

Issue 2, May 2018

# Aboriginal Ageing Newsletter

## NeuRA talk:

Over the past year in Sydney, we have had the pleasure of getting the Aboriginal Ageing Team together for a wonderful set of workshops, prepared and delivered by our Coffs Harbour based research team of Mr Terry Donovan and Dr Wendy Allan. Terry Donovan, a Gumbaynggirr Elder, drew on his own experiences in community and Country to give an important cultural awareness seminar for NeuRA researchers. Terry has been extremely generous in inviting us to share in his knowledge, whilst reminding us that we must listen to our research partners and continue to share our findings within the community. We thank Terry for his time, insight and efforts.

Wendy's workshops have provided an introduction to qualitative research methods. She drew upon her experience in field research and her expertise in analysing the words and stories shared with her by participants (in the Koori Growing Old Well Study (KGOWS) and in her earlier research work). Wendy's research skills and background in understanding conceptions of grief and loss in Dunghutti Country are helping us to translate some of the findings about ageing well that we have gathered in our recent studies.



## More to come: Aboriginal Dementia – New grant and continued study

Our team of researchers, led by NeuRA's Dr Kylie Radford and Professor Tony Broe, have received \$3million from the NHMRC National Institute for Dementia Research. The funding will support the project 'Our MOB (Our Mind Our Brain): Dementia prevention across the life course with Aboriginal Australians'.

The 'Our MOB' project aims to better understand the causes of dementia in Aboriginal communities and generate culturally appropriate strategies for promoting healthy brain ageing.

These strategies will improve the wellbeing and quality of life for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ultimately aim to prevent or delay the onset of dementia.



## Contact us:

[AboriginalAgeing@neura.edu.au](mailto:AboriginalAgeing@neura.edu.au)

## Out and about:

Aboriginal Ageing Team members Lauren Poulos and Louise Lavrencic have developed and submitted their e-posters to the International Dementia Conference. They will be presenting these at the conference in Sydney during the first week of June. This opportunity helps spread the word about our work to service- providers in the aged care sector.





## Meet the team: Lauren Poulos

Lauren is heading the development and project coordination of our Online Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dementia Education program at NeuRA. We are very excited to see the development of this Internet resource which will be launched later this year. We spent some time with Lauren to find out about her work and joining the Aboriginal Ageing Team at NeuRA.



### Lauren, what made you interested in this job?

The project coordinator role for this project was appealing to me as I am a descendant of the Aboriginal people of Biripi located on the mid north coast. I saw the role as an opportunity to work with Aboriginal community leaders and health professionals to support the development, implementation and evaluation of an online Dementia resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As a Business System Analyst for over 10 years I had the skills and experience of working on projects and was able to use these skills as a project coordinator for this project.

As this role was part time it also provided the flexibility to work and spend time with my two young daughters.

### What has been the biggest eye-opener for you in your time in the Aboriginal Ageing Team?

The people that I work with (including team members, community members and partners) are all passionate about the dementia research and developing appropriate resources that will assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities living with dementia. They all genuinely want to work with and help the community.

### Why do you think is this work important?

This work is important as it translates the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dementia research results and information in a way that is culturally appropriate and appealing to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. As the dementia rate increases and the number of people impacted increases it is important to educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the condition so that they are aware of what it looks like, how to manage and support someone who is impacted by it.

### What message would you most like people to take away from the online education model?

The dementia journey doesn't have to be scary. If you have the right resources and support available it makes it easier to manage.

Don't be afraid to visit and support a person who has been diagnosed with dementia. Even though it appears that they don't know who you are they are still the same person. They need your help in feeling useful in an environment that is familiar.

### Workshop invitation:

Terry Donovan and Sharon Wall will be delivering the Living with Dementia, Culture and Spirit in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities workshop on July 6<sup>th</sup> at NeuRA. **Please email the Aboriginal Ageing Team for more information at [AboriginalAgeing@neura.edu.au](mailto:AboriginalAgeing@neura.edu.au)**

### Presenting our work:

Louise Lavrencic and Kylie Radford have had their two abstracts accepted for the Australian Dementia Forum in June. Louise will be presenting findings on cognitive test norms from the KGOWS and Kylie will be discussing the importance of partnerships in research, taking a look back at 10-years of KGOWS.