CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

It has truly been an honour to be the inaugural Chairperson of Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA). It has been a great learning experience and extremely rewarding for me. It hasn’t always been easy, there has been a lot of hard work, with many ups and downs, but all totally worthwhile.

I would like to acknowledge my fellow Board members, past and present. They are a very intelligent and motivated group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals, and this is reflected with the success we have had so far. I believe it is very important for a national organisation like IAHA to have a broad representation, and we do represent more than 10 Nations and have a diverse range of working experiences.

IAHA would not be possible without funding and I would like to acknowledge the financial assistance from Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Unfortunately allied health is often out of reach for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as it is often only accessed by those with health insurance and or money to attend private clinics. We need culturally appropriate, accessible and affordable allied health services for our communities. We also need more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals. Currently there are only a few allied health students - we must do everything possible to dramatically increase this number. It is paramount that all students in allied health and those all ready graduated are better educated. IAHA is currently working with universities around Australia on curriculum change, and I believe this will increase dramatically the number of allied health professionals working in Aboriginal health.

An important early step in our journey was selecting our first CEO - Craig Dukes, who came to IAHA with a wealth of experience working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and Australian government departments. Craig has done a great job in a short time. He has excellent networking skills and has worked with the Board to get IAHA on key national committees and allied health in the mindset of health policy planners.

We are still building our membership and brand. I have been travelling around Australia this past year, talking with colleagues and organisations, attending meetings, presenting at conferences and symposia - speaking about IAHA’s vision to health students, allied health professionals and government bureaucrats.

I have never been more motivated and excited about IAHA - I see an extremely bright future for the organisation, I believe it is possible to close the life expectancy gap in a generation. Of course it will take a lot of hard work and good will, but if IAHA continues on its current course, we can make a great contribution. This is something worth fighting for and any sacrifice we may have to make will be a small cost and nothing compared to that of many of our ancestors. I hope to continue my work with IAHA at any level the members and Board see fit, and believe in IAHA’s motto “future thinkers for the greater good”, we must be modern and pragmatic in our thinking and be prepared to sacrifice for the greater good to achieve our goals for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Allied health should take its rightful place as a major contributor to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. We have worked very hard to put allied health on the map, but more work still needs to be done.

James Charles

IAHA’S VISION

IAHA’s vision is to achieve the same quality of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

IAHA aims to work towards this vision through three key objectives:

1. Contribute to improved knowledge and competencies of allied health practitioners working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities
   - Advocate for excellence in tertiary curriculum development to address science, socio-cultural and economic determinants of Indigenous health
   - Provide educational events, resources & learning opportunities for allied health professionals to gain the understanding, knowledge and skills to be culturally competent

2. Contribute to improved allied health services for Indigenous people and communities
   - Encourage & facilitate a greater number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals
   - Develop & contribute to Indigenous health policy and planning
   - Provide effective support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of IAHA

3. Facilitate collegial networks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals

CEO’S REPORT

It was a great honour to be appointed as the first CEO of this exciting and visionary organisation. I wish to acknowledge the work of the Board of Directors, under the leadership of James Charles, in defining IAHA’s vision and in pursuing strategies to address aspects of allied health training and the inequalities in the availability of allied health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It is notable that within its first year of operation, Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) has a seat on the Closing the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Working Group and the National Allied Health Advisory Committee, as well as a number of other committees. IAHA has a key role in promoting culturally appropriate, accessible and affordable allied health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities. As CEO I have actively forged sound working relationships with fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders as well as with key allied health professionals.

Although the staff numbers are small IAHA is fortunate to have a dedicated and very professional team who have helped build the profile of the organisation, established sound administrative systems, developed funding submissions for projects in pursuit of our vision and grown our membership base. I would also like to thank the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, who so generously mentored IAHA in its very early days.

I am particularly pleased to see that our membership is steadily growing and I believe that IAHA has major potential, through this membership, to achieve its vision for equality in health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I look forward to continuing to work towards these important goals over the coming 12 months.

Craig Dukes

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 1ST JULY 2009 – 30TH JUNE 2010

Noel Burgess QLD Dietitian, from Goonpul people
Anita Burns QLD Radiographer
Karla Canuto SA Exercise Physiologist, Kukalgal Clan of the Torres Straits (from 9/12/09)
James Charles Chairperson, SA Podiatrist, from Kaurna people
Pat Dudgeon WA Psychologist, from Baridi people (from 9/12/09)
Chontel Gibson Deputy Chairperson & from Kaurna people
Karen Lewis QLD Speech Pathologist, from Iman people
Faye McMillan NSW Pharmacist, from Wiradjuri people
Marilyn Morgan WA Physiotherapist
Kyle Stathers NT Social Worker, from Jawoyn people
Walker Tabua Treasurer (to 1/11/09), QLD Exercise Physiologist, from Torres Strait Islander people

I believe that it is possible to close the life expectancy gap in a generation. Of course it will take a lot of hard work and good will.......

STAFF LIST

Craig Dukes, Chief Executive Officer, 2 December 2009
Kirsty Glanville, Executive Officer, 29 January 2010
Lin Oke, Executive Project Officer, 1st July 2009
Monefa Rusanov, Office Administrator, 4th March 2010

It is notable that within its first year of operation, Indigenous Allied Health Australia has a seat on the Closing the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Working Group and the National Allied Health Advisory Committee....

BOARD MEETINGS UP TO 30 JUNE 2010

Tuesday 9th June 2009
Monday 15th June 2009
Thursday 29th August 2009
Wednesday 9th December 2009
Tuesday 27th April 2010
1. Contribute to improved allied health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals needed.

A key factor in improving the health and social outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is their greater participation and control in the delivery of health services. The under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the allied health workforce is an issue of concern for Indigenous Allied Health Australia.

During this year’s meetings and discussions have been held with the Australian Council of Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Deans of Health Sciences (ACPDHS) around the need to develop national standards for the core curricula in Indigenous health for all allied health undergraduates and graduate entry programs as well as strategies which will result in increased recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health students.

The IAHA website has information on allied health courses and scholarships which will assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their decision about becoming an allied health professional. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school children have been encouraged to visit the IAHA website by allied health students participating in the Health Careers in the Bush program with students in the Top End and Central Australia and by Board members and secretariat staff at health careers expos at various locations. IAHA’s commitment to providing this information is on-going and will continue to be updated and improved.

More knowledgeable allied health practitioners needed.

Given that the allied health workforce comprises predominantly non-Indigenous practitioners it is important that they are assisted in gaining a greater understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures and the health needs of their communities.

Allied health professionals work in a variety of settings with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: across the lifespan; and at individual and community levels. They also work in a wide range of clinical, community and government settings. In many hospital and mainstream community health, mental health and aged care services, there are no specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions in place to support the allied health team to provide culturally appropriate services.

IAHA Board and staff members have given presentations at health conferences and student symposium to increase the knowledge and understanding of allied health practitioners working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

IAHA facilitated the uptake of internships offered to allied health students by Indigenous Community Volunteers undertaking clinical placements in Aboriginal health services or communities. IAHA also linked some allied health students seeking placements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities with an allied health clinical coordinator in the Northern Territory.

IAHA website members have access to a growing bank of resource material and links to other websites and resources on online learning under the following topics: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history; cultural safety; Indigenous health; addressing Indigenous health and general interest. The website is regularly updated as material becomes available.

Advocate for allied health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy and planning.

From the outset IAHA has enjoyed a good working relationship with the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health associations – the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA), the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses, the Indigenous Dentists’ Association of Australia and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association. IAHA also has a good working relationship with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and acknowledges their early support and encouragement, along with AIDA as IAHA was established. IAHA looks forward to working with these organisations closely in the future to achieve better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

IAHA is recognised as the peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait body for allied health and its input is sought and welcomed on a number of key national bodies including the Closing The Gap Steering Committee, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Working Group and the National Allied Health Advisory Committee.

IAHA has teamed up with rural and remote health organisations such as CRANAPlus and SARRAH in advocating for allied health services for rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The need for greater inclusion of allied health services in Aboriginal medical services has been raised whenever the opportunity has arisen – in meetings, at conference presentations and in informal meetings and discussions with representatives from Community Controlled Organisations, officers in the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and with Aboriginal Directors in state Departments of Health.

Provide effective support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of Indigenous Allied Health Australia.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals who have joined into the Indigenous Allied Health Australia website has grown during this year from 67 to 87. In addition 66 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and professionals who are not in allied health have also joined for the collegiate support. Refer to page 7 for more detail on IAHA Membership. Various discipline specific networking is led by professional representatives on the board of Indigenous Allied Health Australia. The IAHA website provides resource material and links and discussion forums, including Indigenous-only forums, to support members.

Grow the profile of Indigenous Allied Health Australia.

Indigenous Allied Health Australia has had articles featured in a number of prominent national health magazines: Partyline; Australian Medicine; Health Matters; Outback Flyer; and the Primary Health Care Research and Information Service and AIDA newsletters. These articles promoted IAHA vision and objectives, provided commentary on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and advocated for improved access to allied health services.

Presentations and the distribution of IAHA postcards and posters at numerous conferences and symposium during the year have added to the profile of IAHA and have drawn peoples’ attention to the IAHA website.

The number of visitors to the IAHA website increased markedly during the second half of this year. There are regularly more than 4,000 visitors to the site each month – illustrating the continued awareness of the value of the organisation’s website and the value of its regularly updated information and resource material.
1. Contribute to improved knowledge and competencies of allied health practitioners working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities

Advocate for and contribute to improved tertiary curricula addressing socio-cultural and economic determinants of Indigenous health and culturally safe service delivery.

A funding proposal will be developed in conjunction with the Pro Vice Chancellors and Deans of Health Sciences to improve the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in allied health programs.

Advocate for and facilitate fieldwork placements and clinical learning opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) or like organisations, at early childhood services and in schools.

Allied health students and their teachers will continue to be assisted with information on gaining clinical placements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and on the availability of support.

A funding proposal will be developed for a project to develop and trial video recorded clinical sessions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and/or actors to efficiently provide clinical learning opportunities to a great many allied health students via videoconferencing.

Provide educational events, resources and learning opportunities for allied health professionals to gain the understanding, knowledge and skills to be culturally competent, in conjunction with organisations involved in education and research.

The Indigenous Allied Health Australia website “Events” page will continue to be updated with relevant educational events, as well as the members’ area with resource materials and links to current health policies and other resource materials and online learning.

A survey of website members will be undertaken to gain baseline data on knowledge and confidence levels for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities.

2. Contribute to improved allied health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities

Establish accurate data collection on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals and students, on allied health positions in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, and on level of allied health services accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Research will be undertaken on relevant data collections to document current baseline data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals and students.

A funding proposal will be developed for a project to research and document allied health services accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, which allied health services, where they are offered and accessed, and accessing in metropolitan, rural and remote regions.

Encourage and facilitate a greater number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals.

Indigenous Allied Health Australia will continue to promote allied health careers to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at school career events and expos.

A DVD featuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals will be developed for distribution to schools and utilisation at career expos and conferences.

More video-clips for the IAHA website will be made of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals speaking of their passion for their career.

Contribute to policy and planning committees addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, representing and advocating for allied health.

As well as maintaining effective IAHA representation on current committees, IAHA will seek representation on other significant committees.

Advocate for improved access to allied health services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Indigenous Allied Health Australia will continue to promote the benefits of, and advocate for better access to, allied health services at various relevant national committees on which IAHA is represented.

3. Provide effective support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of IAHA

Facilitate the development of a greater knowledge base of effective support strategies for Indigenous health professionals.

Indigenous Allied Health Australia will subscribe to relevant journals and newsletters of Indigenous health professional groups in Canada, NZ and USA and will make these accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of IAHA.

Support will be provided to Board Members’ visits to Indigenous health professional organisations and/or attendance at international Indigenous health symposia and conferences.

Facilitate collegial networks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals.

IAHA is keen to further develop good working relationships with established discipline specific groups like the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association and the National Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Workers seeking collaborative approaches to contribute to closing the health gap and offering mentoring support.

The discipline specific networking which is lead by professional representatives on the Board of IAHA will be maintained.

Facilitate support of less experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals.

Continue to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander IAHA members with advice and guidance via website resources and in response to telephone calls and emails.

A mentorship program will be developed to facilitate mentorship of less experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals.

4. Consolidate the capacity and profile of Indigenous Allied Health Australia

Indigenous Allied Health Australia will continue to consolidate the capacity of Indigenous Allied Health Australia and to promote its website to all stakeholders via emails, with links, newsletter articles, media releases and conference presentations.

Strong working relationships will continue to be built with relevant Australian and State & Territory Government departments, national Indigenous health organisations, ASPIG NSW, Australian universities’ health science faculties and allied health professional associations.

Promotion of the IAHA trademark/brand will continue to facilitate its recognition with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health initiatives.

FINANCES OF IAHA INC

The Board of Indigenous Allied Health Australia Inc wishes to express its gratitude to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing for providing a significant grant to enable Indigenous Allied Health Australia Inc to pursue its goals.
Original artwork by Aboriginal artist Colleen Wallace of Utopia, Northern Territory, depicting people coming together to meet.