

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 10 June 2021

Fresh direction offers new hope for Indigenous health

New approaches and partnerships will place an Aboriginal-led research centre in a position to lead significant progress in improving Indigenous health in communities across the Northern Territory and South Australia.

In celebrating its 10th Anniversary, Flinders University's Poche SA+NT centre has unveiled a new high-profile 10-member Advisory Board and plans to form alliances with community organisations across the nation's central corridor to amplify the impact of health initiatives.

It's a bold new direction for the Aboriginal-led centre, announced at an event to celebrate the Anniversary in Darwin.

"Poche SA+NT is designed to drive local action and to promote national collaborations across a number of university partners, enabling us to work together on issues of priority that are identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders," Flinders University Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Stirling told the Darwin event.

"If there is a silver lining in relation to COVID-19, it is in demonstrating the magic of collaboration that can occur when we start to lay aside our artificial silos and start to work together. The unprecedented speed at which the virus was understood, tracked and new vaccines developed through scientists collaborating and openly sharing their knowledge across the world has provided a benchmark for science.

"We are taking the lessons learned and committing to collaboration to drive more extensive change more quickly."

The new Poche SA+NT Advisory Board draws together leaders from diverse sectors across the country to guide the Aboriginal-led centre on its journey forwards:

- Dr Leisa McCarthy (Co-Chair)
- Professor Jonathan Craig (Co-Chair)
- Professor Tom Calma AO
- John Rawnsley
- Erin Lew Fatt
- Britt Walker
- Shona Reid
- Dr Ram Vemuri
- John Reid
- Dr Maree Meredith

Co-Chair's Dr Leisa McCarthy and Professor Jonathan Craig said Poche SA+NT offered an opportunity to build new networks of knowledge and collaboration that could have a significant impact.

“The new Board is keen to draw in collaborations from the research sector, communities, health practitioners and other areas for Poche SA+NT to facilitate working relationships that positively impact health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” the Co-Chairs said.

“As an Aboriginal-led centre, Poche SA+NT have close links to communities, so we can get grass-roots insights into all the factors that are impacting on health and also we can hear what communities want the centre to work on as a top priority.”

Acting Director of Poche SA+NT, Dr Maree Meredith released a new prospectus encapsulating what the centre has to offer and has organised events throughout the week to identify partnership opportunities and potential collaborators.

“We are setting out to work differently. Our success won’t be measured by getting more staff, or more money, or a bigger building – but by how many people we can help and how much we can help them,” Dr Meredith said.

“Tablets and bandages are brilliant at directly treating some illnesses or wounds, but unless we get the full picture of how to build healthier lives for people, then those same old health issues and same treatments are just going to keep cropping up.

“Poche SA+NT are going to work with partners across Australia’s central corridor to build an understanding of the cultural factors that determine health, and the opportunity to recognise the role of traditional knowledge and culture alongside modern medical breakthroughs.”

Media contacts

Dr Maree Meredith Acting Director Poche SA+NT, E: maree.meredith@flinders.edu.au M: 0400 396 306

Karen Ashford, Director of Media and Communications E: karen.ashford@flinders.edu.au M: 0427 398 713