



Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet
Advisory Board
Communiqué
1 March 2011

At the first meeting of the Advisory Board for 2011, Haylene Grogan was welcomed to the Board as the replacement for Ken Wyatt as the NATSIHON representative. Ian Anderson, who has resigned following his appointment as Director of Murrup Barak, the Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development, was thanked for his contribution to the Board.

The importance of disseminating information about ‘closing the gap’ was discussed. Neil Thomson, Director of the HealthInfoNet, reiterated the HealthInfoNet’s commitment to helping to close the gap by providing the knowledge base to inform policy and practice. The ‘closing the gap’ (CTG) section on the HealthInfoNet site was being updated regularly as new information becomes available.

The Board raised the possibility of the HealthInfoNet giving greater attention to service provision, with particular focus on services addressing chronic diseases and the health of mothers and babies. These two areas relate most directly to the CTG targets for life expectancy and the mortality of children up to 5 years of age. Ideally, the information would highlight best practice and be developed in consultation with NACCHO. It was agreed that more information about effective services in these and other areas was needed, but these aspects were not included in the HealthInfoNet’s current contracts with the various funding bodies. Sources of funding for this area would be continued to be explored.

Research activities since the last Board meeting were highlighted. A number of reviews, which provide comprehensive and up to date information on selected health topics, were completed: Indigenous men’s health; substance use among Indigenous people; Indigenous oral health; and Indigenous offender health. Work is continuing on reviews of kidney health, sexual health, nutrition and growth, diabetes, and physical activity. In addressing its commitment to providing information to as wide range of users, plain language reviews of health topics are also completed after a full review has been finalised. Work is continuing on plain language reviews of: cancer among Indigenous people; alcohol use among Indigenous people; and Indigenous offender health. The major project to provide a resource pack, toolkit, website, yarning place and national workshop for the newly appointed Healthy Lifestyle Workers is progressing well.

Statistics on visits to the HealthInfoNet show a 37% increase in visits to the site and a 30% increase in page-views compared with the corresponding time last from the same time year. Visits to the HealthInfoNet’s peer-reviewed journal, the Australian Indigenous HealthBulletin increased by 11% and page-views by 4%.

The homepage had been upgraded based on feedback from a major on-line survey. This upgrade will flow through to other pages on the site over the coming months. RSS feeds and twitter accounts have been set up to inform users of new information. There has also been a significant upgrade of the electronic networks (yarning places) to assist networking among people working to address various aspects of Indigenous health. This was possible with additional funding from OATSIH.

Since the previous Board meeting, funding had been received from OATSIH for the EarInfoNet and substance use sections of the website, as well as separate funding for a mental health resource portal.

The *HealthInfoNet* has also entered into agreements with Asthma Australia, the Australian Lung Foundation and the Research Centre for Injury Studies at Flinders University of South Australia.

Promotion of the website is continuing through conferences. In the second half of 2010, the *HealthInfoNet* ran 15 *HealthInfoNet* cafes and presented at seven events, and provided promotional material to 31 conferences. There are also mail-outs to stakeholder groups of our hard-copy reviews, email blasts to stakeholder groups, and articles written by the research team appeared in various health-related professional publications and journals.

Two specific aspects for the future direction of the *HealthInfoNet* were discussed. The first was the possible expansion of the *HealthInfoNet* coverage at state/territory level. The WA Department of Health already funds a WA section on the *HealthInfoNet* site; this enables information and materials relating to Indigenous health in WA to be ‘packaged’ and presented in a separate web section. The Board agreed that jurisdictional coverage should be increased, and provided suggestions on possible ways of achieving this. The Board also discussed future options for the Australian Indigenous *HealthBulletin*; this included the possibility of expansion and collaboration with other organisations, including the possible increased attention to peer-reviewed material.

The next meeting is scheduled for early June 2011.