

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and workers: strengthening professional skills through CPD

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With national registration of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner (ATSIHP), the need for policy and tools to support continuing professional development (CPD) of the workforce has emerged as a key issue.

Northern Australia's health services rely heavily on the capacity of ATSIHPs to deliver comprehensive primary health care in a range of settings to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people.

A commitment to CPD as part of ongoing professional development process is well understood by many health professional and supported within industrial relations and enterprise business agreements. However for many ATISHPs the concept of CPD to maintain professional registration is a new concept and therefore is less well supported by tools and policies.

GNARTN is a cross jurisdictional partnership between the health departments and Integrated Regional Clinical Networks (IRCTN) in the NT, WA and QLD, funded by recently dis-established HWA. In 2014, GNARTN in partnership with NATISHWA worked closely with health services, training providers, and policy staff within government and the NGO sector, to co-invest in the development of range of culturally acceptable tools to support CPD activity, with the aim of leading to organisational cultural understanding and change, while providing practical tools to support CPD.

This presentation will describe the process, the challenges and the issues that arose as result of the consultation and developmental stage, and will outline the opportunities that have emerged to drive policy and organisational cultural change, in support of strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers in northern Australia.