

Winnunga News

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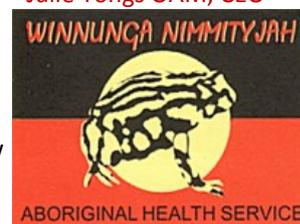
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CEO Update



Julie Tongs OAM, CEO



The release this week of the 2017 Closing the Gap Report is a further reminder of the distance yet to be travelled to achieve substantial and embedded change in the life circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, including here in the ACT.

While it is depressing that the latest report has revealed Governments around Australia have again failed to make any significant progress in meeting the closing the gap targets in six of the seven measures, what is equally depressing is that I do not know a single Aboriginal person in Australia who expected any other outcome.

In releasing the report Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull reiterated his conviction that change will only be achieved when Governments work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. He repeated the mantra that Governments and the public service 'must do it with Aboriginal people not to them'.

In that regard the imminent release by the ACT Government of its response to the Moss Report into the care of Steven Freeman will be revealing. I have called on the Government to commit to accept and implement all the recommendations in the report. Anything less than the adoption of the full report will be regarded by the local Indigenous community as a serious breach of faith and an abrogation of responsibility for ensuring that the major failings identified by Phillip Moss in the management and care of Steven Freeman in the AMC will never be repeated.

The release of the Closing the Gap Report, while highlighting the failure of Governments to engage successfully with the seven designated target areas, also forces us to reflect on what is happening in areas not covered by the report. I remain, for example, gravely concerned at the rate of removal of Aboriginal children from their families. There are, proportionately, almost as many Aboriginal children in care in the ACT as anywhere in Australia. On current trends it is highly likely that the rate of removal of Aboriginal children in the ACT will soon be the highest in Australia.

It is, tragically, the fact that this is exactly what has happened with the rate of Indigenous incarceration in the ACT. According to the latest ABS data an Aboriginal person in the ACT is 21 times more likely than a non-Indigenous person to be sent to prison. The highest rate in Australia. This is simply scandalous. A common feature of the ACT Government's response to both of these disastrous outcomes is that ACT based Aboriginal managed, led and staffed service delivery organisations (namely Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga) have been excluded from any meaningful role in supporting the at risk Aboriginal people and families.

Two Major Tests Looming for the ACT Government

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Canberra will be paying close attention to how the ACT Government responds to two critically important events in the next two weeks.

1. The Moss Report

Winnunga AHS believes the Government must commit unequivocally to the implementation, in full, of the recommendations of the Moss Report into the care and treatment of Steven Freeman in the AMC. Phillip Moss's report is damning of the lack of care which Steven Freeman, a young Aboriginal man received upon admission and in the time up to his death in custody while in the care and control of the ACT Government. Anything less than the full implementation of the recommendations will be regarded by Winnunga AHS and the broader Aboriginal community as a serious breach of faith and of commitment by the Government to the needs of Aboriginal detainees within the ACT Corrections system.

Winnunga AHS is also mindful that the Moss Report contains a raft of findings that detail major shortcomings in the management and administration of the AMC and is insisting that the Government must commit to addressing the myriad of failings identified through these findings in addition to implementing the formal recommendations.

2. The Coronial Inquest into the Death of Steven Freeman

Winnunga AHS believes the Government must also commit unequivocally to ensuring that counsel representing the ACT Government at the coronial inquest into the death of Steven Freeman is instructed to at all times ensure that all pertinent information tendered to the inquest is made publicly available and that the ACT Government will at all times support the need for openness and transparency in the Court.

Winnunga AHS also believes the ACT Government should ensure that Counsel representing the ACT Government supports any representation made to the Coroner that he expand the nature of the inquest to include a consideration of any causal links between the bashing of Steven Freeman and his death.

the Government must commit unequivocally to the implementation in full, of the recommendations of the Moss Report into the care and treatment of Steven Freeman in the AMC.



Commonwealth Recognises Need for Effective Evaluation of Indigenous Programs -Time for the ACT Government to do Likewise

The Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister, Nigel Scullion has announced that the Commonwealth will devote \$40 million to evaluating its Indigenous Affairs programs as a response to a report of the Commonwealth Auditor-General on the implementation and operation of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS). The Audit Office concluded in its report that while the Department had been focussed on achieving the IAS policy objectives it had not done so effectively. The Audit Office noted that the planning and design for the Strategy had been required to be undertaken in seven weeks and that this was clearly inadequate. As a consequence the grants administration processes had fallen short of required standards.

The Audit Report followed a 2015 Productivity Commission report which found that insufficient evidence existed to appropriately evaluate Indigenous programs, and a report in 2016 from the Centre for Independent Studies that found only 8 per cent of 1,082 Indigenous specific programs worth just on \$6 billion it had reviewed, had been effectively evaluated.

It is of course axiomatic that effective evaluation of programs is fundamentally important in ensuring that resources are being appropriately directed to programs that work. In light of the tortuous pace being achieved in closing the gap between the health and other life outcomes of Indigenous people it is distressing to see Government agencies and mainstream service providers failing to appropriately evaluate Indigenous programs.

To its credit the Commonwealth has responded positively with the \$40 million commitment to ensuring that Indigenous programs are delivering optimal outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The ACT also suffers from a dearth of effective or timely evaluation of ACT Indigenous programs.

The ACT Government has been signalling for some time that it proposes to design outcomes and performance measures for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015-2018. It is now 2017 and the Agreement is past the half way mark and Winnunga is not aware of any progress in the development of the outcomes and performance measures.

Winnunga has also sought, without success, information on the evaluation framework for the Indigenous specific aspects of 'A Step Up for Our Kids', Throughcare and most recently the ex Inanna housing. All of these services have been contracted out by the ACT Government to non-Indigenous mainstream providers all of whom are apparently content to not be accountable to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Canberra.

Constitutional Recognition in the ACT and a Treaty

The ACT Government is being left behind by progressive States throughout Australia in relation to Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people...

The ACT Government is being left behind by progressive States throughout Australia in relation to Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the negotiating of Treaties, and the provision of payments to members of the Stolen Generations suffering ongoing trauma and harm.

The Government of Tasmania has formally amended the Constitution of Tasmania to recognise Aboriginal people as Tasmania's First Peoples. This is a magnificent first for Australia and the Government, and people of Tasmania are to be congratulated.

The National Party of Western Australia has unanimously endorsed the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution.

The South Australian Government has announced that it will commence treaty discussions with Aboriginal South Australians as the next step towards reconciliation. The Government has appointed a Commissioner for Treaty and provided generous funding to support the Treaty process.

The Victorian Government is facilitating the Interim Treaty Working Group in preparing a roadmap to a treaty in Victoria.

In addition to these most significant and important developments the Government of New South Wales has agreed to a \$73 million reparations package offering one off payments to members of the Stolen Generations suffering ongoing trauma and harm as a consequence of their removal from their family.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Canberra would welcome an indication from the ACT Government of where it stands on these issues.



Fact: Constitutional recognition is the move towards recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's founding document – our Constitution.

Selective Concern by CPSU About Violence at Alexander Machonochie Centre

It is notable that not only did the CPSU not make a submission to the Moss Inquiry it has remained silent since the report was publicly released...

The 'deep concern' expressed by the CPSU at allegations that a prison guard was injured by a detainee at the AMC in mid January highlights the selective nature of the Union's concern about violence at the prison.

The Moss report into the near fatal bashing of Aboriginal inmate Steven Freeman revealed the worrying extent of intimidation and violence suffered by detainees at the AMC. At paragraph 12.9.5 for instance Phillip Moss reported:

'...the Inquiry came to appreciate that detainees at the AMC exist in apprehension of attacks and reprisals. Some detainees reported that their response to this was to remain in their cells most of the time. Some detainees suggested to the Inquiry that their experience at the AMC was worse in this regard than at NSW prisons'.

It is notable that not only did the CPSU not make a submission to the Moss Inquiry it has remained silent since the report was publicly released, which details a litany of failures in the care, protection and treatment of detainees at the AMC.

While all violence is to be condemned it is to be regretted that while the Union representing prison guards is inclined, quite rightly, to condemn that suffered by prison guards it remains apparently unconcerned by that which the prison guards it represents, fail to protect the detainees in their care from suffering.

The 'deep concern' which the Union has expressed for the safety of its members also does not appear to extend to the irreversible and potentially life threatening harm experienced by detainees in the AMC who have contracted Hepatitis C as a result of not being able to access clean needles because of a Union ban on their supply.

Vince McDevitt

ACT Regional Secretary of CPSU



Fact: CPSU Membership is open to employees in a wide range of industries including the Commonwealth and Territory public sectors

Do it with us, not to us

Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council



Dr Ngiare Brown is a familiar face around Winnunga and the ACT region. The well-respected Winnunga Doctor and Professor of Indigenous Health at the University of Wollongong, was re-appointed earlier this month to the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council.

Dr Ngiare's re-appointment was welcomed by Winnunga CEO Julie Tongs. "Professor Brown's re-appointment comes as no surprise to me as she is a strong advocate for our mob and understands the challenges of working in an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service. Professor Brown is a valued member of the Winnunga team and I know that her on the ground experience will assist in her decision making on the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council" Julie said.

Dr Ngiare joins fellow members Andrea Mason, Susan Murphy, Roy Ah See, Chris Sarra and Djambawa Marawill in their important role in engaging and providing the Australian Government with a range of advice to help deliver better outcomes in partnership with our mob, stakeholders and communities.

June Oscar is the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

June Oscar AO, a proud Bunuba woman from the Kimberley region of Western Australia has been announced as the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner to replace Mick Gooda who is now a Commissioner investigating the Northern Territory's youth justice system. June has devoted her career to improving the health and welfare of Indigenous people, particularly those living in remote areas. She is also well known for leading a successful campaign in the Kimberley region to restrict alcohol in a bid to curb Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder as well as violence, crime, injury and death.

Winnunga CEO Julie Tongs was pleased with June Oscar's appointment. 'I have known June since she was elected as one of the first ATSIC Commissioners in 1990 and I have enormous respect and admiration for her and what she has achieved. June's appointment as the first female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Commissioner is very fitting'. June will begin her five year term as Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner on April 3, 2017. Earlier this month, June was awarded an honorary doctorate from Edith Cowen University.

Professor Brown's re-appointment comes as no surprise to me as she is a strong advocate for our mob...

We cannot afford to keep drifting ...

'In part the unfinished business in the myriad of reports, commissions, inquiries and studies we as a nation have conducted over decades. We've had health reports, housing reports, education reports, welfare reports, community violence reports, law reform reports, economic development reports, employment and unemployment reports, Social Justice Commissioner reports, death in custody reports, the taking of children away reports, the list is almost endless ... and on top of this we've had assessments, evaluations, pilots, trials, umpteenth policies and policy approaches. And all of this paperwork would comfortably fill a couple of modest suburban libraries. And, it's on the shelf where most of them have stayed.

They've stayed there unread, unfinished, their recommendations unimplemented, and they're very much unloved'.

Professor Mick Dodson



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comfortably
fill a couple of
modest
suburban
libraries*

Winnunga Teams at Yass Touch Football Knockout

We had two touch football teams in the Yass Valley Touch Football Knockout. This touch tournament has been running for 29 years.

Yass Valley Touch Football Knockout is one of the largest touch football competitions in the world with this year boasting 110 teams - 39 Men's, 44 Mixed and 27 women's teams over the weekend of 28 and 29 January. There were novice players to current Australian representatives taking to the fields.

The Winnunga Sista's first time ever to play in a tournament, got to a semi-final and did themselves proud, losing to the team that went on to win the grand final in their division. The Sista's had a special guest playing with them, Bridie Duggan.

The Winnunga Possums mixed touch football team also got through to the semi-finals and had a great time gaining experience and exercise.

Bridie Duggan: 2016 Northern Territory Young Australian of the year for raising awareness about mental health within the younger generation. She also supports the Livin' Foundation and promotes mental health awareness.

Fact: Professor Mick Dodson AM is a member of the Yawuru peoples – the traditional owners of land and waters in the Broome area of the southern Kimberley region of Western Australia.

NDIS and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community

...the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community will be more adversely affected by those deficiencies than the community at large.

The deficiencies of the NDIS and most particularly its funding, are becoming increasingly clear and it is unsurprisingly, also clear that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community will be more adversely affected by those deficiencies than the community at large.

Winnunga AHS has been for many months investigating the development of a business case for registering as an NDIS provider. As a consequence of the nature and range of health issues typically impacting the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including people with a specific disability, there are a range of extra barriers facing them in accessing the NDIS.

While it is acknowledged there are potentially very good services available to the Aboriginal community through the NDIS, it is a challenge for an Aboriginal service provider such as Winnunga AHS to construct a business case within the current funding arrangements for the NDIS that would permit it to provide services as an NDIS provider.

Winnunga AHS believes that both the Commonwealth and ACT Governments need to look more closely at the support needed to ensure that Aboriginal managed and led services have the capacity to support Aboriginal people through the NDIS.



CRICKET ACT **INDIGENOUS SOCIAL CRICKET DAY**

SUNDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2017
Makin Place, Deakin Oval - 1:00pm to 4:00pm
ALL AGES . FREE EVENT

For more info contact Kris Britt at kris.britt@cricketact.com.au / 0412 837 781

Vacancies on Elected Body Filled

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith has appointed Mr Dion Devow and Ms Selina Walker to vacancies on the Elected Body. Winnunga AHS CEO Ms Julie Tongs has welcomed the appointments of Dion and Selina and congratulates them on their appointment.

Ms Tongs said the Elected Body had a very important role to fulfil and she looked forward to working with Dion and Selina to advance the interests of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Ms Tongs also said she was looking forward with interest to participating in the process which the Government was presumably developing for the implementation of the recommendations of the Janke Report into the Elected Body. Ms Tongs said that in addition to the range of recommendations for reform included in the Janke Report she would support a further amendment to the Act which would require the Minister to seek expressions of interest from the community before filling vacancies on the Elected Body.

To not do so, as was the case in the present instance, is to ignore a basic democratic principle, and also smacks of paternalism.

Growing up Aboriginal in Australia

Some might say we're all good at footy and dot paintings. Others might say we're all angry activists or aren't black enough! Aboriginal people in Australia are defined by many stereotypes and labels. And then there's all the other negative and abusive terms.

But where do these labels come from and is there any truth to them? What is it like to grow up Aboriginal in Australia? Do you call yourself an Aboriginal Australian? An Australian Aborigine? Or do you identify as Indigenous, First Nations, Murri, Koori, Noongar or something else? Black Inc. is calling for autobiographical accounts of growing up as an Aboriginal person in Australia for an anthology to be edited by Anita Heiss, author of *Am I Black Enough for You?*

The pieces can be written in a wide range of styles, voices and tones, as long as they are original, honest and reflective; we are not looking for abstract or sociological treatments. The anthology will be aimed both at high school students and general readers. The submissions can deal with any aspect of growing up as a Blackfella, and must be engaging while providing insight into the diverse lives of Aboriginal people in Australia today. We are looking for voices that defy, question or shed light on the usual stereotypes.

Submissions should be between 800 and 3000 words in length and must be received by 1 May 2017. The anthology *Growing up Aboriginal in Australia* will be published by Black Inc. in early 2018.

Please send submissions by email to: enquiries@blackincbooks.com

What is it like to grow up Aboriginal in Australia? Do you call yourself an Aboriginal Australian? An Australian Aborigine? Or do you identify as Indigenous, First Nations, Murri, Koori, Noongar or something else?

Winnunga Programs

Did you know that at Winnunga not only do we provide medical care but we have a whole lot of programs to promote good health and healthy lifestyles and best of all, these services are all free, no costs to you. Here are two of the programs you can come and check out in 2017.

Mums and Bubs Group/Parenting Group

The group provides information and support for new mothers, health education and lifestyle education (e.g. returning to the workforce, budgeting, nutrition, safety in the home, stress management and breastfeeding). Each week a different therapist from ACT Child Development Service will be in attendance (expect for the first Wednesday of each month). This includes an occupational therapist, physiotherapist and speech pathologist.

Winnunga also supports all parents, grandparents and carers.

When: every Wednesday

Time: 9.30am – 12pm

Want to know more information or find out when the next dates are - call 6284 6222.

No More Boondah

No More Boondah is a program that assists people to identify why they smoke, what triggers their smoking and what strategies can help to avoid or delay their smoking.

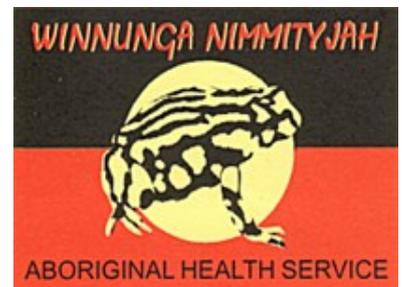
No More Boondah runs a weekly one-hour support group but can also provide phone support, outreach and follow up for people who find it difficult to attend the weekly session.

Through Winnunga's GPs we offer access to quit smoking products such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) - patches, inhalers and gum as well as oral treatments.

When: every Thursday

Time: 11am – 12pm

Want to know more information - call 6284 6222.



**TACKLING
SMOKING**

Promoting a healthy lifestyle

WINNUNGA NIMMITYJAH ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE

We will be providing information on all our Programs over a number of newsletters in 2017



Staff Profile

Name: Rodney Bloxsome

Position: Senior Home Maintenance Program Worker

Who is your favourite singer/band?
Creedence

What do you do on the weekends?
Look after and spend time with my kids and family

What is your favourite food?
Chinese

What do you like most about working at Winnunga?
Helping my mob and the people at Winnunga



What is your pet hate?
Nothing

Who is your most respected Aboriginal leader/hero and why?
Charles Perkins because he stood up for all our rights

