



CENTRAL
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Board Communiqué

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Werte!

Here are the latest updates following the Congress Board of Directors meeting held on 11 April 2024:

- Gap Clinic to close Sundays and Public Holidays
- Health Hub Update
- Progress against Strategic Plan (Five Year Action Framework)
- Alukura MGP Launch
- Imanpa Clinic Launch
- Territory Pharmacy Contract Extended
- Joint Remote Health Board Reps
- Research

The next meeting of the Congress Board of Directors will be held Thursday 27 June

Gap Clinic to close Sundays and Public Holidays

Gap Clinic will no longer be open on Sundays or Public Holidays, with the first Sunday closure being 12 May 2024. The Congress Board approved this change after careful consideration of clinic attendance data and staff consultation. It is anticipated that this change will create efficiencies and savings that can be directly reinvested into improving service delivery for clients, and allow the Congress Gap Clinic workforce to focus on providing ongoing general practice and chronic care from Monday to Saturday.

Importantly, this change will be reviewed after six months to ensure that it is achieving objectives and not disadvantaging clients.

The Mparntwe Urgent Care Clinic located at Northside Shopping Centre is open every day of the year, including Christmas Day (hours detailed below) and has proven popular among Congress clients and the non-Aboriginal community. The Mparntwe Urgent Care Clinic has capacity to accommodate the urgent needs of clients who would have attended Gap Clinic on Sunday and public holidays.

Clients seeking an appointment with their Gap Clinic GP should contact the clinic or attend for a walk in appointment during open hours. Clients who need urgent care should attend the Mparntwe Urgent Care Clinic where they will be triaged and assisted as appropriate. As always, clients in life threatening situations should call 000 or attend Emergency at Alice Springs Hospital.

To help people who do not hear of the change and attend the clinic on a Sunday after the closure date (particularly clients who walk or don't have transport home), Gap Clinic will continue to be staffed with

ALOs and a Transport Officer every Sunday until 2 June 2024.

Health Hub Update

The Mparntwe Health Hub project remains on track. You will have noticed plenty of progress at the development site, which is very exciting for Congress and the community. The site, built with some assistance from the Commonwealth government, has hosted visits from many interested parties, including Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney; Assistant Minister for Health/Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians, Malarndirri McCarthy; Member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour and the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese. We will continue to keep members posted as the development continues to advance, but can report very positive progression to date.

Progress against Strategic Plan (Five Year Action Framework)

The Board was provided with its six-monthly update on Congress' progress on its strategic priorities as set out in the 2019 - 23 Strategic Plan and accompanying Five Year Action Framework. Pleasingly, Congress been able to meet or partially meet over 80% of the KPIs in the Five Year Action Framework despite difficult circumstances including the ongoing workforce crisis.

Of particular note, Congress has: effectively maintained the delivery of quality health services to its clients; established the midwifery group practice at Alukura and the Urgent Care Clinic at Northside; improved housing maintenance outcomes in remote communities; increased its grant and non-grant funding by almost 12 % overall year on year; increased its

Medicare income by more than 20% since 2022; continued to support the transition of remote health services to community control in Central Australia; increased assessments of developmentally vulnerable young people by over 60% year on year (through its Child & Youth Assessment and Therapeutic Services (CYATS) program); made solid progress on its capital works program (specifically the Todd Street Health Hub, Mutitjulu Clinic development and Ltyentye Apurte Clinic renovations); further developed the skills of its Board of Directors through AICD training; increased cultural awareness of its staff through cultural orientation sessions; continued to advocate and lobby for government action on key social determinants of health; and further enhanced its Syphilis Response Program.

The Congress Board is currently in the process of developing its next long term strategic plan in close consultation with its staff, members and other key stakeholders.

Alukura MGP Launch

Congress' Alukura Midwifery Group Practice was officially launched last month with a special women's only event at the Alukura site. Congress Alukura has been trying to establish a Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) model of care since the early 2000's, noting evidence showed this type of service model was most effective.

In 2020, Congress partnered with the Molly Wardaguga Research Centre, based at Charles Darwin University, as well as private provider of midwifery led care, My Midwives,. This partnership approach has been successful in securing a new birthing agreement with Alice Springs Hospital which has enabled the establishment of the new Alukura MGP service in partnership with My Midwives.

The initial idea of the project is 40 years in the making. In 1984, several hundred Aboriginal women from more than 60 communities - and 11 language groups -

met in Mparntwe/Alice Springs to establish what would later become Congress Alukura by the Grandmother's Law. Central to their vision was women being able to give birth under Aboriginal community control in a way which would ensure the traditional cultural integrity of the birthing process on Aboriginal land.

Congress Chair Ebony Abbott McCormack was among the speakers at the event, alongside NT Health Minister Selena Uibo and Assistant Minister for Aboriginal Australians/ Assistant Minister for Health, Malarndirri McCarthy. The event, guided by the Alukura Grandmothers, included the launch of the Alukura Womens Healing Space and a baby smoking ceremony.

The new service commenced late last year and there have already been more than 50 births supported by the new partnership service with early indications of improved outcomes including in the critical area of supporting pregnancies going closer to full term.

The Alukura Grandmothers sharing songs during the launch event





Nyangatjatjara College Imanpa Campus students showing their “thank you” artwork at the clinic launch

Imanpa Clinic Launch

A very successful opening was held for the Imanpa Clinic on 20 March. Chair Ebony Abbott-McCormack spoke at the event behalf of Congress, along with Director Tanya Luckey and other community members, expressing their positivity about the move to community control. The Imanpa Band provided music and it was a great celebration of this amazing community milestone..

Territory Pharmacy Contract extended

The Board resolved to extend the current contract between Congress and Territory Pharmacy. This has been an important partnership for Congress and has ensured the ongoing supply of medicines, including some that are in short supply.

Joint Remote Health Board Reps

The Board appointed Directors Abbott-McCormack and Dowling to represent the Congress Board on the Joint Remote Health Board in 2024. The Joint Remote Health Board is made up of representatives from the various remote boards and advisory groups. It offers a chance to ensure important conversations take place to support service delivery in remote communities and is a valuable part of community control.

Research

The following research projects were supported by the Board of Directors:

1. *Equitable access to full blood examination testing at the point-of-care in remote primary health – [Working title: Sepsis Point-of-Care Testing Trial (SPOCTrial)]; Flinders University; Dr Brooke Spaeth;*

Dr Emma de Courcy-Ireland; Dr Rodney Omond.

2. *The ATLAS Indigenous Primary Care Surveillance and Research Network; University of Queensland Poche Centre for Indigenous Health; Professor James Ward. The ATLAS Indigenous Primary Care Surveillance and Research Network; University of Queensland Poche Centre for Indigenous Health; Professor James Ward.*