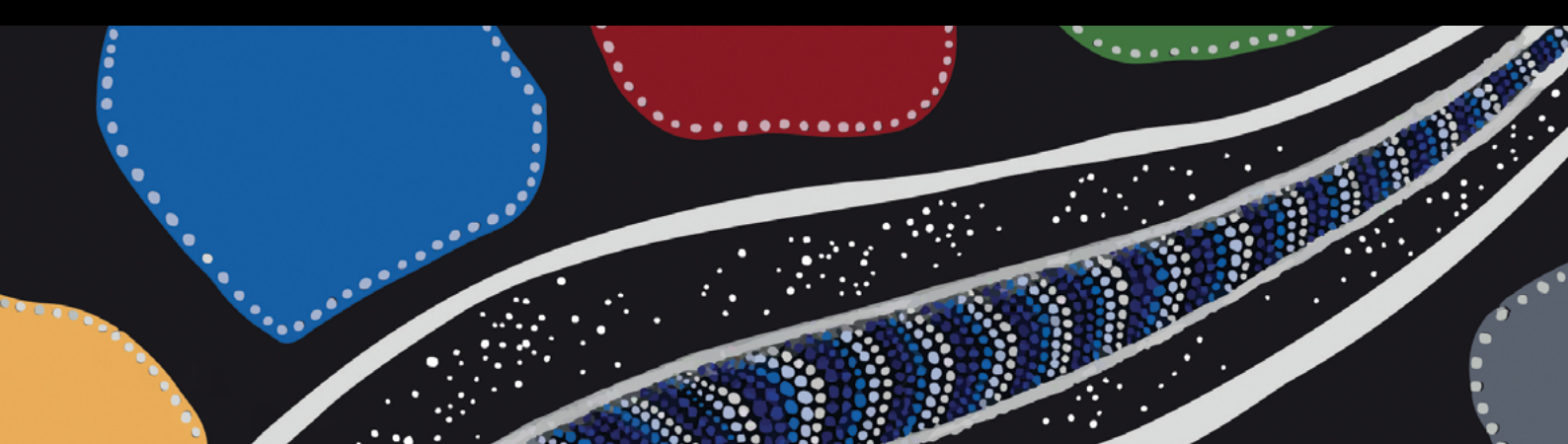


REPORT

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aging Well Research Symposium

THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge that SAHMRI is located on the traditional lands of the Kurna people and pay our respects to the Kurna people, Elders past and present. We acknowledge their continuing connection to this land and thriving cultural practices and knowledge. We also pay respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples attending from other areas around Australia.



SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW

On Thursday 17 October 2024, Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity hosted the 2nd annual The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Well Research Symposium at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute, Adelaide. In this symposium we welcomed our Ageing Well Services Network of frontline service providers from aged care, health and social services to discuss “systems connection” priorities to strengthen care and support systems.

SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS

Welcome to Country

We were welcomed to Kurna Country by Aunty Ros Coleman and Daniel Coleman. Aunty Ros talked about the importance of the Symposium’s agenda for the day and the importance of healthy ageing and aged care needs of elders and the need for research to inform policy and service delivery.

Aunty Ros Coleman

Aunty Ros is a Kurna and Narungga woman, respected Elder and leader within the Kurna community. Aunty Ros is a recent Director of the Kurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation and has spent many years working throughout Adelaide with a passion for seeing people reach their potential and find their purpose.

Daniel Coleman

Daniel Coleman is a Narungga, Kurna and Wirangu man. Daniel has spent many years working in Aboriginal cultural heritage and Aboriginal cultural education services. Daniel also has a passion for sharing the Yidaki, commonly known as the Didgeridoo, through Welcome to Country ceremony.



Opening Address

Associate Professor Odette Pearson presented on Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity Theme program of healthy ageing and aged care research. An outline of the recently commenced system connector research project was provided and informed the focus of this seminar. Study highlights included results from the “Leaving No-One Behind” study that provides evidence on health, including the number of comorbidities and activity status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receiving aged care between 2017 and 2019. This study is being done in collaboration with the Registry of Senior Australians to answer questions of importance to Aboriginal communities.

The publication can be accessed here: <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52353>

Celebrating Eldership Aunty Shirley Peisley dedication

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that the following dedication contains references deceased person.

Aunty Shirley Peisley AM (1941-2024) was a Ngarrindjeri/Boandik woman who dedicated her life to the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, leaving behind a great legacy of advocacy, compassion and leadership.

Aunty Shirley was a remarkable advocate for Aboriginal communities, recognised with the Order of Australia Medal in 2000 for her extensive contributions across culture, heritage, legal, health, welfare, and the Catholic church. She played a pivotal role as a campaign leader ahead of the 1967 Referendum and was the first Co-Chair of the City of Adelaide Reconciliation Committee (2002-2005), which aimed to advance reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider city community.

In the 1960s, she was a member of the Council of Aboriginal Women of South Australia, successfully lobbying for essential services for Aboriginal peoples. In the 1970s, she broke new ground as the first Aboriginal female Probation and Truancy Officer, working with youth and the Children’s Court.

Aunty Shirley was a cherished friend to many at SAHMRI, particularly with Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity Theme and SAHMRI Women’s and Kids, Aboriginal Communities and Families team, and her lifelong contributions to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations were invaluable.

Aunty Shirley Peisley AM, whose legacy of service and dedication to the Aboriginal community will be remembered and honoured.



Invited presentation

Ms Andrea Kelly is a proud Warumungu and Larrakia woman with over 30 years of dedicated service in the Australia Public Service. Her career has been distinguished by her commitment to advancing the rights of First Nations peoples through influential roles, including her position as Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Reconciliation Australia. Notably, she played a pivotal role in establishing the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, a landmark initiative addressing historical injustices faced by Indigenous communities. Currently serving as the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner, Andrea Kelly leads efforts to advocate for culturally safe aged care services for older First Nations people Australia. Andrea's extensive experience and deep cultural insights drive her ongoing work to influence public policy and achieve meaningful change for First Nations peoples.

Ms Kelly, presented on her work and consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the first year of her role. Her presentation included findings of what she has heard from frontline workers and the 1000 older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the nation. Andrea provided some insight into the barriers and opportunities for system connection and next steps including a report that will include recommendations arising from the consultations. This report is expected to be delivered to the Minister for Aged Care before December 2024.

Panel Discussion

Dr Adriana Parrella

Wardiparingga Aboriginal Health Equity
SAHMRI (MC)

Ms Andrea Kelly

Interim First Nations Aged Care
Commissioner, Commonwealth Department
of Health and Aged Care

Mr James Atkinson

Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal
Community Elders Services, Victoria

Ms Jennifer Morris

Business Support Officer Aboriginal
Community Services

Panel (left to right): Ms Andrea Kelly, Mr James Atkinson, Ms Jennifer Morris, Dr Adrianna Parrella



The panel provided insights on the challenges and opportunities to improve systems connection from the perspectives of policy, program and frontline service provision. The panellists discussed opportunities on how aged care programs are delivered and the importance of human relationships that bring service providers across sectors together.

Throughout the Q & A session the audience raised crucial issues around the future of in-home aged care and the new “help at home” Support at Home Program to be introduced in 2025. In particular what potential benefits it will deliver Elders. A common theme throughout centred around a need for continuity and clarity across service programs with regards to funding eligibility of items to keep Elders safe at home.

Roundtable Discussion

The Round table discussions were to seek attendees’ views on assessing needs and improving system connection across health, aged care and social services.

Community Elders Roundtable

What is important for older Aboriginal people in their ageing years and how can aged care services provide for their needs?

The Aboriginal Elders highlighted several key areas for improving aged care to support their needs in their ageing years. They emphasised the need for Aboriginal workers, both male and female, to provide culturally appropriate care and communication. Addressing the gap in available Aboriginal workers is crucial. The Elders also stressed the importance of focusing on health, particularly through exercise and rehabilitation programs.

The Elders described that aged care often resembles institutionalisation, leading to feelings of being controlled and feeling ignored due to a lack of staff. They would like to see more power and autonomy for Aboriginal people within the system. Discrimination based on age and disability is a significant concern, and there is a need for aged care services to understand and respect the individual ‘my journey’, rather than treating people as numbers. Recognising and addressing behaviours stemming from trauma through culturally safe practices is essential. Effective communication with providers is also critical, ensuring that Elders feel heard and validated.



Service provider Roundtables

In your organisation, what is already working well in terms of service delivery across health, aged care and other community services?

- Community service programs (within their organisation) are working well.
- Progress towards building a First Nations model of service delivery.
- Within government health services, there is a strong network of leaders and senior staff advocacy is present.
- Aboriginal health teams provide excellent care and connection, although funding is insufficient.
- Cultural competency training, self-determination initiatives, the development of an Elders village, and building Aboriginal leadership within directorates are also notable strengths.
- What are some important attributes of a successful partnership e.g. between health, aged care and other sectors?
- A successful partnership between health, aged care, and other sectors hinges on several key attributes. Core funding is essential, along with additional support for social workers and community engagement to address diverse needs.
- Streamlined system connections ensure seamless service delivery, while appropriate communication tools, including culturally safe language, foster effective interactions.
- Interim services, adequate resources, efficient administration, and a well-trained workforce are also crucial to maintaining high standards of care and support across sectors.

What would help your organisation to better assess unmet needs of your clients and respond accordingly?

- For clients who relocate and re-enter services, it is crucial to ensure seamless access to funding and services without repeated assessments.
- Developing guidelines for homecare that are less restrictive.
- Appropriate client assessments by local assessors with contextual community knowledge rather than disconnected external assessors to ensure cultural safety and relevant service allocation.
- Organisations that are genuinely connected with Aboriginal communities are better at establishing good services relationships and understanding of client needs.
- Practical cultural safety training, led by Aboriginal people, focusing on appropriate communication and relationship-building is essential.
- Improving education around assessments and system access.
- More culturally appropriate resources and a broader availability of aged care specialist officers are needed.
- There must be greater accessibility to clients' information across systems to ensure effective and timely service responses.



What would be your top 3 ideas of how to improve system connection to support ageing well?

Coordination

Streamlining discharge protocols, ensuring smooth transitions from hospital to home with adequate support from GPs, nurses, and other healthcare providers.

Improving navigation within systems such as education through face-to-face events to foster better connections and support.

Interconnection

Improving integration across programs such as NDIS, health and social support services, and government agencies.

Emphasising cultural sensitivity in case notes, terminology, and the use of interpreters.

Trauma-informed care is crucial.

Financial models of care/eligibility for services that meet the unique needs of the Stolen Generations, including through private health insurance.

Communication

Effective communication from providers can be achieved through regular emails, newsletters, and education spotlights on best practice.

Updates from the First Nations Aged Care Commissioner.

Empowering the First Nations Aged Care Commissioner with more authority.

A system that shares data to prevent clients from repeating their stories are vital.

What is needed in and between services to increase access to the supports older people need and are entitled to?

- Advocacy, Culture - Culturally sensitive organisations.
- Not be forced into mainstream services because of lack of Aboriginal service options and choice.
- There is a need to increase the availability of culturally specific services.
- Improved timeliness of services.
- Consistency across in service eligibility and information about clients' entitlements.
- Fund preventative aged care initiatives through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).



THE FIVE C'S OF ABORIGINAL INFORMED SYSTEM CONNECTION

Throughout the day symposium attendees provided suggestions on the following attributes of system connection and service navigation.

Collaboration

- Specific navigator workforce roles to intentionally bring people and sectors together
- Place - based initiatives
- Bringing multi-disciplinary teams and community together around projects, goals or topics
- Need to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector organisations in service delivery
- The NGO sector should partner with ACCO & ACCHO sectors. Benefit - sharing & capability building.

Cultural Needs

- Build a culturally competent sector
- Options for ACCO, ACCHO & housing support
- Inter-generational programs to support cultural knowledge transmission - Elders and young people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory/ directors' group should be compulsory on organisation boards and executive leadership
- Aged care options 'on Country' "We need this to happen, communities need Elders"

Communication

- Create a South Australian Aged Care Network that is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific
- Lived experience identified roles (e.g. Aboriginal carers) who can walk alongside, help navigate
- Diverse communication channels to cater to different needs

Choice making

- Well informed and supported decision making?
- Short term trials, such as aged care program placements for people to experience options before committing

Coordination

- Communities of practice across sectors
- Aged Care network of leadership representatives across NGO, government, ACCO and ACCHO sectors would demonstrate commitment to working together
- Increase diversity of funding for Aboriginal aged care
- Identify systemic racism within policy, practice and delivery models



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Welcome to Country:

Aunty Ros Coleman and Mr Daniel Coleman

Celebrating Eldership –Aunty Shirley Peisley AM (1941 – 2024) Dedication video

- Family of Aunty Shirley Peisley – Thank you for allowing us to share the video.
- Aboriginal Community Services CEO Graham Aitken and the ACS team

Community Elders

- Aunty Martha Watts
- Aunty Elaine Rigney
- Aunty Jean Pinkie
- Uncle Alex Stengle
- Uncle Dennis Rigney

Invited speaker:

- Ms Andrea Kelly, Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care
-

Panel members:

- Ms Andrea Kelly, Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care
- Mr, James Atkinson, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Community Elders Services, Victoria
- Ms Jennifer Morris, Business Support Officer Aboriginal Community Services
- Dr Adriana Parrella, Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity (MC)

Round table facilitators:

- Dr Adriana Parrella
- A/Prof Rachel Reilly
- Ms Courtney Hammond
- Ms Tameeka Leremia
- A/Prof Natasha Howard
- Dr Christianna Digenis
- Mr James Bevan

Audiovisual and Registration:

- Ms Kate Kwenda
- Ms Sachi Calabrese
- Dr Christianna Digenis

Master of Ceremony:

- A/Prof Odette Pearson

Attendees:

- The symposium was attended by 55 attendees from 30 organisations in person and online. Thank you for your participation.

Funding:

Connecting aged care, health care and social services systems to support older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live their best lives [MRFF 2024389]. Odette Pearson is funded by an NHMRC Investigator Grant [GNT2026852].





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE

To get in touch, please email us at wardliparingga@sahmri.com

To view our research, please visit our website at sahmri.au/AHE

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter [@wardliparingga](https://twitter.com/wardliparingga)

