, School of Health Studies
- Marr Mooditj Aboriginal Health Training College
- Mawarnkarra Health Service Aboriginal Corporation
- Office of Aboriginal Health
- Ord Valley Aboriginal Medical Service
- WA Aboriginal Health Workers' Association

The first meeting for the Group will be held on the 18th March 2009.

Study Opportunity for Aboriginal Health Workers

A key aspect of the Partnership is provision of direct support to Aboriginal people wanting to advance their careers as health workers in their communities.

As part of the Partnership, scholarships, each worth up to \$5000 were offered to Aboriginal Health Workers throughout Western Australia 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.

Kulunga's Curriculum Development Officer Gail Barrow said the Partnership responds to a call from Aboriginal community health workers for greater training, development and support opportunities in the area of Aboriginal maternal and child health.

"The Partnership's aims recognise the critical role Aboriginal people play in improving the health outcomes in their own communities," Ms Barrow said.

"Providing Aboriginal Health Workers, particularly those from regional areas, with greater training, development and support opportunities is essential in achieving this, and these scholarships are an excellent start in responding to this call."

The Partnership is pleased to offer Study Scholarships to:

- Lyn Cheedy, Marnwarra Health Service, Roebourne
- Sarina Morgan, Wyndham Community Health, Wyndham

Lyn will be undertaking her studies at Marr Mooditj Aboriginal Health College in Perth, whilst Sarina will be attending the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service Council's (KAMSC) School of Health Studies in Broome.

We wish both Lyn and Sarina all the best in their studies this year.

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.

Plans for a National Symposium to take place in 2010

Planning is underway for a national symposium targeted at Aboriginal Health Workers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and those working in Aboriginal health programs.

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

Whilst the symposium is not planned to be held until mid year in 2010, expressions of interest will be sought from anyone 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.

It is expected that expressions of interest will be open to submission in June 2009. Further updates on the symposium will also be covered in the next edition of **'Strong Futures'**

For additional information on the Partnership, please visit www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga

Contact Us:

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***Bringing research and
practical support to
Aboriginal community
health workers in
Western Australia***

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