

COMMUNIQUE – YARNING UP AND STRENGTHENING AN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH(ER) WORKFORCE

On 14 February 2019 the Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) Indigenous Researcher and Capacity Strengthening Network Steering Committee (IRCBN) hosted a National Forum in Adelaide – *Yarning Up and Strengthening an Indigenous Research(er) Workforce*. The purpose of the National Forum was to:

- extend working relationships and build on our strengths and expertise;
- listen, hear and share ideas about how we can strategically work across AHRA and beyond (internationally) to grow and support Indigenous researchers and colleagues working to improve the health of Australia’s First Peoples;
- seek agreement on a vision and tangible actions to guide AHRA to upscale and accelerate research capacity strengthening strategies centred on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- determine the next steps to progress this work.

The forum was funded by the Medical Research Future Fund Rapid Applied Research Translation Program and hosted by Health Translation SA at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute.

Why build the capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce?

National-level research on capacity strengthening strategies is needed to support the continued success and sustainability of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researcher workforce. This research needs to build on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. It also needs to identify clear and robust pathways to careers and stable employment in the health workforce, and health researcher workforce more specifically.¹ Most AHRA Centres are already progressing significant strengths-based capacity building activities. However, there is the need to ‘join the dots’ across bodies of work and measure success across the AHRA. A National Forum was facilitated to conceptualise and determine the way forward.

The National Forum objective was to co-create and reach agreement on a vision and tangible actions to guide the AHRA to upscale and accelerate research capacity strengthening strategies centred on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

What happened at the National Forum?

A Welcome to Country was given by Kurna custodian Trevor-Tiritpa Ritchie (see inset with daughter Kakirra). The National Forum included representatives from the IRCBN Steering Committee, Centre Operations Managers and Centre Project Officers (see Page 2). The workshop plan included outlines of the landscape for supporting and building on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers (see Figure 1).



The following presentations were given at the 2019 National Forum:

1. Findings from the **Indigenous Researcher and Capacity Building Network Environment Scan** and **Desktop Review** to identify the need to support and build on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers (Kim O’Donnell/ Kate Schwartzkopff: Translation SA);
2. Update on **NHMRC Strengthening and Growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Researcher Capacity** (Sandra Eades);
3. Analyses from the **Capacity Building of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researcher Narrative Review** (Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, Chris Platania-Phung);
4. **AHRA Centre Presentations** provided their strengths and expertise to developing the Indigenous research(er) workforce and proposed ways to action the activities identified.

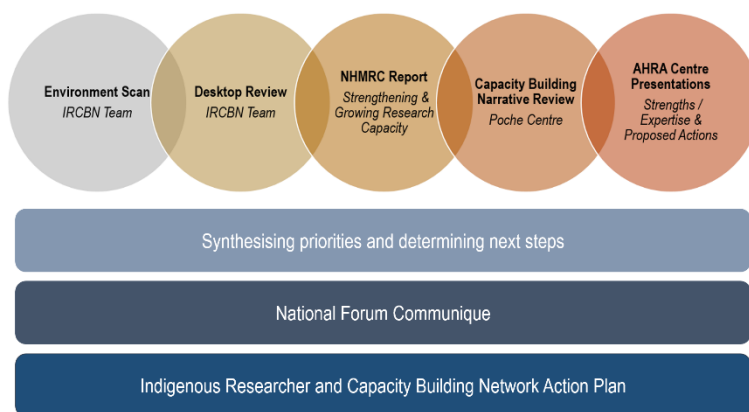


Figure 1: National Forum outline including platform of knowledges informing Communique and Action Plan development

¹ Ewen et al. *Human Resources for Health* (2019) 17:10 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-019-0344-x>

IN-PRINCIPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Progress the Indigenous Research(er) Capacity Strengthening Network to build on and maintain a robust network that:
 - Coordinates activities across AHRA;
 - Celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health successes;
 - Integrates the IRCBN and Indigenous knowledges into AHRA projects and platforms (e.g., data sovereignty)
 - Reinforces the need for AHRA to support and enable Aboriginal business across Centres and their Partner organisations.
- Identify and unlock Indigenous Research expertise within each Centre and facilitate the development of a repository for shared knowledge (People, Projects and Networks);
 - Greater recognition and weighting community relationships, knowledge and expertise contributed by health workers / liaison officers / support workers and project officers
 - Better define and understand the Indigenous health workforce in a way that reflects Indigenous perspectives
 - Advocate for an obligation for research projects that have an impact on Aboriginal health to include Aboriginal researchers/community organisations as part of the research effort.
- Increase individual Indigenous Researcher capacity through the development of the following initiatives:
 - Leadership Training
 - Research Methodology Masterclasses
 - Mentorship and Supporting Career Pathways
 - Exchanges and Placements
 - Advocacy
 - Seed grants and Travel Scholarships
 - Provide a regular event for peers, e.g. Yearly gathering to meet and share knowledge
- Establish principles and cultural protocols to intersect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research and translation across and within AHRA Centres.

An Action Plan will be drafted based on the recommendations from the National Forum.

Workshop attendees:

- **Central Australia Academic Health Science Network:**
Heather D'Antoine, Chips Mackinolty
Zoom: Leisa McCarthy, Lorna Murakami-Gold
- **Health Translation SA:** Alex Brown, Kim O'Donnell, Kim Morey, Wendy Keech, Kate Schwartzkopff, Natasha Howard, Ecushla Linedale
- **Maridulu Budyari Gumat (SPHERE):** Kerrie Doyle, Stephanie Wrightman
- **Melbourne Academic Centre for Health:** Sandra Eades, Luke Burchill, Heather Whipps
- **Monash Partners:** Jacinta Elston, Angela Jones, Jacqueline Boyle
- **NSW Regional Health Partners:** Ellen Newman, Tameka Rae-Small
- **Sydney Health Partners:** Juanita Sherwood, Aisling Forrest
- **West Australia Health Translation Network:** Glenn Pearson, Debra Turner

