I was pleased to attend the 7th SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care) National Conference which was held in Canberra this month. The Conference devoted attention to the most urgent and intractable issue facing Aboriginal communities in Australia, namely the consistent failure of Governments to address the causes of removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

The Conference, which was attended by more than 1,000 delegates from across Australia, was united in demanding an increased focus and investment in early intervention to support families where children might be at risk of not growing up safe, healthy and strong.

There was understandably a deep sense of frustration and at times anger that the rate of removal of Aboriginal children from their families is increasing and is now higher than it was at the time of the Bringing Them Home Report. In fact the Conference was opened by the report’s author, Professor Mick Dodson, who in his speech commented that ‘the gravity of the findings demanded action and action hasn’t been taken.’

It was not lost on ACT delegates that this applied more pertinently in the ACT than almost anywhere else in Australia with the ACT, the most prosperous jurisdiction in the nation, on the verge of having, to its shame, the highest rate of removal of Aboriginal children in Australia.

The common thread of all of the resolutions adopted by the SNAICC Conference was that the response to the tidal wave of removals of Aboriginal children from their families had to be led by Aboriginal community-controlled early intervention, family preservation and family reunification services.

These resolutions have a special resonance in the ACT in light of the decision by the ACT Government to overlook the involvement of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in the provision of any such services in the ACT, preferring instead to deal only with non-Aboriginal mainstream organisations. Many in the Canberra Aboriginal community suggest that if the ACT Government is truly interested in understanding why it is the worst performing jurisdiction in Australia when it comes to supporting Aboriginal families, then it needs to start by acknowledging the fundamental role which dedicated Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and families must play in the care and protection of their children.
On another matter it was very pleasing to see reported in the Canberra Times the unequivocal support of the Liberal Party for the establishment of an Indigenous specific drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation facility in the ACT.

As James Milligan MLA said it is now ten years since the Labor Government promised to establish such a facility. He went on to say that the need for an Indigenous specific drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility ‘has never been greater.’ He said the ‘facility should provide an appropriate clinical model of care and be run by Indigenous people for Indigenous people.’

I agree fully with Mr Milligan and the Liberal Party on this issue as I am sure does every Aboriginal person in the ACT. I urge the Greens Party and the ALP to join with the Liberal Party and commit to ensuring that this vital health facility becomes a reality.

Steven Freeman Inquest Continues

The Coronial inquest into the death, at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, of Steven Freeman while in the care and custody of the ACT Government, reconvened in mid-August. Evidence was given at the hearings by staff of ACT Justice Health about Steven’s care immediately before his death in custody.

The formal taking of evidence has now concluded and the Coroner has asked all legal counsel representing the respective parties to prepare submissions for his consideration. The Coroner has indicated he is hopeful that he will be in a position to finalise his consideration of the inquest before the end of the year, but has explained that there may be factors that he may not be able to control.

Winnunga AHCS CEO Julie Tongs again supported Steven’s mother Narelle and her family during the inquest hearings. Narelle and other members of Steven’s family have attended every session of the inquest which has at times been emotional and distressing as they have been forced to re-live the sadness and grief of his unexpected and tragic death.

Julie Tongs has again said that while there is nothing that can be done to bring Steven back or to erase the grief and loss that Narelle and Steven’s family will bear for the rest of their lives, that Narelle dearly hopes the lessons that have been learned from the Moss report and from the Coronial inquest will mean no other mother or family of an Aboriginal person in prison in the ACT will ever have to bear the pain that Steven’s death has caused her and her family.

Fact: The Coroner’s Court of the ACT is a court which has the power to make findings in respect of the cause of death of a person or fire.
Archie Roach’s Special Message to ‘All the Brothers in the AMC’

Archie Roach, at a recent meeting with Winnunga AHCS CEO Julie Tongs, asked her if she would deliver a message from him to all of his brothers detained at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Archie is of course not just the most recognisable and loved Aboriginal singer in Australia but is one of Australia’s living treasures. Julie said that prior to his request to deliver his handwritten letter to the AMC he sang two of his most haunting and famous songs; Charcoal Lane and Took the Children Away.

‘While still a very young child, Roach and his sisters, along with the other Indigenous Australian children of the stolen generations, were forcibly removed from their family by Australian government agencies, and placed in an orphanage.’

To all the Brothers in A.M.C.

Stay Proud, Stay Strong!!

Spirit cannot be caged!

Respects! Archie Roach
Violence in the AMC- Enough is Enough

Reports in August of the bashing of two Aboriginal men in the Alexander Maconochie Centre inflamed memories of the earlier savage bashing of Steven Freeman.

The bashing of Steven Freeman, who died in prison a year after he was bashed, led to the establishment of an independent inquiry headed up by Mr Philip Moss. The Moss Report contained a damning indictment of Steven Freeman’s treatment and care while in the AMC. The Government has accepted the recommendations of the Moss Report and is currently progressing their implementation.

That Aboriginal detainees have again been bashed so severely while in the AMC that they required hospitalisation raises worrying concerns about the capacity of the ACT Government to guarantee the safety of prisoners in the ACT. The bashing highlights the urgency of ensuring that all of the recommendations of the Moss Report are implemented in full and as soon as possible.

A major concern about the failure of ACT Police to either identify the perpetrators of the bashing of Steven Freeman or to lay any charges in relation to the assault on him is that it would almost certainly have emboldened the perpetrators of violence in the AMC to believe that they can act with impunity. It is fair to ask if the failure of the AMC and the police in the Freeman investigation was a causal factor in the latest attack.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community will be watching closely the response of ACT Corrections and ACT Police to this latest violence against Aboriginal people in the care and under the protection of the ACT Government. As the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Chairperson Katrina Fanning has said about this disturbing incident ‘Enough is Enough’.

Fact: ‘The AMC emphasises rehabilitation, compliance with Human Rights principles and adherance to the Healthy Prison Concept. A Healthy Prison is one in which: everyone is and feels safe (detainees, staff and visitors alike); everyone is treated with respect and as a fellow human being (again, all people within the AMC); everyone is encouraged to improve him/herself and is given every opportunity to do so through the provision of purposeful activity; and everyone is enabled to maintain contact with their families and is prepared for release.’ (Source, http://www.cs.act.gov.au/custodial_operations)
Data on AMC Rehabilitation Lacking

It was to be hoped following the unflattering report of the ACT Auditor-General into rehabilitation programs at the AMC, that management would have paid attention to the need for detailed and reliable data on the AMC’s rehabilitation programs.

On 31 July the Minister for Corrections issued a press release congratulating the eight participants in the then just completed Solaris Therapeutic Community Program at the AMC. Participants in the Solaris program typically have had moderate to severe drug and alcohol dependencies.

Congratulations are certainly in order to all detainees who graduate from the program.

In his press release the Minister notes that the Solaris program ‘provides the support and tools to help people change their lives and reintegrate with the community’ and further ‘it aims to reduce rates of relapse into drug and alcohol use and also reduce recidivism.’

Following the Minister’s press release Winnunga AHCS asked the Minister’s office for data that reveals whether graduates had in fact changed their lives and reintegrated with the community, and in particular for data on the number of graduates who had relapsed into drug use both before and after leaving the AMC, and also the recidivism rate of graduates. Winnunga AHCS also requested any such data to be disaggregated by Indigenous status.

The Minister’s Office informed Winnunga AHCS that no data on any of these issues is collected or maintained.

ACT Corrective Services obviously hopes, as do we all, that the aims of the Solaris Program as detailed by the Minister, are being met, however there appears to be no quantitative data to confirm whether that hope is being realised.

Fact: In the 2016-2017 financial year Winnunga AHCS provided 141 clients with 731 occasions of service at the AMC (ACT adult prison) and Bimberi Youth Detention Centre.
Hey guys – have you heard about the Winnunga Men’s Group?

The group is held every Monday between 11am and 3pm.

It’s open to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men and is a culturally appropriate and non-judgemental environment to discuss health and lifestyle concerns. Lunch is provided.

The Men’s group engage in various activities from art work to excursions and covers topics such as:

- Healthy eating
- Quitting or reducing smoking
- Cooking for a family
- Having regular health checks
- Cooking on a budget
- Managing depression and anxiety
- Reducing alcohol consumption
- Oral health care
- The importance of physical activity

If transport is required to get to Winnunga for the Men’s Group, please contact us on Mondays between 9am and 9.30am on 6284 6222.

Narrabundah Bus Services Must not be Abandoned

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga AHCS has joined the call by John Keely, Chair of the Old Narrabundah Community Council for the Government to reverse the decision to cancel Old Narrabundah’s direct bus route 5 to Woden and the weekend service 398 to Manuka/Kingston.

Ms Tongs noted that Old Narrabundah has the highest proportion of community and public housing of any suburb in Canberra and the decision to cancel long established bus routes will impact disproportionately on elderly residents, people living with disadvantage and residents who are not well off.

She said that while the residents of Old Narrabundah would be particularly disadvantaged by the cancellation of these bus services the Aboriginal clients of Winnunga AHCS, many of whom do not own a car and experience significant health issues would also be adversely impacted.

It is difficult to not see the decision to cut these bus services as an attack on some of the poorest and most disadvantaged members of the Canberra community, and Winnunga AHCS calls on the members of the Legislative Assembly to reconsider this decision.

Fact: As of October 9 people who use bus stops in Kootara Crescent will now have to walk to, and then cross over Jerrabomberra Avenue at the crosswalk opposite Narrabundah College to reach a bus stop in Goyder Street.
Winnunga Dads — Father’s Day

We know them by all types of names, Dad! Daddy! Pop! Father! Old man! and each of them, hold a special place in our hearts. To celebrate Father’s Day and to highlight just how deadly dads are, we spoke to a couple of our Winnunga AHCS dad’s about what being a dad means to them.

Craig Cook

How many children do you have?
I have a son and another one on the way.

What was it like when you saw your child for the first time?
It was amazing. Words can’t describe the feeling you get.

What’s the best thing about being a Dad?
Having my kid around. It’s their excitement and unconditional love. They keep you on your feet.

What has your child taught you?
Expect the unexpected.

What type of future do you hope for your children?
To have a better future than mine.

What did you do for Father’s Day?
Played around with my little one, we chilled out together. Just having good quality time together.

What’s the best Father’s Day present you’ve received?
Definitely my son.

What’s the worst/funniest Father’s Day present you’ve received?
My son jumping on me and waking me up. When he was little, he crawled up to me and put his lips on my ear and screamed in it, woke me up instantly. He started laughing, it was very cute!

Ian Bateman

How many children do you have?
I have 4 children; 2 boys, 2 girls.

What was it like when you saw your child(ren) for the first time?
Hard to describe, put into words but it’s a special experience seeing your child born. It’s a must for all dads’ to experience. It’s very humbling, puts things into perspective. It’s something you’ll never forget, something that stays with you forever.

Fact: In the 2016-2017 financial year Winnunga AHCS Social Health Team delivered 502 group activities.
Winnunga Dads — Father’s Day (cont’d)

No matter how busy we are, it’s important to make time for your family. You only get one go at it. Thursday has always been family night so we always try to do something as a family.

What have your children taught you?
Patience. Humility. To be humble. They put things into perspective. You think life is all about you until you have children and it becomes all about them and it’s something I’d never change.

What type of future do you hope for your children?
It doesn’t matter what they do or become, just for them to always be happy no matter what, as long as they’re happy, it makes me happy.

How did you spend Father’s Day?
It was a good relaxing day spent with the kids. We had good quality time together, you can’t beat that.

What’s the best Father’s Day present you’ve received?
It’s definitely a Father’s Day card made by the kids.

What’s the worst/funniest Father’s Day present you’ve received?
The kids bought me a golf mug that I really loved but the dog knocked it off the table and it smashed...I didn’t even get to have a cuppa coffee out of it! Still not happy about it, still burns me to this day!

Fact: In the 2016-2017 financial year 48% of Winnunga clients were male.
Winnunga AHCS Podiatry Service

What can I expect from the Winnunga AHCS Podiatry Service?

Our Podiatrist Kevin looks at a whole range of things – these include:
- Treating clients with foot and lower leg pain caused by many factors
- Skin conditions
- Corns
- Callus
- Warts
- Ill-fitting footwear
- Injuries (including sporting injuries)

A key area is diabetes management with a focus on education and prevention of foot problems in low risk clients and ongoing treatment for clients that are in the high risk category.

The service also includes treating clients with systemic illness such as arthritis, where clients may be unable to reach their feet to cut their toe nails and in the case of rheumatoid arthritis - try to off load painful joints.

Just a reminder - our Podiatry Service is on every Monday (except for public holidays) at Winnunga AHCS.

If you’d like to know more about our Podiatry service or to make a booking, give us a call on 6284 6222.

Fact: In the 2016-2017 financial year Winnunga AHCS provided 52,844 client occasions of service (excluding transport and admin services).
Styling Up In Deadly New Shoes

Eight Winnunga AHCS clients will soon be putting their best feet forward in their new shoes! The shoes were kindly donated by Paul Sawaqed, Manager of Ascent Footwear ACT/NSW. Paul did not hesitate to donate the shoes once he learnt from Podiatrist Kevin Kim there were many Winnunga AHCS clients who lacked good supportive footwear.

Ascent is an innovative Australian born and bred footwear brand that works closely with Podiatry, Physiotherapy, Amputees and Diabetes Associations. Their footwear has therapeutic benefits and aids in the management and/or prevention of various foot ailments.

Winnunga AHCS clients have been making the most of the weekly Podiatry service which began in June this year and is a partnership between Winnunga AHCS and Suzanne Paterson Podiatry.

Suzanne and Kevin stress the importance of having good footwear and regular foot care. ‘Proper footwear is fundamental and essential for good foot care. Good footwear will offer protection, improve foot function, provide support and balance, thereby reducing the chance of falling’ they said.

Podiatrist Kevin who visits Winnunga AHCS each Monday afternoon to provide the podiatry service, will assess each client he sees and base his decision on whom the newly donated shoes will be of most benefit to, given individual circumstances.

Fact: In the 2016 -2017 financial year Winnunga AHCS provided 3,808 episodes of transport.
Visitors to Winnunga

It’s always a nice thing when we can open our doors to visitors to Winnunga AHCS. What’s even better is when the visitors are from another Aboriginal community controlled health organisation.

The Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Health Co-operative were in Canberra for the SNAICC Conference and came by to find out more about Winnunga AHCS and to see what we do and the services we offer to our clients.

It was a lot of fun meeting and welcoming our Victorian visitors who consisted of Chief Executive Officer Bradley Brown and the Board of Directors.

Winnunga Touch Footy Teams Grand Finalists

When most of us were curled up on the couch this winter, the Winnunga Touch Footy teams were out battling not only the cold but some tough opposition as part of a local winter touch football competition.

A solid season saw both the Winnunga Possums and Warriors make it through to each of their Grand Finals but both went down to their oppositions. It was a great effort by all players and with some notable improvements along the way.

In other, Touch Footy news, our Winnunga players were invited to play in the CDTA inter region Defence Touch Football competition. All players had fun and enjoyed the

Fact: In the 2016-2017 financial year 112 clients joined the Winnunga AHCS Healthy Weight Program.
opportunity to get to know the players in this competition.

If you’d like to be part of any of the Winnunga Touch Footy Teams – we’re on the lookout for new players for the new season starting next month. We have mixed, women’s and men’s teams.

For more info or if you want to join one of our teams – give Ian Bateman, our Social Health Team Manager, a call on 6284 6222.

The Heart Foundation recommend 30-45 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (like brisk walking) most days of the week. You can build up activity in shorter bouts, like in three 10 minute walks.

Keeping fit and active doesn’t just have to be running or playing touch football, it can be anything as long as you are keeping active! Some of those activities could be gardening, taking the kids to the park, taking the dog for a walk, instead of driving to the shops, try walking down to your local shop instead. Springs here you mob, let’s get active!

Fact: In the 2016 -2017 financial year Winnunga AHCS delivered 48 ‘No More Boondah’ group activities.
Driver Licence Disqualification Reform

The NSW Government has recently finalised a review of driver disqualification laws and introduced changes designed to better protect community safety, reduce unauthorised driving and repeat offending.

The Government has explained the rationale for the reform as the finding ‘that lengthy disqualification periods, which can sometimes last for more than ten years, do not deter unauthorised driving and have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged people, including Aboriginal people.’

The reforms are designed to reduce reoffending by providing new ways for people to return to lawful and regulated driving.

The scheme to be introduced in NSW will involve a combination of provisions that on the one hand strengthen the capacity of the police to respond to dangerous driving and repeat offending, however support and encourage people who have lost their licence, and who do the right thing to have their disqualification lifted and their licences restored.

In light of the evidence of the extent to which some laws don’t have a deterrent effect, impact disproportionately on Aboriginal people and other people who experience disadvantage (with a consequent impact on incarceration rates), it is pleasing to see evidence based thinking being applied to law reform such as this.

Winnunga AHCS believes there would be advantage on a broad review in the ACT of all laws known to impact disproportionately on Aboriginal people and other people living with or having experienced disadvantage.
What is your favourite food? Seafood, Thai, Yum Cha and bush foods from back home.

What do you like most about working at Winnunga? I like the diverse range of things I get to work on within my position. I like working here knowing that our mob has somewhere to go to get the support or help they need, not only medically but also with social circumstances, impacts that life presents. I’m also grateful for the supportive and caring colleagues I work with.

What is your favourite song? I don’t have one but I think it’s cool that there’s a song about me, well kind of! It’s called Nyul Nyul girl and when Dan Sultan sings it, I like to think he’s singing it only to me HAHA LOL #dreaming.

What do you do on the weekends? I try to have fun and live life to the fullest as much as I can. I go on road trips. I love exploring beautiful Ngunawal country or chilling on the beautiful South Coast. Catching up with friends. Watching shows or movies. Cheering the Raiders on!

What is your pet hate? Good question! Narrow mindedness, dishonesty and people who don’t take responsibility for their actions.

Name: Nevanka McKeon

Position: Media and Communications Officer

Who’s your mob? My mob are the Nyul Nyul, Nyikina, Kija from the Kimberley region of Western Australia

Where’s your country? I was born and raised in Broome. I spend most of my time out on Nyul Nyul country with my family, which is located around the Beagle Bay area on the Dampier Peninsular, north of Broome.

Who is your favourite singer/band? I don’t mind old school Hip Hop and R&B...I really don’t have any favourites but I do like any music that puts me in a good mood, brings back fond memories, motivates me to exercise or I can dance to – if it does that, then I’ll listen to it!

My favourite pet? Don’t have any but I guess my housemate’s pet dogs are cute but totally cray cray! haha