Launch of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan

Nicola Slavin & Brendon Sherratt, NT Department of Health & Adam McEwen, Ministry of Health NSW

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Action Plan has been developed by the enHealth Working Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health. The Action Plan represents a commitment by enHealth and the Australian Health Protection Committee to improve environmental health conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is intended to provide state and territory jurisdictions with guidance in developing and implementing evidence based, culturally appropriate environmental health strategies and programs.

Safe Houses, Healthy Families

Alan Blackman, QLD

This presentation demonstrates how safe houses will lead to healthy families. The presentation covers hand hygiene, overcrowding, pets and sanitation and the impact each has on the household environment. The main focus is about germs and potential outcomes regarding family and community health if the household environment is not controlled.

A remote environmental health perspective - Mapoon

Patrick Mene & Willie Ase, Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council, QLD

Mapoon community is situated approximately 76 Km from the Rio Tinto mining town of Weipa on the west coast of Cape York in Far north Queensland. Mapoon is located on traditional lands of the Tjungundji people with five other tribes also bordering the Mapoon township. Being a remote community, residents and members alike are often faced with issues relating to environmental health and animal management in a way that greatly differs from our urban brothers and sisters. Mapoon’s Indigenous environmental health worker and animal management officer will display and showcase various aspects of their roles in their community to achieve healthy outcomes to both humans and animals alike, with an emphasis on the remoteness, issues that arise and how they are managed and rectified.

Building our partnerships for healthier outcomes: environmental health and tenancy support

Raymond Christophers, Ken Bin Jacob, Chicky Clements, Louie Bin Maarus, Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation, WA

Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation is a not for profit, Aboriginal owned and controlled organisation delivering services for Aboriginal people across the Kimberley. Our key focus is to provide services and programs for the direct relief of poverty, sickness, suffering, distress and misfortune, to help and encourage traditional culture, and to assist in the provision of care and support to Aboriginal people affected by social injustices. This has led the organisation to seek ways to improve outcomes for local communities in the environmental health field, and to explore the benefits of partnering with housing programs. This presentation looks at how an environmental health service provider has taken on two tenancy support programs and how our partnerships with the Departments of Health and Housing have significantly increased the scope and scale of environmental health improvements.

Housing inspections in partnership with the Department of Housing: case study Mullewa

Mark Chadwick & Colin Jones, City of Greater Geraldton, WA

During 2012 the City of Greater Geraldton approached the state housing agency to conduct joint inspections of homes following ongoing concerns about standards and living conditions in Mullewa, a small town 100kms from the regional centre. The result of the joint inspections has developed a stronger relationship between the two agencies, a greater understanding by a housing organisation of priority health risks in the home and efforts to improve environmental health conditions for the residents.

SA Aboriginal Environmental Health Programs

Phillip Graham, SA Department for Health and Ageing, SA

The Department for Health and Ageing, SA, coordinates the delivery of environmental health programs for Ceduna/Koonibba Health Service, Scotdesco Community, Umoona Tjutgaku Health Service, Pika Wiya Health Service - all Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations who have the workers living and working in their own communities. The workers will present program activities and good news stories.

Animal Health and Housing: An Integrated Indigenous Environmental Health Approach

Francis O’Donahoo, Flinders University, SA

The prevalence of parasites and their impact on the educational attainment and growth of children in remote indigenous communities is not widely understood. Who is responsible and how it should be managed is often a complex interaction between community residents and multiple service providers. Knowing how parasites and associated diseases are spread and impact on the health and development of children is important. Micronutrient deficiencies, common parasitic infections, poor vision and hearing, and disability can have a detrimental effect on school enrolment and attendance, and on cognition and educational achievement. Despite the implementation of infrastructure upgrades and sanitation measures, and an increase in ‘monitoring’ child health outcomes, research has shown that a high rate of parasitic infections still persists amongst disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged communities in Australia and globally.
Dog Care Education in Environmental Health Promotion: dog’s breakfast or man’s best friend?
Dr Sophie Constable, Ms Pritika Desai & Ms Eileen Fletcher, AMRRIC, NT
AMRRIC Education Officer Pritika Desai works in partnership with East Arnhem Shire AMWs Sharon Wunungmurra and Virginia Barratj to develop their education programs in their community of Galiwinku. They will discuss their approach to identifying issues, working collaboratively in community and developing new activities and resources. These include a two-week all-years school program, a ‘Felt Dog’ and an iPad app for outstation health promotion use. AMRRIC Education Officers Sophie Constable and Eileen Fletcher will also discuss the development of a DVD exploring dog behaviour in remote communities, how it affects both worker service delivery and resident quality of life.

NSW Health Aboriginal Environmental Health Training Program - changing the way we do business
Jason May, Central Coast Local Health District & Sally-Anne Donahue, Camperdown Public Health Unit and Camden Municipal Council & Dr Hopi Yip Richardson, Health Protection NSW
The NSW Health Aboriginal Environmental Health Officer Training Program has been supporting Aboriginal people through university studies and on-the-job training to become qualified Environmental Health Officers since 1997. All Trainees in the Training Program are provided with unique training opportunities based on their work placement. Recently, three models of financial, industrial and training partnerships were developed to increase uptake of Trainees in the Environmental Health workforce in NSW. This presentation is an overview of the new Training Program partnership models with example from two trainees employed through two different partnership models.

Aboriginal Leadership Programs inspired into Environmental Action
Charlee Law, Camperdown Public Health Unit and Canada Bay Council & Trent Auld, Western Sydney Public Health Unit, NSW
This presentation explores the experiences of two young Aboriginal people who undertook programs that inspired a sense of pride and drive to work with Aboriginal communities to improve environmental health outcomes. They were inspired to join the Environmental Health workforce after participating in two independent Aboriginal Leadership Programs. The life experiences gained through these Leadership Programs helped them to understand the importance of environmental health in Indigenous communities and provided the motivation for them to enrol in the NSW Health Aboriginal Environmental Health Officer Training Program.

Aboriginal Environmental Health Initiatives: Community Clean-Up Projects
Glenn Pearce, Ruth Williams, Nicole Ansell, & Stephanie Stratigos, Hunter New England LHD and Dr Angela Pitts & Deb Taylor, Health Protection NSW
This presentation will compare two Community Clean-up Projects, one in a remote community and the other in a community adjacent to a regional centre in NSW. The projects’ main objective was to work collaboratively with the community, stakeholders and other related agencies to reduce the potential risk accumulative waste poses to public health. The location, available services and resources determined similar outcomes but different approaches. The combined presentation will examine community engagement and participation, project delivery, results, waste management/sustainability strategies and barriers encountered. It will also examine the process of aligning interests, objectives and practices through a collaborative approach to make a difference in Aboriginal health.

A Collaborative Approach to Tackling Illegal Dumping
Tait Farram Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, NSW
The NSW EPA administer grants of up to $50 000 every year to Local Government Councils and Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) who can show that they can work collaboratively in cleaning up illegally dumped rubbish on LALC owned lands. A total of $200 000 is granted annually to this initiative by the NSW EPA. Tait & Justin will discuss their personal experiences with the grant application processes and the outcomes achieved throughout the state of NSW as a result of the grants.

Clean faces health places
Joan Whitehead, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Inc, NT
The Central Australian Clean Faces Healthy Places program incorporates evidence-based strategies to reduce trachoma through reinforcing consistent holistic public health and personal hygiene messages and highlighting environmental improvements that reduce the transmission of infections. Policy and planning activities promote access to clean, appropriately equipped washing places, through the Northern Territory ‘Families as First Teachers’ health, hygiene and safety guidelines. Ongoing sharing and reinforcement of skills and practices have been through curriculum resource development and worksheets. With collaboration of the Fred Hollows Foundation community-based worker program, community members knowledge of the link between health and the environment has been enhanced.
Healthy Environments, Healthy Homes
Maria Wilson, Port Adelaide Enfield Council, SA
In my presentation I will highlight my role as an Indigenous Environmental Health Officer working for Local Government which includes a focus on delivering services to Aboriginal people within an urban context. This presentation will talk about the new SA Public Health Act (2011) to reflect the mandatory requirements of Local Government. In part I will focus on the City of Port Adelaide Enfield Council’s approach in following the new Public Health Act (2011), which has introduced the “Healthy Environments, Healthy Homes” Project for the local Aboriginal community. In doing so, I will also highlight:
The Healthy Environments, Healthy Homes objectives to:
• Reduce the incidence of homelessness amongst the Aboriginal population brought about by eviction due to complaints regarding waste and pests.
• Reduce the incidence of disease and minimise the risk of disease transmission, preventable illness and pest/rodent infestation.
• Improve public health, knowledge and access to services for the Aboriginal community in the Council area.
In seeking to achieve the above objectives I will emphasise in my presentation about the need to deliver services in a culturally appropriate way and the importance of partnerships and community consultation.

No Germs on Me – Kimberley Style
Emma Catlin, Kerwin Malay & Scott MacKenzie, Shire of Derby/West Kimberley, WA
The Shire of Derby West Kimberley’s Aboriginal Environmental Health Unit have used the ‘No Germs on Me’ kit extensively since the launch at the last National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Conference. They have found it to be a very beneficial tool in spreading environmental health promotion messages. It was identified that some changes could be made to modify the program to better suit the Kimberley region and to cover specific topics more thoroughly, depending on the target audience. We have expanded the ‘No Germs on Me’ program to incorporate new ideas and unique educational tools and will show how we spread the message Kimberley style.

Rheumatic fever – from a sore throat to a broken heart
Jennifer Cottrell, SA Department for Health and Ageing, SA
Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) is chronic damage to the heart as a consequence of repeated episodes of acute rheumatic fever (ARF), a complication of a Group A Streptococcal bacterial infection. ARF is a disease associated with poverty and overcrowding, with young people being most affected. Rates of ARF and RHD have significantly decreased in developed countries over the last century; however in Australia rates remain alarmingly high in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This presentation will provide an overview on these diseases, outline how environmental factors play a part in getting ARF and how a new register for South Australia is hoping to improve health outcomes for these patients.

Aboriginal mental health programs SA (rural and remote)
Ian James, SA Department for Health and Ageing, SA
The presentation will focus on the current status of Aboriginal mental health in South Australia, both in a metropolitan and country setting. I will explain the terms ‘mental health’ and ‘social and emotional wellbeing’. I will also discuss mental illness and the services available in South Australia to manage this. How mental health is addressed is not a simple process - it’s about matching the needs of a vulnerable population to the range of services available. How effective this is is dependent upon the collective understanding of mental health issues; what needs to be done, who will do it and how it will be done in a versatile and holistic approach considerate of cultural concerns. In this presentation I will also discuss my thoughts in developing and providing a better way forward for Aboriginal mental health in South Australia.

La Perouse Environmental & Public Health Community Project
Toni Cains, Health Protection NSW
Following a successful Housing for Health Project in La Perouse in 2011, the La Perouse community and South Eastern Sydney Public Health Unit (SESPHU) identified a number of public and environmental health issues in the community including mould in bathrooms, possums accessing roof spaces and general concerns about respiratory health. SESPHU in consultation with the community designed specific projects to assist the community with these issues which were implemented during the later part of 2011. Informal evaluation from these projects revealed strong community support.
Environmental Health Challenges at major events:
Garma festival East Arnhemland
Robert Small & Christopher Blow Department of Health, NT
This presentation highlights the importance and need for Environmental Health Officer involvement at a major public event. The presentation focuses on the annual 4-day Garma Festival held in East Arnhem Land NT. Up to 2000 people attend the festival and camp in a bush setting. The logistics of ensuring that all public health issues are addressed and maintained is vital. Matters such as water quality, food safety, etc. require careful planning and monitoring throughout the festival. Any major public event is a challenge to the environmental health profession and generally does not succeed without their help and guidance.

Stainless Steel Satisfaction: Living with Healthy Living Practice Hardware
Ruth Elvin & Yash Srivastava, Centre for Appropriate Technology, NT
This presentation explores through the post occupancy evaluation of Alice Springs Town Camp housing built or refurbished between 2008 and 2011 how designing for healthy living practices, such as installing steel kitchen benches, might not meet its objectives unless residents subscribe to the design rationale. How, then, can the now well-established healthy living practices better serviced in building programs for communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Washing Machine Djäma: Preliminary Results from the East Arnhem Spin Project
Timothy Foster, Alex Kopczynski, Chris Saroukos & Bruce Patterson, One Disease at a Time, NSW
We present results and insights from the East Arnhem Spin Project, a Federal Government-funded initiative that aims to improve access to functioning washing machines throughout East Arnhem Land. Baseline surveys across more than 450 households found 33% of households lacked a functioning washing machine. Functionality rates differed significantly by manufacturer and a high proportion of problems were related to poor installation. A technician was subsequently dispatched to inspect faulty machines, and was able to repair 87 machines back to a fully functioning status. We conclude with key recommendations for improving the sustainability of washing machines in remote Indigenous communities.

The Importance Of Partnerships In Integrated Health Promotion
Geogina Kelly, Kimberly Population Health Unit, WA
The Mabu Buru (Yaruwu for Healthy Environment) program collaborates with a broad range of health promotion services to provide Environmental Health education to the Broome and Dampier Peninsula area. By adopting a holistic approach, the program communicates the Environmental Health message of healthier living environments for local communities. In addition, the program ensures the minimisation of double ups and resource wastage through its partnerships with both external and internal health promotion providers. Through its grass roots engagement and community participatory approach the program provides tailored Environmental Health education by incorporating feedback provided from local schools, clinics and communities.

Conservation at what cost? the potential impact of water conservation in remote Indigenous communities
Dr Meryl Pearce-Churchill, Assoc Prof Eileen Willis & Susan Lawrie, Flinders University, SA
Although populations in remote Indigenous communities in arid regions of South Australia are small and show little growth, improvements in housing, water and wastewater infrastructure, and treatment and reticulation of water supplies have led to an increase in water demand. Community ground water reserves are lacking and tend to vary in quality and quantity. Provision of water supplies is less hindered by technology and finance than by the constraints of the natural environment. To ensure a sustainable water supply in remote communities as mandated under the National Water Initiative, greater water use efficiencies are required throughout Australia regardless of location. However, there are high levels of morbidity among remote-dwelling Indigenous people including conditions such as trachoma and scabies which are mitigated through the use of water. Over the past decade health promotion programmes have achieved improved health outcomes in part through their ‘use water for health’ message. This raises a conundrum in that whilst there is a need for water conservation in remote Indigenous communities, at what cost to health? This presentation looks at water use over a five year period in Amata and Mimili in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in northern South Australia to determine if it was adequate for washing (personal and other), waste removal, internal and external temperature control and dust mitigation.

The unexpected in a remote and pristine environment
Michael Spry, Department of Health, NT
A number of rivers in the Northern Territory are iconic for fishing, especially for barramundi species, and considered a pristine environment. The results of a recent study of fish from Northern Territory rivers found mercury in various species. What this meant and how this was communicated alarmed the local community. This presentation explains some of the unexpected findings, compares them with other river systems and relates some of the steps taken to appropriately inform the local community of the current fish quality.