



POCHE
INDIGENOUS HEALTH NETWORK

LAUNCH

Speech by Prof Tom Calma AO

Chair and Patron of the Poche Indigenous Health Network – 27 May 2015

Minister Sussan Ley, Members and Senators, Mr Reg and Mrs Sally Richardson, Directors and Friends,

I acknowledge that we are on the land of the Ngunnawal Peoples and I pay respect to their elders, past and present and acknowledge their youth, and for that matter all youth, who will be our future leaders, custodians of our cultures, histories, stories and languages.

Thank you Reg. Your leadership has been fundamental to founding each Poche Centre and now our Network. The Poche Centres for Indigenous Health are an excellent example of the power of partnership in achieving real change and closing the gap in life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

The Poche Centre model is unique. We work with leading researchers and students to pool their knowledge with communities to find workable, sustainable and affordable solutions to wicked problems in Aboriginal health. Across our six Poche Centres we tackle problems such as social and emotional well-being, mental health, chronic disease, workforce development, health literacy, oral health, specialist medical support, allied health, and health promotion.

Poche Centres always work collaboratively with communities and we bring together the resources of philanthropy and government.

All of the Poche Centres share a unified vision, yet work independently of one another - focusing on the priorities of each Centre.

- NSW focusses on Rural and Remote health
- South Australia on health workforce
- Northern Territory on building health literacy
- Western Australia on finding solutions to complex mental health issues
- Victoria on developing the next generation of Aboriginal health leaders, and
- Queensland is focussing on urban health.

Time does not allow me to cite the many early achievements of each Centre but we have most of the directors and their university colleagues here so they can share with you their achievements and aspirations.

We have:

- Ms Kylie Gwynne from Poche NSW
- Assoc Prof Wendy Edmondson from Poche SA
- Assoc Prof Kerry Taylor from Poche NT, and
- Prof Jill Milroy from Poche WA.
- Absent are Prof Shaun Ewen of Poche Vic / Tas, and
- Prof Cindy Shannon from Poche Qld.

I would also like to acknowledge Prof Dennis McDermott the substantive director of Poche SA who is currently working offline.

The Network and what it does

The Poche Network is an important initiative to advance Indigenous health in Australia. We turn research... the very best evidence... into outcomes. We do this by harnessing the best minds around the country to focus on wicked problems and creative solutions that will deliver lasting benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and in turn, the Australian economy.

The Poche Indigenous Health network has been established in recognition that some issues are better addressed at a national level. Our Network will have a highly visible public presence and contribute to genuine change at the grass roots and policy levels. It will also amplify the efforts of each existing Centre, creating a connected public presence.

The aims of the Network are:

- Translating research and evidence so it can be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities in the field
- Influencing government and public policy
- Promoting the research findings of each Poche Centre
- Identifying and supporting projects of national significance
- Profiling the work of the Poche Centres and their collective impact

The Poche Network's activities will be linked by a website, www.pochehealth.edu.au, providing a convenient, central point of contact for all Poche Centres and a storehouse of knowledge for anyone interested in Indigenous health.

As Reg has already said, Greg and Kay have an enduring commitment to improving Aboriginal health and I am very proud to be the Patron and Chair of their Poche Indigenous Health Network.

Part of Greg's vision was to support Aboriginal people to lead the next generation in health. Over the past seven years the Poche family through their Poche Centres across Australia have supported 72 scholars - a truly Amazing achievement. I now have the pleasure of introducing Simone Sherif.

Simone is one of our scholars and she exemplifies the importance of practical support to assist young people with promise to meet their goals.

Simone is a Wotjobaluk woman who was born and raised in Wagga Wagga on Wiradjuri country. Simone, a Project Officer at the SAX Institute in Sydney, completed her Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion in 2013.

She did so well in her studies that she earned a place in the highly competitive Master of Public Health at the University of Sydney.

Simone, who will complete her MPH this year will tell us a bit about her experience as a Poche Scholar. Simone