In response to a request from the Chief Minister and Treasurer I have submitted, on behalf of Winnunga AHCS a budget submission covering the comprehensive needs of the Aboriginal community of Canberra. The submission has as an over-arching theme, the right of Aboriginal peoples to self-determination, which is a process of choice to ensure Indigenous communities are able to meet their social, cultural, personal and economic needs. In the submission I again pointed out to the Chief Minister a range of issues that highlight the extent of the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples living in Canberra, including high rates of child removal, adverse health outcomes, poor educational outcomes and high incarceration rates.

I consequently reiterated that the starting point must be the development of a comprehensive policy statement covering all the matters concerning Aboriginal peoples across the full spectrum of health and community services and the development of an action plan for the delivery of the agreed policies.

Among the range of priorities and initiatives which I raised in the submission was the need for appropriate funding to ensure the commencement at the earliest opportunity of the autonomous Winnunga AHCS holistic health and wellbeing services at the AMC, as agreed to by the Government following the inquiry by Phillip Moss into the care of Steven Freeman. The service will be initially supported by two GPs, four nurses and three Social Health Team workers on a full time basis.

I am very pleased to advise Winnunga AHCS has begun the recruitment process for these positions and has received incredibly strong interest from experienced practitioners excited at the prospect of working with Aboriginal detainees in a prison setting. The four nurses to be employed in the AMC have in fact been recruited and are waiting anxiously for the Government to finalise the fit out of the Winnunga AMC clinic room so that they can commence work.

I have also asked again for the ACT Government to make good on the promise made over a decade ago for the design and construction of an Aboriginal residential alcohol and other drug rehabilitation facility in the ACT. The level of drug usage when combined with poverty and historical trauma within the Aboriginal community is at crisis levels and the absence of appropriate drug treatment options exacerbates the relative disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples in Canberra. I urge the Government to move to close this critical gap in services for the Aboriginal community as a top priority.

If you haven’t already signed the Winnunga AHCS initiated petition and would like to, on the absence of a cohesive Indigenous policy in the ACT, or of a genuine commitment by the ACT Government to the principles of self-determination and self management, the petition can be accessed at https://chn.ge/2MG60yr
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga AHCS was pleased recently to meet with officers of Procurement ACT within the ACT Treasury to discuss a draft Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy.

The ACT Government is to be congratulated for pursuing this issue. There is potentially significant benefit to be gained in reducing barriers to the development of successful Aboriginal enterprises, no more so than in encouraging and facilitating the employment of Aboriginal peoples.

A key feature of the proposal is that ACT agencies would have the capacity to grant an exemption from the quotation thresholds for goods and services under $200,000 to directly seek a quote from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander enterprise.

Julie expressed her support for the development of the strategy but stressed that in order to ensure the integrity and sustainability of the program it was imperative that there be a robust and rigorously policed certification process.

Of more direct relevance to Winnunga AHCS, an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, was the urgent need of reform to the approach by the ACT Government to the procurement of services for the delivery of services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Canberra.

Julie pointed out the ACT Government’s record of ignoring the importance of the principles of self-determination and the fundamental difference the involvement of Aboriginal community controlled organisations made to the quality of services delivered to the Aboriginal community. This could be seen in areas as diverse as child protection, supported accommodation, throughcare, family violence, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, incarceration and recidivism, education, employment and housing.

In all of these areas the Government had consistently over-looked the potential to involve Aboriginal community controlled organisations in the delivery of frontline services in favour of dealing directly with mainstream non-Aboriginal agencies who have, in most instances consistently failed to improve the circumstances of Aboriginal clients.

While Winnunga AHCS applauds the development of an Aboriginal Procurement Policy it will effectively be worth nothing if it is not accompanied by a sincere and genuine commitment by the ACT Government to the principle of Aboriginal self-determination and autonomy.
Death in Custody of Jonathan Hogan

Still No Answers

The Health Services Commissioner, Ms Karen Toohey has responded to a request which Julie Tongs made for an inquiry into the adequacy of the care which Jonathan Hogan, a young Aboriginal man from Canberra, received while in the custody of ACT Police, The Canberra Hospital and Junee Prison where Jonathan tragically died in February this year.

Julie made her representations to the Commissioner because of questions about the adequacy of the care which Jonathan received while in the custody and care of ACT officials prior to absconding and being imprisoned in NSW, as well as concerns that his care at Junee was clearly inadequate.

One issue of concern was the level of cross-border collaboration which exists between ACT and NSW authorities in circumstances where an offender is in contact with the justice systems of each jurisdiction.

The Commissioner advised Julie that in light of the way in which Jonathan was managed following his arrest in the ACT, and his admission by ACT Policing to The Canberra Hospital for assessment under section 309 of the Crimes Act, as to whether he required immediate assessment for a mental impairment. Due to fact that Jonathan absconded from the hospital, a new practice has been implemented and formalised for people transferred to the hospital under section 309 of the Crimes Act.

It is to be hoped that the new practice will ensure vulnerable people with diagnosed mental health conditions such as those which Jonathan had, will in the future avoid the same shocking fate.

The inquiry undertaken by the Commissioner also revealed there are no formal protocols or arrangements in place between NSW and ACT corrections, and health authorities for sharing of health information of detainees. This is clearly unsatisfactory and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Commissioner has advised no request was made by Junee Prison for Jonathan’s health records and it appears that ACT Corrections did not think to provide them to NSW Corrections.

It is a matter of continuing distress to Jonathan’s parents and family that as far as they are aware Jonathan was receiving no treatment at Junee Prison for his mental health and self-harming behaviour. The question they ask is if Jonathan’s health records had been provided to Junee Prison by ACT authorities would he have received a level of care

Fact: The Commissioner’s mandate is to consider complaints about the provision of health services and services for older people, and complaints about contraventions of the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997.
Death in Custody of Jonathan Hogan
Still No Answers (cont’d)

and treatment that may have prevented his death?

A question which the Commissioner was unable to answer was why ACT Police did not seek Jonathan’s extradition to the ACT after his arrest by NSW Police following his escape from custody at The Canberra Hospital. It can only be hoped that this and many other disturbing aspects of Jonathan’s care while in the custody of both ACT Police and NSW Corrections will be answered at the Coronial Inquest into his death.

In-Joke or Freudian Slip?

The latest ‘Community Update’ from ACT Health on the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm refers in its opening sentence to the Bush Healing Farm as the Ngunnawal Budget Healing Farm.

One wonders whether this is a deliberately sardonic acknowledgement from ACT Health insiders that the real reason this $12 million purpose built drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation facility is being used for part time music and cartoon therapy, is simply because there was no money in the budget to operate it as a dedicated residential Aboriginal drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility.

To be kind it is probably just a typo but if it is really only a slip, how Freudian.

Fact: A Freudian slip is an unintentional error regarded as revealing subconscious feelings.
NT Chief Minister Sets the Pace on Aboriginal Self Determination

Northern Territory Chief Minister Michael Gunner has shown up his Labor colleagues around Australia by demonstrating with actions that there is a lot more to being a progressive leader and Government than just boasting that you are.

The Chief Minister announced at this year’s Barunga Festival that his Government would initiate a process for the negotiation of a Treaty with the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory.

Now, just two months later he has entered into an agreement with the Aboriginal people of Groote Eylandt, the Anindilyakwa people, to transfer to them the power and authority to operate front line Government services. The agreement provides for the Anindilyakwa people to be responsible for running schools, health clinics and a range of other Government services.

Chief Minister Gunner said the planned agreements would ‘put power back in the hands of local communities’. He confirmed the agreement was a first step towards the Treaty he had promised.

The attitude of the Northern Territory Government stands in stark contrast to that of the Labor/Greens Government in the ACT. While Michael Gunner is handing over responsibility for the delivery of health services and the running of schools to the Aboriginal community in the Northern territory, the ACT Government contemptuously refuses to allow the Aboriginal community of Canberra to run its own sports oval or the Aboriginal Cultural Centre.

Treaty Now

The latest edition of Reconciliation News, the bi-annual magazine published by Reconciliation Australia, contains a very good summary of why a Treaty is fundamental to achieving reconciliation and of the steps being taken in different jurisdictions towards a Treaty.

Australia is of course the only developed Commonwealth nation that doesn’t have a Treaty with its Indigenous peoples and it is a great credit to Victoria (blessed as it is with the most progressive Government in Australia) that it has entered into a formal legislative Treaty process.

Reconciliation Australia also notes the state of progress towards a Treaty in the rest of Australia. Its summary of the situation in all the other States and Territories is very revealing:

‘Governments in Queensland and Western Australia are considering Treaty talks, while the NSW Opposition has promised to begin the Treaty process if it wins government at the next election. South Australia began Treaty negotiations in 2017 but processes were halted by the new Liberal Government. The Northern Territory was in the process of appointing a Treaty commissioner at the time Reconciliation news went to print.’

What this reveals is firstly that Liberal Governments across Australia have almost unanimously and unfortunately failed to engage with the importance to the Aboriginal peoples of Australia of a Treaty, and secondly and perhaps more surprising, the ACT Labor/Greens Government is the only Government or Labor or Greens Party in a State or Territory in Australia that has refused to support the almost universal aspiration of Aboriginal peoples for their sovereign rights and status as the traditional owners and custodians of Australia to be formally recognised and respected in a Treaty.

As noted by the Reconciliation News, agreement making between Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples could advance reconciliation in a variety of ways. Treaties with Indigenous peoples commonly establish agreements between Indigenous peoples and governments. The Victorian Government says it sees the Treaty process as a way to recognise and celebrate the unique status, rights, cultures and histories of Aboriginal Victorians; to heal wounds of the past and in doing so, to advance reconciliation.

It is difficult to understand why none of the three parties that constitute the ACT Legislative Assembly (ie, Labor, the Greens or the Liberals) are interested in a treaty for the ACT. A bit too progressive for them, one may assume.

Fact: A treaty is an agreement arrived at by treating or negotiation. It gives rise to binding obligations between the parties who make it. It acts to formalise a relationship between the parties to the agreement.
Aboriginal Justice Centre - Where Is It?

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga AHCS participated in a panel discussion titled Indigenous Perspectives on the Coronial Process at the recent annual conference of the Asia Pacific Coroners Society.

During the session Julie made the self-evident point that if a serious commitment had been made by States and Territory Governments, their agencies and authorities, to the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, many of the problematic and continuing poor outcomes experienced across the board by Aboriginal peoples would be avoided. She said this related as much, if not more, to the justice system, including the coronial process, as any other area.

In this regard it is revealing to read through the 339 recommendations included in the Royal Commission’s Report, to see the extent to which Governments have ignored the recommendations or have paid only lip service to their implementation.

Recommendation 2, for example, is that every State and Territory establish and fund the operation of an Independent Aboriginal Advisory Committee to provide each Government with advice on Aboriginal perceptions of the criminal justice matters, and on the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations. The recommendation specifies the importance of the Committee being staffed by an independent secretariat.

Winnunga AHCS has for a number of years, including this year, in a submission to the Chief Minister and Treasurer, urged that funding for an Aboriginal Justice Centre/Committee be included in the budget.

Julie said that the level of contact of Aboriginal peoples with the criminal justice system and the escalating rate of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT, demands that the Government move to fill this void in services as a matter of urgency.

Bernard Collaery Wins Civil Justice Award

Bernard Collaery, noted Canberra lawyer, leading Australian social justice advocate and a Patron of Winnunga AHCS has won the 2018 Civil Justice Award. The award was in recognition of his work in fighting for justice for the people of East Timor.

Winnunga AHCS CEO Julie Tongs extended her congratulations to Bernard on winning the award and thanked him for his life time commitment to justice and support for marginalised, disempowered and disadvantaged people. Julie said that Bernard’s commitment to the Aboriginal community of Canberra over many years was exemplary.
NACCHO Youth Summit

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), the peak body representing 143 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) across the country held the inaugural NACCHO Youth Health Conference Future leaders of Tomorrow, in Brisbane this month.

Around 75 young people from around the country attended, where health and public policy issues affecting our youth were discussed. Two of our deadly staff members Minyaada Swan and Shane Morris represented Winnunga AHCS at the Summit and said the experience was both amazing and an important one.

Minyaada said ‘I’m so grateful to Winnunga AHCS CEO Julie Tongs for asking me to attend. This has been such an important experience for us young people to come together and be heard on youth health and wellbeing related issues.’

Shane said he was proud to be asked to attend the Youth Summit. ‘I was surprised to be asked to attend and can’t thank Aunty Julie enough for the opportunity. I was proud to represent not only Winnunga AHCS but the other young people of Canberra and my own community. It was empowering to see many strong young people speaking about the issues that affect us and putting forward solutions by us, for us.’

Shane also explained that speaking about youth issues is a long held passion of his.

‘Growing up in rural communities, I have an insight into the issues felt and affected by young people in my community. What I’ve found in my community, often there’s a lack of support and understanding, which can have a negative impact on the younger generation. That’s why the youth summit is very important to me as it gives us a voice and provides a better understanding of our everyday struggles, and shows the realities of what young people go through. This awareness and understanding can greatly influence those policy makers when it comes to our issues.’

Fact: 52% of the 4,723 clients seen by Winnunga AHCS in the 2017-2018 financial year were under the age of 30 years.
Both Minyaada and Shane said they would like to say ‘thanks to NACCHO for putting on the inaugural Youth Summit and for being open to listening to what young people, the future leaders of tomorrow have to say.’

At the NACCHO Youth Summit, the Minister for Indigenous Ken Wyatt officially launched the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s (AIHW) report Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Adolescent and Youth Health and Wellbeing 2018.

The report aims to contribute to better outcomes for Indigenous young people today, as they move into adulthood, and for future generations of Indigenous Australians.

Creating meaningful and important partnerships is something the Winnunga AHCS Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program (ANFPP) have embraced enthusiastically as they continue to establish themselves in Canberra as one of Winnunga AHCS’ newest teams.

At the invitation of Wellington Aboriginal Corporation Heath Service (WACHS), the Winnunga AHCS ANFPP Team, made a site visit to Dubbo late last month. The three day visit to the WACHS gave the Team a great insight into how an organisation that has been delivering the Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program for a while, works and have processes and practices in place to successfully achieve the program outcomes.

The Winnunga AHCS ANFPP Team said some of the highlights and benefit of the visit included discussions around community engagement, shadow visits, graduations, group activities, resource and milestone packs, and promotional equipment used.

Despite the hard work ahead to implement what was learnt, our ANFPP Team are eager to put together an action plan and work out what is achievable and doable from everything that was learnt over the three days in Dubbo.

The Winnunga AHCS ANFPP Team would like to extend their sincerest gratitude to ANFPP WACHS for not only taking the time to take us under their wing, but for their continued encouragement and support for our endeavour to implement a successful ANFPP program in Canberra. And lastly, we would like to say thanks to Lyndall and her WACHS Team for the phenomenal preparation work they put into making our visit the success it was. This truly is collaboration at its very best between our Aboriginal Health service and theirs, for the greater good of our First Nations peoples.
Road Ready Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

ACT’s Road Ready program is being delivered through CIT Yurauna to encourage safe driving amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. On successful completion you will receive your ACT Learner Driver’s License.

Course Dates: 4, 5 and 6 December 2018 | 9:30am to 3pm
Attendance on all three days is compulsory for successful completion.

Enrolments open 9:30am on Tuesday 4 December at CIT Yurauna. Please bring three forms of ID, including minimum one form of photo ID. Students will be enrolled into the unit - Investigate driving and owning a car (VU22410).

Location: CIT Yurauna, F Block, CIT Reid.

To register, please contact CIT Yurauna
(02) 6207 3309 | CIT.YuraunaCentre@cit.edu.au

Canberra Institute of Technology YURAUNA
A report by Australia 21 which was launched on 2 November exposes once again the wide range of health and social harms created or worsened by Australia’s current drug laws. The report is the result of expert views of representatives from across the full spectrum of organisations in Australia involved in research about, as well as the response to drug use. Along with actively engaging a broad range of specialist organisations, the report was also informed by contributions from addiction specialists, sociologists and criminologists.

Australia 21 Director Emeritus Professor Bob Douglas summarised a major finding of the report in the following terms:

‘Local and international evidence shows that punishing people is not an effective way to reduce drug use; criminal prosecution can actually increase drug use and crime as well as poverty, social disadvantage, unemployment, homelessness, family violence, child protection interventions, mental illness, stigma, discrimination and suicide.’

Australia 21 have identified the central finding from the report as being that Australian governments have failed to take into account that many policies affecting people who use drugs are not regarded as being drug policy, and that many specific drug policies have large effects outside the drug domain. The report also reiterates the incontrovertible truth that Governments continue to ignore the evidence that many people who use drugs are harmed far more by their contact with the criminal justice system as a result of their drug use, than by their use of drugs.

In commenting on the report’s findings Carol Nikakis, CEO of the Victorian Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders said:

‘Once in the criminal system, continued misuse of drugs and alcohol will, for many, lead to repeated incarceration, especially where long term, chronic drug use has led to criminal behaviour to support a habit.’

The explosion in the level of incarceration in the ACT with an associated and very worrying increase in the recidivism rate, suggest that the overwhelming evidence detailed in the latest Australia 21 report has extra significance for Canberra.

The most stark example of the misplaced priorities of Governments who remain committed to fighting the long lost war on drugs is to be found here in the ACT where despite having the second highest rate of Indigenous incarceration in Australia there are no Indigenous specific or culturally appropriate Indigenous specific drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

Is it any wonder that the Aboriginal recidivism rate is over 60%.

Fact: Australia21 is an independent, not-for-profit think tank established in 2001 (source: australia21.org.au).
My Health Record

Opt Out Date Extended

The My Health Record Opt out date has been further extended to 31 January 2018.

A My Health Record will be created for every Australian unless they choose not to have one.

Anyone who does not want a personal electronic health record will now have until 31 January 2019 to opt-out of the national scheme the federal government recently announced.

If you don’t want a My Health Record, you can:


or

2. Come to Winnunga AHCS to see our dedicated Project Officer, Kacey Boyd, who can assist you through the process. To do this, you can ask for Kacey at one of our Reception points.

If Kacey is unavailable, you can leave your name and contact details and Kacey will call you back and talk you through the process. However if you are a Winnunga AHCS client and you have given Kacey permission to act on your behalf to opt out, she can do an assisted deregistration for you without you having to doing anything except giving Kacey the permission to opt out on your behalf.

‘‘Anyone who does not want a personal electronic health record will now have until 31 January 2019 to opt-out.’’

Fact: There are a number of access and security settings you can set up on your My Health Record to choose which information your healthcare providers can see.
Winnunga Bus Service

They’re the most well-travelled duo in Canberra and they do such a deadly job too! Meet Winnunga AHCS’ Transport Officers Mick Ella and Ted Longford. Mick and Ted operate the Winnunga AHCS bus service.

It’s a daily service, Monday to Friday, which provides transport to Winnunga AHCS clients who may for whatever reason otherwise be unable to get to Winnunga for their appointments, to seek medical assistance or to access other Winnunga AHCS supports.

Mick, whose mob come from La Perouse, has been at Winnunga for 12 years (he did leave briefly but is thankfully back) and Ted has worked at Winnunga for over 10 years. They both enjoy what they do and say the highlight of their job is making a difference to the lives of clients and also the good yarns they share.

‘You see everyone on the bus. I like mixing with the elders. They have good yarns. The clients trust us. There’s that respect’ Ted explained.

Mick says ‘We’re what we call accidental counsellors. I’ve been talking with people all day. Our clients open up to us. But we call the bus ‘Vegas’. What happens on the bus, stays on the bus!’

Mick also added that his personal highlight is bringing the kids in. ‘I like bringing the kids in because it means they are getting seen by a doctor.’

‘It’s great making a difference to people’s lives. Our clients are families, individuals – people without transport or who might not have enough money for petrol’ Ted added.

The Winnunga AHCS transport service is free and both Mick and Ted drive a bus each, covering the ACT and surrounding areas including Queanbeyan. The buses are 12 seaters and also have a number of baby seats available. Presently there is no wheelchair access but hopefully in the future, this may change.

Mick covers the North side while Ted covers the South side. Each day, they would, each, easily drive 200 kilometres.

If you would like to inquire more about the service, or make a booking, please contact the Winnunga AHCS reception on (02) 6284 6222.

Fact: In the 2017-2018 financial year Winnunga AHCS recorded 4,125 episodes of transport.
Winnunga AHCS

Children's Christmas Party

Free Event

Friday 14 December 2018

10am to 3pm

Come celebrate Christmas with Winnunga at 63 Boolimba Cres, Narrabundah ACT.

There will be plenty to see, lot’s of activities food and fun!
Staff Profile

What do you do on the weekends?
Play footy and watch kids play rugby.

What is your favourite food?
Coconut Curry Chicken.

What do you like most about working at Winnunga?
The thing I like most about working at Winnunga is the other employees, they have really taking me in with open arms and have made my time at Winnunga so far a lot easier to do my job. Also getting to meet clients from all different communities and hearing about their stories.

My favourite pet?
Had a dog called Soco before we moved down from Darwin, left him with my dad.

What is your pet hate?
Soco hated having a wash and then I hated it when he went straight to the dirt to scratch himself after having a wash.

Name: Richard Fraser

Position: Social Health Worker

Who’s your mob?
I’m a Kimberley Man from Western Australia and my mob is the Kadjerong people.

Where’s your country?
I was born in Katherine in the Northern Territory, moved to Darwin when I was three years old and recently moved down to Canberra at the start of the year with my young family.

Who is your favourite singer/band?
Alan Jackson.

What is your favourite song?
It’s Five O’clock Somewhere – Alan Jackson.

Do it with us, not to us