

Indigenous Health Workforce Forum –Short Report Canberra 5-7 July 2010

The Forum was hosted by the National Indigenous Health Equality Council (NIHEC), and sponsored by Minister Warren Snowdon, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery.

The structure of the Forum included short presentations on specific topics or research, followed by workshoping topics as outlined in the program. Four main areas came up Indigenous staff in the workforce plus health workforce in Indigenous health, and getting people into the workforce from school, and retaining and attracting those who have left.

The workshop items were relatively short and specific, and structured slightly differently throughout the program to ensure maximum networking opportunities, allowing ideas to develop from other ideas. These have been collected and summaries were minited to capture the ideas and any ongoing discussion, for a greater report development.

Minister Snowdon acknowledged the need for working across the silos in government, and the need for a coordinated approach for development and strategies that support mentoring of careers into and within health. He would like to see the retention strategies that have been available being continued and mentored for a lifelong career in Indigenous Health Practice. His discussion drew on the need to develop an interest in health careers from an early age. And also to attract the mature age into the industry.

Shane Houston from NIHEC identified that a consistent and available workforce was required. He recognised the changes in workforce, such as X & Y Generation and their expectations of material rewards and regular change to retain them. He referred to some entrenched ideas that created challenges and the lack of Cultural Competence. His overall directions included the openness to do things differently, being bold; Use our data –rethink and refocus; develop the future and the current workforce to meet the needs.

Katrina Fanning from DEEWR outlined the issues around building the capabilities in the Indigenous labour force. Issues included career readiness for school leavers, developing an Indigenous Academic plan – to guide and mentor students toward a career. *Some questions I had included how many positions could be created? To support new students in training – positions for this, and where do the trained get the positions where they can be mentored in their early years. Funding would be required.*

Kiralee also from DEEWR presented some statistical information – provided in the participants' folder that will be forwarded. She cited some new, and as yet unpublished research that what the barriers were to taking up careers in health included were, lack of awareness of Health as a career, lack of Pathways information, considered too much book learning and difficult issues to deal with such as death. Areas that were seen as motivators included helping people / family members, recognition and observing the pathways of family members. Indigenous people going

into health has increased, but still significantly lower than mainstream %. More Mature age than youth. See folder 'Targets Analysis' tab for research readings.

Ideas that came up included the Summer camps, joint ventures for a road show, recommended Education Dept funded, but all involved departments committed; Indigenous Clinical Schools, Centre's of Excellence in knowledge, and establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander College – a collaborative environment.

Greg Phillips from NIHEC spoke and supported the mentoring idea, where there could be an easier transition between school/ work experience/ VET and HE. He promoted culturally safe learning, and support for Lecturers who were used to old style education strategies. He advised that it was critical to give career information and support to students and workers on the career paths. He promoted health and education sector collaboration, and support and recognition for regional variances. Cultural Safety was a strong item of discussion, including becoming everyone's responsibility to learn cultural safety, including practitioners. Promote the 'awesome learning opportunities' to build an Indigenous Health workforce. ? Develop an Indigenous support agency to provide support to those working in Indigenous Health.

Opportunities:

- AHW competencies pathways
- RTO's VET supporting initiatives
- VETiS – School Based Apprenticeships
- Student Centered programs- suited to student need – Linking to Industries
- Coherent Articulation to University
- Workforce Planning / National Mentoring Scheme.
- Rural Health Clubs
- Funds pool – to promote careers, rather than each individual area seeking their own.
- Marketing Road Show
- Identify those with interest or talent and guide them – need mentors and career support.
- Case Management from schools
- Summer School programs

All leading to a term that became popular as 'A pipeline to Health Careers' including many of the above.

Also discussed were the Review and Redesigning of health roles – Expecting translation from one role to another. ? restructure of funding options – positions or task model.

Peter Carver gave a presentation that was particularly interesting and relevant at this time, with the project that has just established HealthWorkforce Australia <http://www.hwa.gov.au/> developed to undertake projections and research, develop partnerships, promote appropriate training environment and develop competencies across the VET and HE sector, and initiate incentivizing priority areas of delivery nationally.

To take away:

VET and HE to market better into schools. VETiS to be established in Health and related areas:

*Some issues to be managed are level of maturity for experience for experience, type of experiences – may only need to be tours, talks etc. Capacity of organisations to absorb that or develop funding options to enable staffing to be available.

Develop capacity for VET & HE to accommodate increasing numbers relevant to the support required by students, and mentoring program

Cultural Competency inclusion in Health programs – and other staff and programs within the institution.

Develop clear paths for Indigenous Pathways across all health and related programs.

It was a great forum with a number of people who were passionate and energetic in developing forward ideas, where no idea was too outrageous and productive discussions were held, with an overall feeling that the event would be able to progress an increased and talented Indigenous workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend.

Vicki Williams.