



IAHA MEDIA RELEASE

IAHA celebrate the achievements of the NT Aboriginal Health Academy

11 December 2020

Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), the peak organisation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce, is proud to host the IAHA Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Academy (NTAHA) graduation in Darwin for the second year.

As part of IAHA's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Academy program, the NTAHA uses an innovative community-led learning model that has reshaped and redesigned how training and education can be delivered with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in high school. The NTAHA takes a holistic and supportive approach to health and success, embedding the centrality of culture.

This year, the Academy has had the privilege of working collaboratively with seven high schools in the Darwin region, stakeholders and host employers to successfully engage and retain students in their education and learning despite the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's graduation will also recognise five young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the NTAHA, completing Year 12 and graduating with a Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance through a fully supported School-Based Traineeship, which involved on-the-job training and wrap-around support for an individual learning program.

In addition to engaging and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students through culturally safe and responsive learning, another of the Academy's goals is to prepare graduates to have job-ready skills and be employable within a breadth of sectors. The Academy offers support and mentoring and helps students connect with practising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and medical professionals, forming role-models for current students.

IAHA Chairperson, Nicole Turner, has echoed this message, saying:

"Students are now on an educational and training pathway leading to long term careers in health and have shown interest in a broad range of professions including oral health, pharmacy, speech pathology, nursing, midwifery and medicine. The importance of this model is that it is about supporting students make informed choices and contextualise their opportunities to their local community and workforce needs."

This week at the NT Academy Graduation and Awards night, hosted by IAHA, the students celebrated their outstanding achievements with their families, communities, government officials, and the broader IAHA support network.



The Hon Mark Coulton MP, Minister for Regional Health, provided an address to the NTAHA students recognising the achievements of the students and the contributions they will make into the future, through their understanding of the contexts and needs of the communities in which they work. Minister Coulton said:

“I think what you will bring to your careers, whatever direction will be a great combination of your cultural understanding... combined with the educational qualifications that you’ve received... I am a very strong supporter of the pathway you’ve chosen.”

IAHA also recognised the following award recipients for their contributions to the NTAHA in 2020:

- Student’s Choice Award: Lorraine Randall
- Local Champion Award: Elyssia Tallon Rosas
- Commitment Award: Porsche Cahill
- Inspiration Award: Lorraine Randall
- Deadly Student Award: Toya Wilson-Norris
- Future Leader Award: Tianna Fitzgerald-Millar

Graduates have stated they have gained confidence in their abilities and in finding the direction to continue their path to pursue a career in health or a related sector.

Toya Norris, a Warumungu girl, from Palmerston College, Year 11 says:

“The Academy has changed me because it has made me commit to something... I would recommend the Academy because it’s a good opportunity, you can learn new skills... My advice about joining the Academy would be, don’t be quiet, stay in class, get more involved and be yourself. One challenge I struggled with this year is balancing schoolwork and Academy work, and my sports, but the [IAHA] staff and PGA really helped me balance them out.”

Another Year 11 student from Palmerston College, Porsche Cahill, a Ngombur girl, from the Kakadu region states:

I joined the Health Academy to gain more skills, to give back to the territory, to later in life, further my skills in the health industry. The Health Academy has helped and guided me to the person I aspire to be... I am very passionate about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island health in Australia. I see being in the health industry as a very rewarding career. My highlight of being in the Academy has been the interaction with people, learning more skills and gaining confidence and new experiences.”

The Academy model is designed to work collaboratively across health disciplines and sectors. There is an urgent, and a real need for health professions in sectors such as primary health care, disability, mental health, allied health, medicine and aged care; for providing a sustainable education, training and workforce development approach in the Northern Territory.



IAHA Chairperson Nicole Turner continued:

“It’s essential that education is delivered in a culturally safe way, which recognises and values the strength of culture, family, and community, and which provides the types of holistic support which empowers our young people to thrive. We hope that many of our graduates go onto great things in health professions, working across sectors to transform health care and systems, improving the accessibility and cultural safety of services and the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with IAHA continuing to support them all the way.”

IAHA congratulates the 2020 NTAHA cohort and looks forward to celebrating students’ achievements well into the future, as we continue to work with our young people while building relationships with communities, stakeholders and governments to expand the Academy nationally.

END MESSAGE

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