

The value of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet

Millie Harford-Mills, Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet

Good morning, thank you for having me here to speak to you today. Before I begin my presentation, I would first like to pay my respects to the Traditional Owners of the land we are meeting on today, the Yirriyangji people, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Today I'm going to give you a brief introduction, or reintroduction for some of you, to the Indigenous environmental health practitioners portal on the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet. I'll be showing you how the portal can be a useful tool for you in your day-to-day work and the ways in which you can use the portal for sharing your information with other people in the sector. Lastly, I will also be talking about the future of the portal, as we have some exciting new developments in the works.

The Indigenous environmental health practitioners portal sits on the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet website. The HealthInfoNet was established in 1997 by the late Professor Neil Thomson, to make research and knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health easily accessible by anyone working or studying in this field. HealthInfoNet is funded by the Department of Health, and based at Edith Cowan University at Mt Lawley, in Perth, WA. Some of you may have seen the HealthInfoNet, and use the environmental health portal in your work already. WGATSIEH originally recognised the need for a hub for information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environmental health quite a few years ago now, and out of this, the environmental health portal was born. We have been funded by enHealth since 2009, and we're grateful for their support.

You can see on the slide here the home page of the environmental health portal. The current design of this portal came from feedback provided by delegates at the 2009 NATSIEH conference, some of whom might be in the audience with us today. These same delegates also identified the key sub-topics for this portal, which include:

- Water supply
- Waste management
- Housing and community
- Food safety
- Personal hygiene
- Communicable diseases
- Animal management
- Caring for country
- Emergency management.

To show you how the content for each topic is laid out, I'll take you briefly through one topic section, housing and community. The housing and community section covers lots of different kinds of information including housing maintenance, overcrowding, plumbing, asbestos control, and more. There are seven main navigation points highlighted in the yellow box. The structure of each sub-topic for the portal is identical, so once you know how to get around one section, you should be confident using them all. I won't discuss all seven sections, will show you some of the key areas you might be interested in.

The key facts section is one of our most popular areas on the portal. The key facts are written in plain language, and aim to provide an easy to understand background to the topic. Key information covered in the housing and community key facts includes:

- the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in

terms of housing and communities

- types of housing
- role of Indigenous environmental health practitioners in housing and communities
- healthy living practices.

The programs and projects section is a collection of programs that explore housing and community among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Each entry contains information about what the program aimed to do, any outcomes, contact details, related or evaluated publications if available, and links to further information. We hope that the programs and projects section can provide a starting point for those looking to implement a program or project in their local community.

The section on health promotion resources lists resources on housing and community relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The home page will take you directly to a list of resources, which includes content such as leaflets, posters, videos, comics and more. These resources are aimed at the general public and can be used by environmental health practitioners when working with communities and families.

We also collect health practice resources, such as guidelines, toolkits, manuals and other resources. These are designed to up-skill or support practitioners when working in the area of environmental health.

Under publications, you will find a list of publications which look at housing and community among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These are divided into general and specific topics, and include articles, reports and other literature. At the moment, we have around 1,400 publications on Indigenous environmental health on our site.

The workforce section provides workforce-related information for all of the environmental health topics (water, waste, animal management etc), including:

- Courses and training
- Job opportunities
- Funding
- Conferences, workshops and events
- Professional associations, and
- Related publications.

As part of the work we do on the portal, we also distribute a monthly environmental health newsletter. These contain information about what is new on the website, including news, job opportunities, publications and resources, and programs. If you'd like to sign up, come and see me at the HealthInfoNet exhibition booth; it only takes 2 minutes.

Now I'd like to talk about the future of the environmental health portal.

Recently, the HealthInfoNet team have been moving towards making our website responsive. This means that it will be much easier to use on a tablet or a phone, because it will adjust to fit the screens of those devices.

As part of this process, we've also been working on improving some of the other features of our website, such as the search feature, and the ways in which you can get around the website. We're hoping to have this ready for launch by January next year.

Please note that the screenshots you see on the next few slides are a work in progress - and the design and layout of these haven't been finalised yet. These images are there to show the changes in how you use it.

On the main *HealthInfoNet* site, we are changing the way you can get around it, so it's easier to work out where you can find content relevant for you. There will be five key navigation sections, which are:

- Search
- Learn
- Promote and practice
- Connect and engage, and
- About us.

Not all the sections are available yet. Environmental health will sit in the learn section, under determinants.

One of the key sections I mentioned is search. The search feature on the new website will allow you to search across the range of our publications, resources, programs, and other content on the site, and find content you are looking for much more easily, with more options for finding specific content. For example, if you wanted to find content on the *HealthInfoNet* site that was about dog health in Queensland, at the moment, there is no option to do that easily. On the new site, there will be ways of cross-searching all of the content we currently have.

What we've also been working on to help improve the way you can find your way through the pages of the portal is adding some pre-set content breakdowns. Here you can see some of the content breakdowns for the publications section of the housing and community section in the new portal, which are:

- Home safety
- Infrastructure and maintenance
- Overcrowding, and
- Power supply.

Clicking on these headings will filter out the content in each publications list, to make it easier to find things which are relevant to you. These can then be further filtered by things like state or document type.

In addition to the changes I've mentioned, as part of the portal re-launch, we'll be including a new section on climate change. There has been a lot of information coming out recently about the impact that climate change will have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and this section will aim to capture that information. If you are aware of any organisation doing work in this area, then we'd love to hear about it.

There are also a number of other changes you might see when the new website goes live. We're hoping overall that these changes really enhances the experience for our users, and makes the website a much better resource for you to use. It might take a little time to get used to the changes; however, we'll be on hand to answer any questions you might have, and we'll also be running a series of webinars to guide people through the new site.

Thanks for listening to me today. Before I finish, I'd like to emphasise the importance of communication between you and the *HealthInfoNet*. We love to hear from people across the country about what you're doing in your communities, and we're very happy to promote your work, job opportunities, or resources. If you'd like to get in touch with me to share any information, then please check out my details on the slide here.

We also have an exhibition booth, so if you'd like further information, or just to have a chat, then please come and say hello!

For more information

Millie Harford-Mills
Research Officer
Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet
2 Bradford Street
Mount Lawley, WA 6050
m.harford-mills@ecu.edu.au

Glossary

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| NATSIEH | National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health |
| WGATSIEH | Working Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health |