



CENTRAL  
AUSTRALIAN  
ABORIGINAL  
CONGRESS  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION  
ICN 7823

# Board Communiqué

## ISSUE 57: AUGUST 2024

## Werte!

Here are the latest updates following the Congress Board of Directors meeting held on 22 August 2024:

- Strategic Plan 2024/25-2028/29
- NT Curfew Legislation
- Clinics and Service Delivery
- Human Resources Report
- Health Hub Louvre Artwork
- Research Projects approved
- **CEO's Report to the Board**
  - Food Security
  - The NT Police Commissioner Apology
  - Children and Families Tripartite Forum (TPF) and the Generational Strategy Steering Group (GSSG)
  - NT Locum service co-design and the proposed constitutional changes to the NT Primary Health Network (NTPHN)
  - Report on review of preschools in the NT
  - NACCHO / ACCHS CEO Summit Perth
  - Joint Congress and Remote Health Boards meet
  - Indigenous Australians' Health Program (IAHP) core grant reporting
  - Organisational Review

**The next meeting of the Congress Board of Directors is on Thursday 17 August 2024.**



Left to right: Sheena, Jas, Hannah and Swasti after accepting the award on behalf of the Congress CYATS team.

### Strategic Plan 2024/25-2028/29

Over the past few months, the Board has been working with consultant, Edward Tilton to formulate the organisation's new Strategic Plan. This document, commencing from this financial year, provides a high-level road map, guiding Congress' direction for the next five years. The Board endorsed the plan at the August meeting, and will be shared with members and implemented by staff in coming months.

### NT Curfew Legislation

Following a snap youth curfew in March 2024 in Alice Springs made by the Police Minister under the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, the NT Legislative Assembly has now made amendments to the *Police Administration Act 1978* that provide the Police Commissioner with powers to make a public disorder declaration and apply 72-hour curfews. The Board discussed the amendments and potential resulting concerns, including that the amendments suspend the Discrimination Act and increase the risk of

vulnerable and marginalised people to be criminalised. The Board resolved to work through AMSANT and APONT to ensure our concerns are made known to government. Congress will also continue to advocate for measures such as family responsibility agreements with social consequences as needed to assist parents and families to take more responsibility for keeping their children and young people safe.

### Clinics and Service Delivery

**Alukura's Midwifery Group Practice** is continuing to service more families, with 90 births recorded already since the service started last year. It is great to report that more families are accessing this culturally responsive service and mothers can experience continuity of care with a known midwife throughout their pregnancy.

**The Child and Youth Assessment and Therapeutic Service (CYATS)** team was named the *Fox Education and Consulting Primary Healthcare Team of the Year* at the recent Health Professional of the

Year Awards. Held during the NTPHN Compass Conference, the awards recognise excellence in seven distinct categories – each highlighting the exceptional dedication and impact of individuals and teams in our healthcare community. Well done to the whole team for this well-deserved recognition!

### Human Resources Report

Congress' sustained employment growth has reached over 590 positions and is likely to reach 600 before the end of the calendar year. A lot of recruitment is happening with challenges for certain positions remaining, however our turnover of staff is holding firm at 33%.

As the number of Aboriginal staff studying continues to increase to an impressive level and our Aboriginal employment has shown an increase in numbers against this time last year, there is however, a slight drop-off in the proportion of Aboriginal staff overall due to the organisation's growth increasing the number of qualified allied health and clinical positions which are underrepresented by Aboriginal people.

Mandatory induction for staff has been increased to two days and Congress has engaged Raymond Walters to provide weekly cultural safety training.

### Research Projects approved

**The Board supported and approved participation in the following research projects to be conducted through Congress:**

- *Head to Health (H2H) kids national evaluation including the establishment of Aboriginal Reference Group; Nous Group*
- *Exploring the role of the \$100 Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services (RAAHS) Scheme in supporting quality use of medicines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation; Hannah Loller*

## CEO Report to the Congress Board of Directors

*The following updates were made to the Board at the August meeting.*

### Food Security

The National Indigenous Australian's Agency (NIAA) is in the process of developing a national food security strategy for remote Aboriginal communities. It has contracted PwC Australia to undertake the consultations and Congress staff attended the Alice Springs meeting and provided a written submission based on our prior policy positions including our Food Security Position statement.

There have also been consultation meetings in remote communities across the NT including Utju and Yuendumu in Central Australia. The Utju community consultation was attended by the Utju Health Board Chair, Sarah Gallagher as well as other directors and community members who provided a very powerful message and expressed many ideas on how things could be improved.

Community members made the key points they have made for some years, such as; the shop is too expensive, lock up the sweets, we want fresh sandwiches everyday instead of fried foods, having fruit cut up in boxes as a healthy snack, among other comments. People have seen these strategies in other communities and want them in their community. They also raised their concern that power cards are only sold at the store, so if the store is closed and the power runs out then the fridge turns off and their food spoils.

Congress allied health staff and the governance team also attended these meetings to support the community and will ensure the community's ideas are well documented for the PwC consultants. Simultaneously the NT government is consulting about the proposed draft standards that they plan to legislate following the cessation of the

Commonwealth Stronger Futures legislation. Congress is also providing a submission for this process.

### APONT discuss TPF and GSSG Children and Families Tripartite Forum (TPF) and the Generational Strategy Steering Group (GSSG)

The caucus of the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT) held a meeting to discuss how they can achieve more through the Children and Families Tripartite Forum. It was agreed that a major focus needs to be making governments more accountable and to look, not only, backwards to the Royal Commission Recommendations but into the future, to create a new set of performance indicators that include reporting on the key Closing the Gap indicators within the TPF remit.

### Review of preschools in the NT

The NT Department of Education (DoE) made public a review they commissioned into Preschools in the Territory conducted by NOUS consultants. Congress made a submission into the review, and will analyse the report to assess what has been included. The report makes a clear definition of what is preschool and it is noted that, based on this definition, the NT Government has a long way to go to ensure access to preschool for all Aboriginal children.

### NACCHO / ACCHS CEO Summit Perth

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) held its inaugural CEO Summit this July in Perth which was attended by Congress' CEO and senior doctors in each service. Following her return from illness, NACCHO CEO Pat Turner gave an inspiring keynote address.

Topics discussed included health care in detention centres, the development of the needs based funding model, raising



immunisation rates, cancer planning, the syphilis outbreak and chronic disease management. Importantly, NACCHO reported on some exciting work getting agreement for a maiden First Nations schedule for the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA). This ensures our sector is at the table during negotiations between the Commonwealth, state, and territory health departments.

This agreement has the capacity to be a game changer and finally makes it clear that the Australian College of Community and Health Services (ACCHS) are here to stay as a permanent part of the Australian health system. This is a historic development and yet again points to the level of credibility that NACCHO and our sector have now achieved.

### Joint Congress and Remote Health Boards Meeting

The Joint Remote Health Board meeting was held recently, attended by representatives from Ltyentye Apurte, Amoonguna, Ntaria, Utju, Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Kaltukatjara and co-chaired by Ebony Abbott-McCormack and Lyle Kenny.

An update was given into the development process of the new Strategic Plan and the findings from the stakeholder consultations. The board expressed its view that we need to do more to assist young people as they are the future. There was also a separate consultation session on the possible reforms to the governance model of remote health services including a possible regional governance model.


The research proposal to Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Indigenous Health Research Fund on *Optimising health system integration through innovative models of multidisciplinary primary care in the remote, Aboriginal context* was discussed as a key way to get the resources needed to properly evaluate major internal service delivery reforms with the chairs of the boards

deciding to sign separate letters of support for the proposal.

Finally, there was a presentation by the CLC housing policy officer about the \$4 billion new housing project. He projected it will halve the current levels of overcrowding with CLC building up to 270 new houses a year over the ten years from 2024 to 2034. There will also be more money for repairs and maintenance.

## SAVE THE DATE!

The Corporations Annual General Meeting will be held on **Thursday 28 November 2024.**



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