First Edition of AHCWA Youth Stories

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State Sector Conference 2017

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The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia’s Youth committee was founded in 2012. The Youth committee consists of Aboriginal young people (18-28 years) who work within the Western Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) and/or have been nominated by an ACCHS to represent that Aboriginal medical service on the youth committee. The AHCWA Youth committee members come together to discuss the most current issues affecting young people in the 7 regions of WA.

In 2014 the Youth Committee presented the idea of AHCWA potentially having a full-time Youth Coordinator to monitor the casual meetings and also take on the ideas/projects that were being discussed by the Youth Committee members at the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Youth Workshops each year. AHCWA then opened the ground for member services to come together and fund a full-time Youth Coordinator. By November 2014 the donation pool for a Youth Coordinator position had reached the amount needed and in December 2014, the new AHCWA Youth Coordinator commenced work.

AHCWA's Youth program aims to provide services and support to Aboriginal young people living in Western Australia so that they can thrive and grow into healthy young adults. We do this by leading the development of Aboriginal health policy, advocating for and supporting community development and capacity building, upskilling Aboriginal young people and building workforce capacity.
Who We Are

Youth Program Coordinator: Hayley Thompson

Name, Age, Location?
Hayley Thompson. 22 years old. Currently living in the Southern suburbs of Perth.

What kind of work are you doing now?
I am currently working as the Youth Program Coordinator. My role is responsible for establishing and coordinating the new and expanded state-wide Aboriginal Youth Program.

What kind of work did you do before?
Prior to commencing work at AHCWA, I studied Fitness & Nutrition. I was also doing casual work with the Netball WA grassroots inclusion program. Before that, I worked at Sports Education and Development Australia as a Sports Development Officer.

Where did you grow up?
I was born and raised in Perth so this is where I spent most of my childhood. I have family spread across the South-West of WA so I travelled down south quite a lot as a child, particularly during school holidays. I started Little Athletics when I was 6 years old so this took up a lot of my time as a child, however I enjoyed playing my weekend sports and spending the rest of my time with family or at home playing video games on my Nintendo and play station.

What do you love to do?
I love spending time with my daughter! I am a young mum and I love every second of it... the good and the bad it’s all worth it. I enjoy playing sports and keeping fit as well as the occasional watching movies and eating pizza :P

Favourite food?
Pizza, of course.

Last words?
Success doesn't lead to happiness, happiness is the definition of success.
This is what I want young people to know and understand. Be happy and live a prosperous life!

Hayley.Thompson@ahcwa.org

Youth Policy Officer: Meagan Roberts

Name, Age, Location?
Meagan Roberts. 25 years old. Currently living in the Eastern suburbs of Perth.

What kind of work are you doing now?
In May I was employed by AHCWA as the Youth Policy Officer. My role is responsible for ensuring that the youth perspective is heard and reflected in relevant policy development, advocacy and program planning.

What kind of work did you do before?
Before working at AHCWA I worked at the Department of Health with the Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program as the Youth Program Officer. I did lots of work educating young people about sexual health and relationships.

Before that I worked at the Metropolitan Migrant Resource centre where I worked with multicultural youth on a sexual health drama program (it was loads of fun!)
Where did you grow up?
I spent the early part of my childhood living in Carnarvon, and then moved to a small country town in the Wheatbelt called Kulin where we stayed for the majority of my Primary School years. Kulin was a great town to grow up in – known for the Kulin Bush races and famous “Tin Horse Highway” (google it). I then moved to Perth with my family when I was 12.

What do you love to do?
I love to travel. I’ve been to 14 different countries and have definitely caught the travel bug.

I also enjoy walking with my extremely hyperactive labradoodle, binge-watching Netflix, reading and have recently gotten into yoga.

Favourite food?
Ice-cream. I can literally eat it at any time of day, all year round.

Last words?
I am extremely passionate about youth health, and I am really excited to get out into the community to hear the voices of young people.

Meagan.Roberts@ahcwa.org

Our Youth Committee:

Our Committee:
The Youth Committee is comprised of a range of Aboriginal young adults aged between 18-28 working in the Aboriginal Health sector throughout WA.

The committee holds 3 meetings throughout the year to discuss issues facing youth and Aboriginal problems that impact our youth.
Tia Ashwin, 23

Tia's positive story.

Tia is a Wongi woman from Wiluna in the mid-west of Western Australia, she was born on the 9th of July 1993. Tia grew up on a farm which is why she loves the outdoors, things like camping, riding dirt bikes, fishing and exploring.

When Tia was 9 years old she was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, which is a rare form of cancer and more common among children than adults. After 2 years of chemotherapy Tia was able to fight off this disease.

She couldn’t have done so without the strong family support she had. The community in Wiluna also held a fundraiser to pay for her treatment and the family's expenses, as her Dad and Mum were not working and solely looking after her.

Tia moved to Bunbury in 2014 and got a job as the Human Resources Assistant at SWAMS. She has since completed her certificate IV in Human Resources and is currently studying her Diploma. To young people suffering from a similar serious illness her message would be to stay strong, always be positive and remember all those people who are there for you in your time, be strong for them and make them proud.

Matthew Boddington, 23

Tell us a bit about yourself e.g. family, where you live, where your mob come from, your interests, etc?

My name is Matthew Boddington. My family come from Mullewa and Geraldton but I was born and raised in Perth. My interests are all sports, mainly footy and basketball.

What is it that you have overcome?

When I was 14 I lost my brother to suicide.

What helped you overcome this? How did this help you?

Speaking up to my peers and making sure that I didn’t bottle everything up! It was a tough time and it happened all so suddenly, no one had answers, so the only thing we could do was to stay together and speak up if we were ever feeling down.

If you could say 1 thing to a young person going through the same thing right now, what would it be?

Speak up! The worst thing someone can ever do is hold it all in and let it bottle up. The worst feeling is losing someone so suddenly, so if you ever feel down in the dumps just let someone know so they can help you because something today might hurt but 3 years down the track it could not mean a thing.
Heidi Thompson, 18

Heidi is an 18 year old Noongar woman from Perth who has recently been accepted into a double degree at Murdoch University studying Criminology and Security, Terrorism and Counterterrorism.

After completing the 14 week K-track enabling course through the Murdoch Koolbardi centre, Heidi was offered a position to do her 3-year double degree in her chosen field stated above. The K-Track course is offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who wish to attend university but did not get the required ATAR score or wish to attend university but did not complete high school.

Heidi graduated year 12 last year at Sports Education and Development Australia where she also got the opportunity to complete her work experience with the Fremantle Dockers Football Club.

Heidi also plays in the Mundella West Australian Women’s Football League for the Perth Angels finishing as the top goal scorer for Perth Angels Football club in the season of 2017. Growing up Heidi participated in Little Athletics and netball. Milestones for Heidi during these times were when she broke the state record for shot put at the age of 8 and when she went over to Melbourne in 2016 as part of the Netball WA U/18 Indigenous All-stars team. Heidi hopes to one day become part of the Australian Secret Intelligence Society (ASIS) where she will get to travel the world and face global issues like terrorism or even become part of the Federal Police targeting youth crime as she hopes to one day become a mentor for her community.

If you or anyone you know would like to share their story, please contact the Youth Program Coordinator.
NAIDOC Week Celebrations

On Saturday 8th July, members of the AHCWA Youth Committee attended the South West NAIDOC ball, where committee member Joey Clarke was asked to deliver a 10 minute speech to the audience based on his speech during the suicide workshop at the 2017 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Conference in May.

Although Joey’s speech at the ball was much shorter than the one he had delivered at the conference, he was able to capture the importance of providing ongoing support for young people who are going through hard times.

Well done Joey!

Other youth committee members who attended the ball were, Wade Garwood who works at the South West Aboriginal Health Service (SWAMS) & Hayley Thompson, the Aboriginal Youth Program Coordinator (pictures below)
Minister for Women’s Interest: Round Table Discussion

On Wednesday the 12th of July 2017 the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia was proud to support 20 young women to participate in the inaugural WA Young Women’s Round Table at Parliament House for the Hon Simone McGurk MLA, Minister for women’s interest.

The purpose for the roundtable was to provide an opportunity for young women to share their interests and aspirations with the minister and to discuss solutions to the challenges they face in achieving their potential. The young women, aged between 15 and 24 years of age, came from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences including young Aboriginal women, women from regional WA, women residing at Foyer Oxford and National Youth Week ambassadors. AHCWA Youth Program Coordinator, Hayley Thompson, was amongst the discussion.

The young women talked about their aspirations and several shared their desire to lead rewarding and fulfilling lives. Some women aspired to be successful sportswoman, a parliamentarian or a social entrepreneur. Several wanted to take up positions of decision making and leadership, while others had a passion for art, music and theatre.

The roundtable identified a number of issues and barriers that young women were experiencing including but not limited to; discrimination, sexism and sexual harassment.

Many of the young women expressed their determination to drive change, others felt frustrated by the persistent need to prove their worth and to be taken seriously.

On completion of the discussion 2 of the participants were asked to partake in a radio interview with RTRFM 92.1. One of those participants being AHCWA Youth Program Coordinator and the other being a National Youth week ambassador from CaLD background. The radio interview took place on Tuesday July 18th at 9:15am and went for about 10 minutes.

What’s the Minister for Women’s Interest going to do next?

A series of Metropolitan and regional roundtables will be undertaken over the next six months.

Further discussions will be held with Aboriginal women, women of culturally linguistic and diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities and women from regional WA to identify key factors impacting on Women’s equality and empowerment.

The key themes and issues identified will inform the government’s agenda for Women’s interest portfolio.
Updates from State Sector 2017

Tuesday April 4th 2017 saw the AHCWA Youth Committee hold their annual Youth workshop, parallel to the WA ACCHSSs Members Planning Day to kick off the WA Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Conference.

Also held at the International on the Water hotel in Ascot, youth from the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services from around WA were invited to come along and participate in the workshop, with a total of 14 attending.

The day began with an introduction by all participants including a brief description of who they are and where their families come from. The group engaged in get-to-know you activities designed for the group to learn more about each other.

The AHCWA Youth Committee introduced themselves to the rest of the group before discussing the current Terms of Reference document which needed updating. The AHCWA Youth Committee then invited the rest of the group to express their interest in being on the committee with a total of 7 new members being recruited!

The Youth Committee engaged in a stern discussion on what they’d like to accomplish over the next 12 months and in particular what they could do to progress the committee’s approach to being a strong advocate for Aboriginal Youth in Western Australia.

A new committee structure was formed including a Board of 3 members who have pledged their commitment to advocating on behalf of the committee. A Youth Committee Board Member has also pledged to be on the AHCWA Board to advocate for the Youth Committee in relation to any youth topics which may be discussed at that level of governance. This motion was passed 2 days later at the WA Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Conference and it was agreed that a youth representative would sit on the AHCWA Board as soon as possible. Congratulations to Cleave Narkle from Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation for being appointed the role of youth representative on the AHCWA Board.

After morning tea an open discussion on the current issues affecting young Aboriginal people commenced and the group got to ‘yarn’ about what the causes of these issues are. The group came to the conclusion that we as a community need to work on building strong families by focusing our effort on providing support to our families on “How to be a family”. This can be done by showing compassion, teaching life skills/ street smarts, education, support, culture, discipline and respect.
State Sector 2017

To finish off the day, guests from the Department of Health WA Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Program attended the workshop to gain feedback from the participants, in regards to advertisement material that has recently been launched to target Aboriginal youth. These ads were typically about being safe, preventing the spread of STIs and testing/treatment. The guests were very pleased with the feedback from the youth and thanked them for their time.

On Thursday the 6th April the Youth committee presented to delegates at the WA Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Conference followed by a youth panel discussion which included NACCHO CEO, Pat Turner, YACWA CEO, Ross Wortham and A/Director of Aboriginal Health -Dept of Health, Wendy Casey.

The AHCWA Youth Committee hope to have a successful year and look forward to working with each other and closely with the WA ACCHSs in the coming months.

Youth Committee

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The first group of participants to undertake the Youth Mental Health First Aid course run by AHCWA Youth will be other AHCWA staff, being delivered at the AHCWA office on July 31st 2017.

If your organisation/service is interested in being upskilled in Youth Mental Health First Aid then please contact AHCWA Youth Program coordinator.

There is a small cost associated with the training, however, AHCWA member services will not be charged.