Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet (AIH)
Advisory Board
Communiqué from telemeeting 16 July 2013

The Board was welcomed to the second Advisory Board telemeeting for 2013. Neil noted that Janine Milera, the new CEO of CATSIN would be joining the Board.

Neil updated the Board on recent AIH research activity. There are a number of reviews in the final stages of preparation including rheumatic heart disease, kidney health, physical activity and ear health. The eye health, illicit drug use and social and emotional wellbeing reviews are also underway.

The Australian Indigenous ClinicalInfoNet resource was launched on 25 June by Minister Snowdon in Canberra. The goal of the resource is to contribute to the improvement of chronic disease health outcomes for Indigenous people by providing front-line health professionals with access to a high quality, evidence-based chronic disease prevention and management resource. There has been excellent feedback already, with the resource having more than 1,000 hits per day in the week following the launch.

The HealthInfoNet has been contracted by DoHA to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alcohol and other Drugs Knowledge Centre. The project will focus on substance misuse prevention and service improvement. Key outcomes will be: promotion of evidence-based messages about alcohol and other drugs through credible and relevant information provision; enhancement of the capacity of the alcohol and other drugs sector to inform national substance misuse prevention and service improvement efforts for Indigenous people; and supporting the development of national alcohol and other drugs policy, aligning with the National Drug Strategy 2010 - 2015.

Use of the HealthInfoNet (comprising the main web resource, the Australian Indigenous HealthBulletin and the yarning places) continues to increase with visits to the resource increasing by 6-8% and page views increasing 11% in the five-month period compared with the same period in the preceding year.

The yarning places continue to grow and develop. There are now 15 yarning places with over 3,250 members. Two recent improvements to the yarning places of note are: users can now upload attachments on discussion boards; and there is a filtering option for the upcoming events section of the yarning places.

Web resource improvements in the period since the last Board meeting include the addition of new portals for eye health and ear health. These portals provide access to plain language information, which is important for health workers who may not have had the benefit of education to the level of upper high-school or above. A new AOD portal is planned as part of the AOD Knowledge Centre. Another addition to the website is a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) section. This section leads to research and other contemporary health knowledge in forms that have immediate, practical utility for practitioners and policy-makers in their efforts to keep up-to-date with current developments in their area(s) of work.

The HealthInfoNet has won two awards recently – ECU’s Vice Chancellor’s Award for ‘Excellence in Research Engagement’ and the Australian Business Awards ‘Australian charity award for outstanding achievement’.