

# Talkin' Strong

KOORI HEALTH RESEARCH

The community newsletter of the *Onemda* VicHealth Koori Health Unit.

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Introducing our  
new name:

*Onemda*

VicHealth Koori  
Health Unit

This is the first edition of Talkin' Strong for 2005 and we thought that we would start the new year by announcing the new name for our Unit. Being the VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit was always a bit of a mouthful – and even though we were fond of this name it didn't quite express the commitment of us all to a culturally affirming program that was grounded in Koori values and ideas.

After a lot of talk amongst ourselves and with our key stakeholders we came up with a number of options for a new name. However, when we discussed some ideas with Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin she came back with another idea: Onemda. Onemda is a woi wurrung language word for love. It expresses a lot of our way of thinking about well-being. We are grateful and honoured for the suggestion. So our new name is the Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit.

# Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health Update

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### Convocation

The Cooperative Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) held its 2005 Convocation in Alice Springs on 6-7 April. The Convocation provided an opportunity for researchers, students, policy makers and practitioners to gather together to hear about successes to date and to discuss how to develop the five program areas (see below).

Both CRAH partners and industry (community health organisations and government agencies) were represented. As part of its commitment to involving industry organisations at all stages of the research, the CRAH has asked each partner to nominate industry representatives. Industry partners formed part of the SME (Small to Medium Enterprises) Forum which had an additional meeting on the 5 April for a pre-Convocation briefing.

At the time of printing we are unable to provide a full report but will do so in the next unit newsletter.

### Research Program Development

The development of the CRAH programs continues to progress. The program areas are:

- Comprehensive Primary Health Care, Systems and Workforce
- Healthy Skin (scabies and skin diseases)
- Social Determinants of Health
- Chronic Diseases
- Social and Emotional Well Being

Recently the CRAH called for nominations for Program Leaders from partner organisations. These nominations are being forwarded to the Board who will make a decision shortly. Program Leaders, representing both industry and research, will be respected experts in their field and able to encourage and support collaborative relationships and provide leadership and guidance to those within the program area.

Program Leaders will be supported in the development and implementation of each program by a Program Manager. Program Managers will be part of the CRAH staffing structure and are expected to be appointed soon. Jenny Brands has recently been appointed in the new role of Research and Development Manager to supervise Program Managers and oversee the programs development. These appointments are part of the general administration restructure to reflect the programmatic approach.

More information about programs (including brief summaries) can be found on the website by going to [www.craah.org.au](http://www.craah.org.au) and clicking on "Research" on the left hand menu and selecting "Programs of Research". Or contact Johanna Monk on 03 8344 0884 or [monkj@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:monkj@unimelb.edu.au).

## Have You Got The LIME Connection?

**The LIME Connection** is a landmark national workshop taking place in Fremantle, Western Australia from the 8th-10th June, 2005. LIME stands for Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education. Maybe we should call it the bush lime connection eh?

**The LIME Connection** is jointly organised by the CDAMS Indigenous Health Curriculum Project (which Onemda proudly hosts) and the Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association (AIDA).

**The LIME Connection** is concerned with the inclusion of Indigenous health into core medical curricula, and the recruitment and support of Indigenous medical students.

**The LIME Connection** will see over 100 invited delegates from medical schools, Indigenous community organizations, AIDA, state and federal governments, the Australian Medical Council (AMC), medical colleges and other stakeholders come together to discuss the issues, practices and actions required to ensure Indigenous health is on the agenda and curriculum of every Australian medical school.

The workshop will seek to build on the groundwork laid down by the **CDAMS Indigenous Health Curriculum Framework** by encouraging schools to consider curriculum planning and implementation, staff and resource requirements, accreditation and evaluation tools, and ways for staff to continue to network and develop once The Connection is finished.

As a first step to developing a network of medical educators, some Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander staff from medical schools recently got together (Brisbane, November 2004 – see photos) to discuss some of the issues we are all facing. The LIME Network of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff will be further developed at the LIME Connection.

One of the other exciting aspects of **The LIME Connection** will be the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives, and our Indigenous cousins from across the seas – Maori and Aboriginal Canadian peoples. While Maori and Aboriginal Canadians have taught Indigenous health in medical schools for longer and with more experience, they are also looking to collaborate with us in terms of accreditation and a national curriculum approach. In this respect, Australia is leading the way. This is exciting because it will be one of the first times medical schools will engage directly with the Indigenous community they serve.

It is hoped that at the end of **The LIME Connection**, a clear direction for every individual medical school, and a national strategic approach for sustainable curriculum and student support implementation will be identified and adopted.

If you haven't got **The LIME Connection** yet, you might just want to keep your eyes and ears peeled for more information. Black, white and lime go together, don't they?

Contact Gregory Phillips at [glphil@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:glphil@unimelb.edu.au) or phone (03) 8344 0813 if you want to know more.



## Anke van der Sterren

'From crisis response to community health: improving the well-being of the Victorian Aboriginal Community'

The central question of my research is 'How can Aboriginal Community-controlled Health Organisations improve their capacity to incorporate community-targeted health and well-being approaches into their service delivery?'. The fieldwork is based at the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and its member organisations.



The research will help VACCHO to develop ways in which it can best support member organisations in these activities.

a.vandersterren@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

## Brian McCoy

'Kanyirninpa: health, masculinity and wellbeing of desert Aboriginal men'



*Kanyirninpa*, or holding, exists as a deeply important value for desert peoples. It is revealed when older people take responsibility to look after younger people. My research explored the male expression of *kanyirninpa* and how it is evident when young men are involved in petrol sniffing, Australian Rules football and prison.

Thesis submitted July 2004; passed December 2004; awarded PhD March 2005; copy available from CSHS

## Emma Kowal



"The impact of the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda: An ethnography of public health research"

My project concerns white Australians who seek to reverse the colonial power relations that have dominated the Australian nation. It focuses on white researchers who work to improve Indigenous health in the Northern Territory. Through participant-observation and interviews, I will examine how white researchers create and maintain subject positions from which they can act ethically in Indigenous health.

emma.kowal@menzies.edu.au

## Yin Paradies

'Racism, stress and the health of Indigenous Australians'



My PhD examines the association between perceived racism, as a form of stress, and a range of health

outcomes for Indigenous people living in the Darwin area. I review the role of stress and racism in Indigenous health. The thesis will also consider critical epidemiological and Indigenous approaches to health research, the use of 'race' in Indigenous Australian health research, and the possibilities for anti-racist interventions in an Australian context.

yinp@menzies.edu.au

## Peter Renkin

'From segregated institution to self-managed community: the contribution of community social work practice towards Aboriginal self-management at Bung Yarnda/Lake Tyers'

In 1970-1971, I worked at Bung Yarnda/Lake Tyers as a community social worker engaged



in an episode of planned social change when the Aboriginal residents were promised, and then obtained, ownership of the Aboriginal crown reserve land and given self-management responsibility of the property.

Based on critical social theory, my research adopts a 'decolonizing methodologies' approach in order to explore, from my perspective as the worker, what happened to the residents of the former Aboriginal Station when utilising the processes of enactment of legislation and community development. Both autobiographical and historical methods of data collection are used.

## Rosemary Mann

'Health in the borderlands'

My research begins at the health clinic in the 'settlement' of Yuendumu in the Northern



Territory where I take a critical look at biomedical frameworks of health promotion and disease prevention. I am interested in finding a place for Indigenous health by looking at Aboriginal experiences of health and illness in

the context of everyday life and in the relationships and connections, both locally and nationally, between people, place and identity.

r.mann1@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au



## Fran Edmonds

'The practice and knowledge of south-east Australian Aboriginal art and its relationship to Community well-being'

This project is a collaborative research project, which aims to

provide a 'story' of south-east Australian Aboriginal art. Research methods, including archival research and oral histories, will be used to find out about art and its importance for Community well-being. The recorded material will be held at the Koorie Heritage Trust's oral history unit.

f.edmonds@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

## Claire Benkemoun

'An investigation into the social determinants affecting existing inequities in Koori maternal and child health'



My project is an investigation into the social determinants, in particular the role of access to care, influencing the existing health inequities in Koori maternal and child health. It aims to

propose a number of culturally sensitive and affirming solutions to improve maternal and child health outcomes for Kooris in Melbourne.

c.benkemoun@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

## Karen Adams

Koori kids and Otitis Media

Otitis Media (ear infection) is the major cause of hearing loss in Indigenous Australians, commencing within weeks of life. Predominantly, responses to Otitis Media involve identification and treatment of the disease through screening of school-aged



children. This PhD proposes an approach to the prevention of chronic disease consistent with Koori definitions of health. Principles of Aboriginal mathematics are utilized to develop an understanding of how social networks impact

on childrens' ear and broader health. This will assist inform an evaluated community-based intervention aimed at strengthening child health.

k.adams1@unimelb.edu.au

# Teaching about Koori Health

*"There's a lot of understanding about taking what you have learnt back to the community"*  
Sam Crane, Kurnai man.

Sam Crane is enrolled in the Master of Social Health (MSH) program at Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit. When we asked Sam how he was finding the course he said he was impressed by how the course links to what is going on at the community level. He suggests that the course is "very open and very broad," in that, there are plenty of opportunities to pursue Koori health issues that you are interested in, while receiving useful input and support from staff. In particular, Sam says that the Aboriginal health course explored relevant problems and ways of working in the community, "there's a lot of understanding about taking what you have learnt back to the community." Sam also thinks that there is a "good partnership" between lecturers and students. According to him you are not "dictated too", there's a lot of "give and take", in that, as a Koori student you are able "to share your knowledge, and the feedback of the lecturers allows you to look in other different direction as well." Sam won a DHS In-train Scholarship to fund his study program and will complete his course in the middle of next year. (Congratulations also go to Di Fitzgerald who also won a DHS In-train Scholarship to undertake the MSH.)

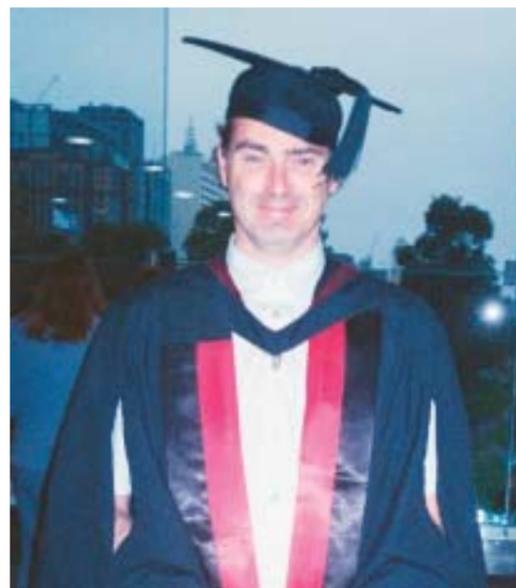
Shaun Ewen and Bill Genat teach the four core Koori health subjects within the Master of Social Health (Aboriginal Health). These subjects are: Koori Health: Past to Present; Policy Processes in Aboriginal Health; Ethical Practice in Aboriginal Health; and, Critical Debates in Aboriginal Health. We are in the second year of teaching the post-graduate program and the courses are becoming more popular, especially with Master of Public health students who can also include these subjects in their course.

Staff within the Koori Health Unit teach Aboriginal health in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. We also collaborate with lecturers of other subjects who wish to include Aboriginal health issues in their subjects. Where possible, community members are included in the teaching of students. Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin, Uncle Colin Walker and his nephew Des from Cummeragunja, Carolyn Briggs from the Royal Women's Hospital, Aunty Joan Vickery

from the Koorie Heritage Trust and Lisa Briggs from VACCHO have all talked to the students. In addition, from the Unit, Ian Anderson, Angela Clarke, Viki Briggs, Karen Adams, Gregory Phillips, Nicole Waddell and Kyllie Cripps have provided input and support.

Undergraduate teaching is primarily focused on medical students, and Shaun co-ordinates the Aboriginal health content across the curriculum. The content includes: Koori concepts of family, community and culture; healthcare funding; Koori definitions of health and well-being; comparisons of Koori and settler populations and health statistics; Koori patient interviewing practice; Koori history and health including engagement with the medical profession; Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services; engagement with Koori patients concerning diabetes and nutrition; field visits to the Koorie Heritage Trust and with Koori hospital liaison officers; an Indigenous children's health symposium and, optionally, a supervised, in-depth investigation of a Koori health issue. As described elsewhere in the newsletter, the Medical Faculty has recently made available several bursaries for Koori students.

All in all, our teaching program at the Unit continues to expand, more Aboriginal students are enrolled, sources of support for Aboriginal students have increased and, in the words of Sam Crane, learning has "strong relevance to the community."



## The University of Melbourne

### FACULTY OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY and HEALTH SCIENCES

#### Postgraduate Capacity Building Research Bursaries for Indigenous Australians commencing in 2005

**The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences is pleased to offer bursaries for Indigenous Australians for postgraduate coursework programs, with an intention to lead to research.**

**The bursaries provide support for students of Indigenous Australian descent. The awards are aimed at capacity building for research.**

#### Benefits

- Bursary – Fee Remission
  - Partial or full fee remission will be available to eligible students. The extent of the fee remission will depend upon the number of eligible students applying in any given year.
- A relocation grant of \$2,500 to recipients who are moving from interstate in order to study at the University of Melbourne. A separate application form is not required for the relocation grant.

#### Duration of Awards

Students undertaking a full fee paying certificate, postgraduate diploma or masters by coursework program with the intention and potential to lead to higher degree by research may receive the bursary for the standard duration of the course they are undertaking. No extensions to the bursary will be possible.

#### Eligibility Criteria

Bursaries are available to Indigenous Australians.

Applicants must be planning to commence or be currently enrolled in a postgraduate coursework program in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne. Applicants must fulfill selection criteria, and be accepted in an approved course.

Applicants must provide a written statement of about 300 words as part of the application about how successful completion of a coursework program will enhance their research capacity.

#### Further Information, application forms and Bursary Information:

See website - <http://www.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au/courses/scholarships/>

**Contact:** Mrs Joan Y Vosen, tel. 8344 4019, fax 9347 7854, email [jyv@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:jyv@unimelb.edu.au)



The Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development is the Indigenous student support unit at the Victorian College of the Arts, an affiliate of the University of Melbourne. The Wilin Centre was established in 2002 after the kind donation from an anonymous donor to support the Centre achieve its ambitious seven year strategic plan. The plan focuses on five areas:

- Cultural awareness,
- Student support,
- Student access and recruitment,
- Community development and relationship building, and
- Infrastructure

The Wilin (wilin means 'fire' in woi wurrung language) Centre has an Advisory Committee chaired by senior Wurundjeri elder Aunty Joy Murphy-Wandin. Kutcha Edwards, Treaahna Ham and Wayne Thorpe are three of the many community based Indigenous artists who give advice to the Centre.

Fire is symbolic as it represents the burning artistic and creative passion our students embody. The creative fires burn bright for our students and alumni artists, and we wish to fan their flames and encourage a new generation and regeneration of Indigenous artists to study and hone their skills at the Victorian College of the Arts. Our program of events will exemplify the journey of fire as the Centre becomes a place for 'Keeping the Fire Burning'!

The Wilin Centre is a place for support, creation, family and reviving of spirit. From the students and staff of the Centre I wish you all a big wominjeka to the Wilin Centre in 2005, our events and our services.

Michelle Evans, Head of the Wilin Centre.



As part of the Dean's welcome for new medical students, Aunty Joy Murphy-Wandin also welcomed the new students. Aunty Joy told of the Wurundjeri people as part of the Kulin nations, on whose land the University was built, and told of the need for skilled doctors in terms of Aboriginal Health. The welcome for country is an important part of the experience of starting medical school, and is a theme which is built on throughout their course, in terms of acknowledging Aboriginal people and their place in Australian life.

# Congratulations

## CONGRATULATIONS AUNTY JOAN VICKERY!

Aunty Joan was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia Medal in recognition of her many years of dedicated work in Aboriginal health. As most people would be aware, Aunty Joan worked (and still makes significant contributions even though she has retired) in Aboriginal health. She is particularly respected for her work in the Koori community for her innovations in diabetes health. The Unit invited Aunty Joan to a special morning tea in honour of her well-deserved award.

Well done Aunty, we are very proud of you!!!



## CONGRATULATIONS KYLIE CRIPPS!

Congratulations to Kylie Cripps on graduating with a PhD at Monash University on the 17th of March. Her thesis was titled 'Enough family fighting: Indigenous community responses to addressing family violence in Australia and the United States'. Kylie is a Pallawah women, and joined the Unit in 2004 as a postdoctoral research fellow.



# Community Profile

## Luke Murray

Luke is a Wemba lad and is the Marketing and Recruitment Officer at the Centre for Indigenous Education (CIE) at the University of Melbourne. He is also the CIE's longest serving staff member and has been around the Uni in one form or another for 10 years. At present you will find Luke busy on the road visiting secondary schools, job fairs and careers markets, both around Victoria and interstate. He is also hoping for the University become a major sponsor of the Croc Festival at Swan Hill in 2005. Keep an eye out for this. He also hosts school groups on campus and cooks a wicked bbq. He is usually the first person you talk to if you want to study at Melbourne Uni and can offer you advice on how to apply, which course is best for you, accommodation options, financial assistance and any other general information on the University.

Luke grew up in Melbourne and Shepparton but has also lived in WA, Tassie and Queensland. He loves keeping fit, food, watching sport and travelling to far away places, and has just recently got married. He is the oldest of 12 siblings.

Luke believes that health, education, cultural heritage and land rights are the key to Indigenous survival today. He, one day, wants to drive a flash 4WD and have heaps of kids to add to his already huge family.



# New Staff

## Helen Smallwood

Helen Smallwood is currently the Project Officer with the Centre of Excellence in Indigenous Tobacco Control based within the Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit.

Helen has completed a BA in Social Science from LaTrobe University (1996), a Post Graduate Diploma in Arts: Social Research Methods, University of Melbourne (1998), and a Master of Social Science: Policy and Management, RMIT University (2001). Prior to her present position, Helen worked as a social and policy researcher in both the community and tertiary education sectors, including Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, The Brotherhood of St Laurence, and the Centre for the Study of Health and Society. The majority of her work has focused upon addressing issues of social justice and, in particular, social and policy issues affecting disadvantaged people within our community. These issues have included: welfare, health, education, utilities, and employment.

# Are you on our mailing list?

If you would like to receive our newsletters, and to be informed about workshops, seminars and courses that we run at the Unit, please fill in this form and mail or fax it to the address below. All questions are optional but it would help us to know what aspects of our work you might be most interested in.

## PLEASE PRINT

Name: .....

Organisation: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....

Phone(.....)..... Fax(.....).....

Email: .....

Are you Koori?  Yes  No

Do you currently work in a Koori community organisation?

Yes  No

How would you currently describe your current area of work or study:

Does your work/study involve any of the following: (Please  as many as apply)

Health service delivery

Health policy

Health research

Other research

Koori education

Other education

Koori community service

Other (please specify)

Do you have any particular interests that we might be able to help you with? (eg. children's health, evaluation, research methods, Koori history)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE



VicHealth



## Where you will find us

*Onemda* VicHealth

### Koori Health Unit

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