



The CRRMHQ marks the end of its first year.

This Newsletter coincides with the anniversary of the official commencement of the Centre. It is with a real sense of satisfaction and pride that we reflect on the achievements in our first year of operation and look forward with enthusiasm to the continuation of our existing projects, the development of new opportunities and the commencement of new initiatives.

The support and commitment from all those who have contributed to the success of the Centre is appreciated. Without our dedicated Board, Participants and staff who have worked tirelessly towards the Centre's initial establishment and early achievements, we would not be in such an advanced position at the end of our first year.

This edition of the Newsletter continues a series of profiles of and interviews with our Board members and we have pleasure in introducing Professor Cindy Shannon and Mr Mike Gilmour.

All of us at the Centre wish you all a safe and restful festive season and we will look forward to continuing our collaboration with you in 2008.

Jennifer Bowers
Chief Executive Officer, CRRMHQ

Pacific Island Mental Health network (PIMHnet)

PIMHnet was officially launched at a Meeting of Pacific Ministers in Vanuatu in March this year. Priority areas of activity for the WHO PIMHnet, identified in consultation with countries, include human resources and training, mental health policy and planning, legislation, advocacy, research and information and access to psychotropic medicines.

WHO has received three years of funding to support PIMHnet activities for 11 countries from the Ministry of Health and the Overseas Development Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, of New Zealand. Currently, 13 Pacific countries are actively engaged with the network. WHO, through its Western Pacific Regional Office and HQ offices, serves as the secretariat for PIMHnet.

CRRMHQ has, as one of its strategic goals, to facilitate mental health care and workforce initiatives to our Pacific neighbours. Resulting from discussions with representatives from WHO, in particular Dr Frances Hughes, WHO PIMHnet Facilitator and Dr Wang Xiangdong from WPRO of WHO, the Centre organised a meeting to explore a range of possible initiatives for consideration by members of the network including, for example, Mental Health First Aid, the expansion of mental health nursing education through the Fiji School of Nursing/JCU School of Nursing and the mentoring of medical professionals in the Pacific Islands to increase mental health knowledge and expertise.

One of the key outcomes of the meeting included agreement that the Centre would act as a catalyst and/or a facilitator for initiatives to be developed and made available for the WHO PIMHnet. This would include the development of a data base of resources and collaborative partners eg NGOs, mental health professionals, Universities, etc. who are interested in and able to develop sustainable mental health resources for the region.

If you are interested in learning more about these activities and would like to be involved or included in the data base, please contact Louise Livingstone on 07 4041 1961 or at loulivingstone@crrmhq.com.au.



Dr Wang Xiangdong, Western Pacific Regional Office of WHO and Dr Frances Hughes, WHO PIMHnet Facilitator.

More of Our Board Members

Following on from our last Newsletters, the Centre is pleased to introduce two more of our talented Board members.



Michael Gilmour Dip Acctg, MBA, FCPA, FAICD *Company Director, Accountant and Business Consultant*

Mike Gilmour is a professional accountant and experienced chief financial officer, and has particular experience in the health and manufacturing sectors. He currently works as a business consultant with Protiviti Australia. He is an experienced company secretary and director with a strong commitment to corporate governance and the not-for-profit sector. He is a director of Open Minds Australia (a provider of services to psychiatrically and intellectually challenged people) and Vice President of the Queensland Division of CPA Australia. He has been previously involved as a director, company secretary and/or in senior financial and commercial management positions with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Uniting HealthCare Group, Boystown Family Care and James Hardie Industries Ltd.

Q: Why did you agree to be a Board member?

A: Until the age of 20, I spent most of my life living in the Flinders Ranges/Port Pirie in the North of South Australia with my parents and five other siblings. As a result I have a strong interest in rural communities. My involvement with the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Queensland provides me with the opportunity to extend my interest in mental health organisations at a governance level. I am currently a Board member of Open Minds Australia, a Brisbane based NGO that provides support services and accommodation to people with mental and intellectual challenges as well as acquired brain injury. I was also given the opportunity to be involved with Queensland rural and remote communities with a health service, which built on my interest developed while I was the Company Secretary and Chief Financial Officer of the RFDS Queensland. Also, Jane, a cousin of my wife (Mel), suffered from an intellectual disability, and mentally never progressed passed the age of about a six year old. Jane often stayed with us as a family. Both Mel and I and our two daughters learnt to provide for Jane, and to experience her trust in us.

Q: What are the issues around rural and remote mental health that you consider to be the most pressing or important?

A: I am concerned about two issues:
Access to services. This is becoming significant issue due to the shortage of skilled individuals who are prepared to work in rural and remote locations.
Impact of the Drought. The impact of the drought not only hurts those involved directly on the land, but also those who provide services and labour to rural areas.
Both of these issues are being actively addressed by the Centre.

Q: Which area of activity currently being undertaken by the Centre interests you most?

A: The National Suicide Prevention Strategy project which aims to implement and disseminate successful Indigenous suicide prevention activities. My main interest in this project is the outreach that it will provide to Indigenous men and youth, and where needed providing hope and self confidence.

Q: Is there a new or different topic or issue which you have learnt about through your involvement with the Centre?

A: Yes, the reality of the difficulty of attracting qualified and suitable professionals to provide services to rural and remote areas. This was brought home to me very strongly when I attended sessions of the Rural and Remote Health Queensland Conference in Mt Isa in August. One of the primary aims of the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health is to accelerate the reach of mental health services into rural and remote areas. I know that as a Board we came away from that meeting with a strong understanding of this issue and a commitment to raise its priority within the Centre.

Q: As you lead such a busy life, do you do something special to maintain your mental health?

A: The best mental health exercise that I have is to spend a few hours or day with my three grand children. We either play kids games, bake cookies or I just read them stories. I enjoy being needed, and they enjoy manipulating me to get special treats.

More of Our Board Members *continued*



Professor Cindy Shannon BA, Grad Dip Ed, MBA, PhD

Director, Centre for Indigenous Health, University of Queensland

Cindy Shannon has recently been appointed to establish the Centre for Indigenous Health at the University of Queensland which will facilitate cross-disciplinary awareness of Indigenous Health issues and enable students from a range of health disciplines to gain first-hand experience of health in Indigenous communities. Prior to this appointment, Cindy has had extensive experience in the development and coordination of academic activities relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health programs in the Faculty of Health Science at the University of Queensland and also as an independent consultant. She has undertaken wide-ranging research and authored scientific publications relating to Indigenous health and Indigenous workforce training. Cindy has also been actively involved in the representation of Indigenous issues at both State and National levels of Government.

Cindy is a proud Aboriginal woman from Stradbroke Island who is passionate about helping her people achieve greatness. She has worked in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs for more than 25 years and has worked approximately 17 years in the health sector throughout her career.

With a strong background in social science and a doctorate in this area, she believes her life experience and knowledge of the Australian indigenous culture are the main assets she brings to the board.

While Cindy doesn't have any formal qualifications in dealing with mental health she says she has seen how mental health can affect individuals and families on a daily basis and it is the sadness surrounding these experiences and the need to make a difference that led her to be involved in the Centre.

"I've seen the impact of it and I've seen the fact that aboriginal health is a holistic concept that includes family wellbeing."

Cindy says there's a range of historical and cultural issues and there's also a lot of social issues that need to be addressed in the remote communities. "These people are mainly Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and accessing services is a real issue for them."

Cindy has grand visions for what the Centre could achieve. "The Centre can be a fantastic resource to a range of stakeholders. I think that it has a role in influencing government policy and government practices and I hope over time it can support local community based organisations and it can be an academic resource for research and workforce development," she said.

There's a very strong commitment to indigenous issues within the Centre and Cindy believes it's about working appropriately and closely with the people who can make a difference in the lives of others. "There's a whole range of sensitivities surrounding dealing with mental health issues in remote indigenous communities and they include the right protocols, cultural sensitivities, relationship sensitivities and just generally sensitizing the way we approach the issue," she said.

Cindy believes that she and Mick Gooda who is also an indigenous Australian on the Board of the CRRMHQ are giving the Centre the vital understanding they need to create positive outcomes for people in these remote communities.

"We (Mick and I) are helping shape the Centre's work in mental health and facilitating its links with key stakeholder groups. I have a strong involvement with the indigenous communities and I am extremely passionate about the work we are doing," she said.

***“Learning from the experts:
Building bridges to implement successful life promotion
and suicide prevention expertise across Aboriginal
communities in Queensland”***



Dr Arlene Laliberte

Significant progress has been made in all facets of this large project. Stage two of the Family Wellbeing Training is now completed. Project officers have been recruited for Yarrabah, Kowanyama and Hopevale. Family Wellbeing community workshops have been held in Kowanyama and Dalby and are scheduled for Hopevale in the coming weeks. Griffith University has drafted and reviewed the evaluation framework for the project.

Suicidologist, Dr Arlene Laliberte, has commenced her role in this project which is to implement successful life promotion and suicide prevention expertise across Aboriginal communities. She hopes to assist communities in gaining a better understanding of the meaning and dimensions of suicide and self-harming behaviours, the situations and warning signs that specifically indicate risk and the recovery experience.

Arlene has recently completed her PhD in community psychology at Université du Québec à Montréal, in which she specialized in suicide among Indigenous peoples of Canada. Arlene’s research interests lie in retrospective reconstruction of life trajectories following suicide and prevention of risk factors using an ecological perspective.

UPDATE

www.crrmhq.com.au

After quite a few weeks of designing and refining, our brand new CRRMHQ website is almost ready for its worldwide debut.

From mid November you’ll be able to find us at: www.crrmhq.com.au

As with the Centre itself, our website will be constantly evolving to reflect our projects, so keep an eye on it to keep up to date with what we’re doing.

Bendigo Bank Supports CRRMHQ

The Centre is delighted to welcome **Bendigo Bank** as a CRRMHQ Sponsor. With invaluable assistance from Pat Freney (Regional Manager for Far North Queensland), Bendigo Bank has not only provided sound advice and support to the Centre, especially when we were setting up our systems and accounts, it has also generously sponsored the fitout and furniture for our Boardroom.

Pat has worked within the banking and finance industry for some 42 years, and in June 2001 joined Bendigo Bank Limited (BBL) as Regional Manager for North Queensland. Since then Pat has been introducing the "Bendigo way of banking" into towns and communities from Mossman to Mackay.

Aside from its branches in larger towns, Bendigo Bank also has a range of Community Banks in smaller communities. The first of these was opened at Home Hill in 2005, followed by Community Banks at Mareeba, Dimbulah and Babinda. Over the next 6-9 months, four more new Community Banks will be opened in the FNQ region at Cardwell, Mission Beach, Ravenshoe and Georgetown.

"Bendigo Bank is all about servicing and supporting regional, rural and remote communities. It's what we do best" Pat says. "We're particularly interested in supporting Indigenous communities programmes."

Bendigo Bank Agencies in Indigenous Communities

Bendigo Bank is proud to offer face-to-face banking services in FNQ indigenous communities, with agencies in both Aurukun and Yarrabah. Both agencies are operated under joint agreements with local Aboriginal Councils who are the official BBL Agents and both agencies are managed and run by local Indigenous staff, who are employed by their local Aboriginal Council and have been fully trained by BBL and are accredited to meet all requirements of the Financial Services Reform Act (FSRA).

Bendigo Bank Indigenous Student School Attendance Incentive Programme: Aurukun

Bendigo Bank is committed to assisting in the education of indigenous students, creating positive longer term employment and career opportunities and strongly encouraging savings and budgeting plans within indigenous communities.

Bendigo Bank believes that young indigenous people are the vital "intellectual capital" of each of their communities, and that regular school attendance is the key to the success of these young people. With this in mind and in cooperation with the school at Aurukun, Bendigo Bank agreed to an incentive programme which rewarded all students who achieved 100% attendance each school term in 2007. In Term 1 of this year there were five students who met this school criteria and each of them was presented with a new bike and helmet.

In Term 2 there were two students who achieved 100% attendance, and they were also rewarded with bikes and helmets.



Kids from Aurukun school receiving bikes as a reward for their perfect school attendance.





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Australian Government
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Office for Aboriginal and
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