

Environmental health in SA: what's happening and where to next

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This presentation is about Aboriginal environmental health in SA. We have existing Aboriginal Environmental Health Workers (AEHWs) working for our Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs). However, a number of our workers have now got substantive employment through our regional Aboriginal organisations, which leads me to look at future training of AEHWs for SA remote and rural communities.

AEHW strategy

AEHWs are identified and employed by local ACCO's to engage with the Community in promoting environmental health practices. SA Health maintains AEHWs in all participating communities in order to provide services such as maintenance and education in:

- Safe water
- Food safety
- Pest control
- Waste management
- Household hardware maintenance
- Effluent disposal
- Dog control
- Promoting the broad environmental health positives across communities

Locations and organisations

AEHWs are currently working in:

- Scotdesco Aboriginal Community (Penong)
- Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Service Aboriginal Corporation
- Pika Wiya Aboriginal Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (Port Augusta)

Pika Wiya covers a large area from Port Augusta up through the Flinders Ranges - Maree, Copley, Nepabunna Iga Warta, Hawker, Quorn, and Roxby Downs.

- Nunyarra Aboriginal Health Service (Whyalla)
- APY Lands

Other Aboriginal communities receiving Aboriginal environmental health services and/or resources:

- Umoona Tjutagku (Coober Pedy)
- Moorundi ACCHS (Murray Bridge)
- Point Pearce Aboriginal Community (Yorke Peninsula)
- Barmera/Berri Aboriginal Health Service
- Gerard Aboriginal Community (Berri Riverland)
- Oodnadatta Dunjbar Aboriginal Community

Seeking support for AEHW training for the future, 2018-2019, from:

- Oodnadatta Dunjbar Aboriginal Community
- Umoona Tjutagku (Coober Pedy)
- Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service
- Barmera/Berri Aboriginal Health Service

Partners who assist our AEHWs are:

- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- SA Health employees working within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care areas and other relevant areas
- Housing SA employees
- Regional and Remote SA Human Services and Family and Children's service provider staff

A current project 2016-19

Training of AEHWs is a work in progress and we are seeking to have a Registered Training Organisation here in South Australia to put the training on Scope as training modules that can be utilised by other states.

We are planning to deliver Indigenous Environmental Health Certificate II and Certificate III for existing SA Health employees across our regions to strengthen their current knowledge within their roles.

Both Certificate II and III are being contextualised to ensure that learning is supported by applying relevant and current local issues to each cohort.

What's in it for the participants?

Elevated skills and knowledge relevant to the work of environmental/community health care practitioners.

- Frame the structure for career/educational pathways for employees
- Peer to peer relationships between workers via collaboration, networking and sharing knowledge with each other.

What will it achieve?

- Transition awareness of environmental health across communities and broader acknowledgement of the importance of environmental health
- Take-up of strategies that deal with resolving place based environmental health issues will result in healthier and safer communities
- Benefits to other service providers in terms of alleviating issues from lack of environmental health strategies

Participants take away

- Builds individual participant capacity and workforce development within the environmental health arena
- Supports SA Health program providers to strengthen their commitment to environmental health within their geographical areas
- Supports and promotes accountability
- Focuses on and works towards sustainability
- Addresses the identified needs specific to an Indigenous cohort.

My presentation then showed photos of AEHWs at work in their communities, and photos of No Germs On Me resources.

The No Germs On Me program has been promoted throughout South Australia as part of a national environmental health program, which is also delivered in other states and territories. This program has been well received in South Australia, to encourage youngsters to wash their hands and faces. It is an ongoing program to improve Aboriginal health in our regional and remote communities.

For more information

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Glossary

ACCHS Aboriginal community controlled health service

ACCO Aboriginal community controlled organisation

AEHW Aboriginal Environmental Health Worker