



Media Release

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For immediate release

Congress: 50 Years Strong!

Today Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Congress) is celebrating 50 years since its beginning in 1973. To mark the occasion, they are hosting the launch of Congress Arrulenye, the first of several events to celebrate this milestone.

Congress is an Aboriginal community controlled health service serving the Aboriginal people of Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and a number of remote Aboriginal communities across Central Australia.

Congress was formed at a meeting in Alice Springs on 9 June 1973, when over one hundred Aboriginal people from Alice Springs and remote communities met to talk about the need to safeguard and promote the interests of their communities.

Congress aims to be a voice for the Aboriginal people of Central Australia on all matters that concern them.

“The goal of speaking out on behalf of our mob has always been an important part of what we do.” Congress Chair Graham Dowling said.

In 1975, Congress started a Medical Service and began developing its comprehensive model of health care aimed at not just treating those who were ill, but also acting on the causes of illness.

“Many things have changed in the last fifty years.” Mr Dowling continued.

“...throughout that time, we have been guided by the dreams and aspirations of our community-elected Board members, and their dedication to justice and self-determination.”

To mark half of century of action to improve the health of Aboriginal people in Central Australia, Congress is holding a special event where the organisation will be presenting for the first time:

- *Congress Arrulenye (Congress from a long time ago)*, an interactive digital portal that allows people to browse or search photos, documents and other media from Congress’ history, while providing controls to protect and prioritise cultural safety.
- *Congress’ interactive digital timeline*, an application that allows users to travel through Congress’ history and view organisational and community milestones alongside major changes in the national socio-political landscape.
- *initial findings about significant improvements in the health status of Aboriginal people in Central Australia over the last 50 years* and the role of Congress in driving and supporting these changes.

Special guests will include the very first Congress Chair, Mr Neville Perkins OAM and current Chair, Mr Graham Dowling, along with past and present Directors, CEO's, health workers and other Congress staff.

The launch event will be held at the Araluen Art Centre from 3pm on Friday 9 June, and will also be live-streamed. Head to the Congress website for details.

A large community celebration is planned for October, with details to be released in coming weeks.

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Attached: Image of Mr Neville Perkins, OAM

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First Congress Chair, Neville Perkins OAM, in the 70's.