

Community-led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce development solutions

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Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) in partnership with AMSANT (Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory), is moving forward on an innovative project to increase the number of young Aboriginal people completing year 12 and entering into the health workforce.

Background

This project is an innovative community led learning model that is about re-shaping and re-designing how training is delivered to Aboriginal students in high school years. The model proposed is centred on ensuring that training and education is delivered in a way that embeds the centrality of culture, whilst having a holistic approach to health. This will assist in gaining evidence to assess the success of education and training outcomes when social and cultural determinants, partnered with wrap around supports brought together and led by Aboriginal community and organisations.

The Northern Territory Aboriginal (Allied) Health Academy Project (NTAHAP) model is designed to work collaboratively across health disciplines, organisational structures (health, education, training, employment) to improve and increase Aboriginal high school students to achieve a number of positive outcomes for their lives and their families.

To transform Indigenous health and wellbeing outcomes and to create a strong labour force providing services that are accessible, available, appropriate and affordable for Aboriginal peoples an increase in the number of qualified Aboriginal health professionals is required to meet the complex needs across sectors and particularly in the NT. To this end, new and more flexible pathways to training and employment are required that are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal high school students. Health professionals are critical not only to health service delivery in acute and primary health care but across the life course and social and cultural determinants in intervention, management, evaluation and prevention, rehabilitation and nutritional dietary services.

Namely the goals of the project are to:

- encourage local NT Aboriginal high school students to stay engaged in education from years 7-10 and go on to complete Year 12 successfully
- engage students into appropriate career pathway opportunities
- support students to gain a qualification in Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance with employability and job ready skills
- support student to complete a School based traineeship over 2 years employed by the NT Dept of Health
- support and mentor students by graduated and practicing Aboriginal health and medical professionals

- expose students to the different employment opportunities in the health and related sectors including acute care, primary healthcare, private practice, community health services, aged care and disability
- provide positive Aboriginal role models (not sports people) that have succeeded in a variety of health and related industry professions leading from the front of the class
- provide a positive learning experiences within the tertiary setting, encouraging goal setting and aspirations
- develop the student's confidence and knowledge of opportunities to pursue a career in health
- establish a culturally safe and responsive learning environment that expects success and achievement while providing holistic support services.

Darwin was selected for this program for the following reasons:

- Skills shortages in health and wellbeing services are greater in remote and rural areas. Allied health professionals in Darwin service remote and rural communities. There are opportunities for real employment outcomes in Darwin from this learning pathway as documented in recent research.
- Major stakeholders in the Northern Territory are very supportive of this project and engaged.
- Allied health is an emerging industry that will continue to grow to address the increasing health needs in chronic disease, early intervention, rehabilitation, mental health, nutrition and health promotion.

Critical success factors

This innovative education training model is about creating and enabling local solutions to better support engagement of high schools' students in the education system, the VET sector and more importantly the workforce. The program has wrap around support service from the all relevant stakeholder groups that are investing their resources, time and expertise into ensuring this happens as a partnership led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, community and organisations.

Group learning in a culturally safe and responsive work simulated environment with interactive practical learning experiences to ensure equality and equity of experiences for all students within a tertiary setting.

Career planning curricula embedded in schools to provide motivation and inspiration by introducing students to Aboriginal role models; Aboriginal perspectives to career planning and opportunities; leadership development and expectations of success; showcase health workforce opportunities and the diversity of professions in more detail; journal and visual aids for building confidence and encouragement.

This program is designed to be transferable to other communities to meet their local health and wellbeing needs for sustainable workforce development solutions that lead to building local and regional community capacity.

Rationale

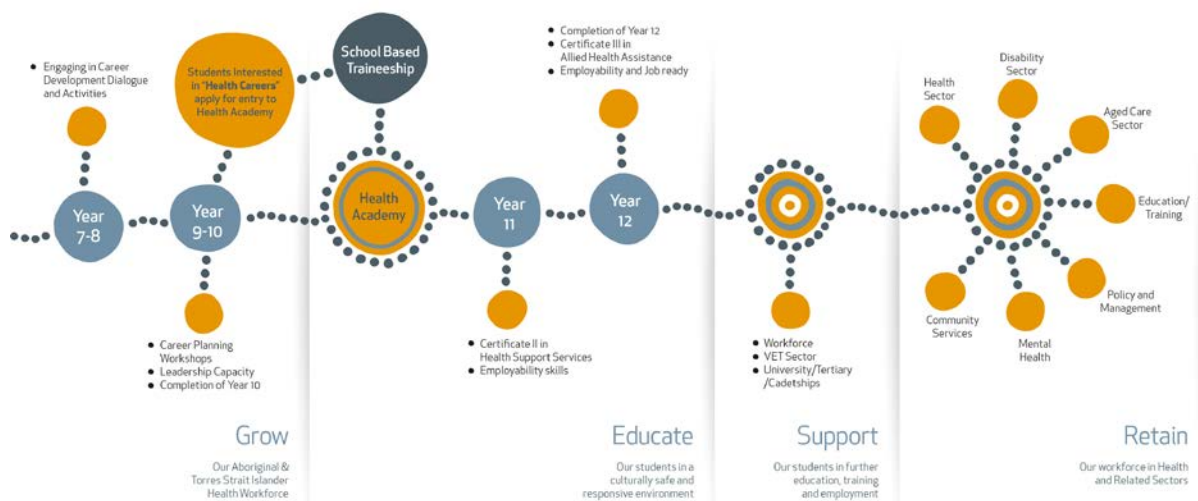
The allied health sector plays an essential role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing and working in a holistic multidisciplinary team strengthens opportunities to significantly impact on outcomes. The availability of Aboriginal staff in all health professions is an important factor in whether Aboriginal people are able to effectively access culturally safe and responsive services.

In 2013, the release of The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan (NATSIHP) was an evidence-based policy framework designed to guide policies and programs to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health over the next decade until 2023. The release of The Implementation Plan in 2015, is the first step in turning good intentions into actions and has a number of key strategies but one specific strategy and follow on action focuses on “Support, grow and increase the capability of the workforce (including medical and allied health professionals, nurses, midwives, Aboriginal health workers etc.) to meet current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health needs.”

The Rural and Remote Generalist: Allied Health Project (GNARTN, 2013) has provided evidence towards addressing the clinical training models for allied health professionals that meet the needs of northern Australia health services, and rural and remote communities in particular. The project had several recommendations, however the work that this project has help to identify is 7 key allied health professions necessary to meet the health needs of those that live and reside in northern Australia including Nutrition/Dietetics, Speech Pathology, Podiatry, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy, Medical imaging and Physiotherapy.

Health Academy model

Multiple entry and exit points dependent on the needs of the community, the aspirations of the individual students



Presenters

Kylie Stothers is a mother of two children and a Jawoyn woman who was born and raised in Katherine, NT. Kylie comes from a large extended family with strong ties in Katherine and surrounding communities. Kylie is the Workforce Development Officer at Indigenous Allied Health Australia and is a social worker who has worked throughout the Northern Territory for over 18 years. She previously

worked for the Centre for Remote Health at the Katherine site and her interest areas are in child and maternal health, working with families, health promotion, child protection and health workforce issues. Kylie is passionate about education and issues that relate to remote and rural Australia and coordinates a local social work network group, K-Town Social Workers, whose main aim is to keep Katherine region social workers connected and supported whilst practising in remote NT.

Donna Murray is a descendant of the Wiradjuri nation of the Murrumbidgee River and of the Wonnarua nation of the Hunter Valley (NSW) and the Chief Executive Officer of Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), a national not-for-profit, member-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health organisation. Donna provides strong strategic leadership across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and wider allied health sector and has extensive experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and governance, management, education and community development. Having worked in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs for over 25 years within government and community organisations at local, state and national levels, Donna has strong relationships and networks within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and related sectors.