



# Weenthunga Health Network



## 2014 - 2015 Annual Report

## President's Report

I have had the pleasure and privilege of being in the role as President of the Weenthunga Health Network since January this year. Prior to this, Weenthunga's President was Rani Lawler – a wonderful young Podiatrist with enthusiasm and commitment to Weenthunga's vision.

I would like to acknowledge Rani's contributions at our Committee deliberations, at our members' meetings and particularly at our Melbourne Health Day: *Womens' Talk* – being there to encourage and inspire other young women into health careers. Rani is now living and working in Sydney.

It has been a pleasure to work with my colleagues on the Weenthunga Committee of Management - reviewing Weenthunga's goals, setting our annual objectives, and monitoring Weenthunga's progress in achieving these objectives, whilst being cognisant of the financial realities.

Weenthunga benefits from the collaborative partnership of our Health and Education Consultant, Steff Armstrong and Lin Oke, our Executive Officer. Together, these two leaders, demonstrate through their practice, the value of First Australian and Australian collaboration, of 'two way talk'. Together they provide guidance and mentorship to our small staff team and volunteers.

I look forward to the year ahead, where the Weenthunga Health Network will again make significant contributions to strategies addressing the inequities in First Australian and Australian health in Victoria.

Rebecca Crawford  
President

## Weenthunga Committee of Management

Following last year's AGM, two new Committee members Marika Jackomos and David Menzies joined the Committee of Management and the Office Bearers were elected: Rebecca Crawford President, Terori Hareko-Samios Deputy President and Carol Mioduchowski Treasurer.



Rani Lawler  
President till January

Profession: Podiatrist.  
First Australian: Torres Strait  
Islander descendant.



Rebecca Crawford  
President from January

Profession: Aboriginal Community  
Development Worker, Dental Health  
Services Victoria.  
First Australian: Barkindji woman from  
western region Darling River, NSW.



Terori Hareko-Samios  
Deputy President

Profession: Social Work Masters student,  
Team Leader, Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Health, Cohealth.  
First Australian: Papua New Guinean /  
Torres Strait Islander descendant.



Carol Mioduchowski  
Treasurer

Profession: Podiatrist,  
North Area Health.  
Manager – Barwon Health Community  
Health and Rehabilitation services.  
Australian.



Karen Hill  
Committee Member

Profession: Nutritionist and PhD  
candidate.  
(sports nutrition and exercise  
metabolism).  
First Australian: Torres Strait Islander  
descendant.



Delyth Lloyd  
Committee Member

Profession: Mental health researcher  
and project manager at the  
University of Melbourne.  
Australian: Welsh.  
Lived in Australia since 2001.



Marika Jackomos  
Committee Member

Profession: Manager  
Aboriginal Programs .  
at Mercy Hospital for Women.  
First Australian: Yorta Yorta Woman.



David Menzies  
Committee Member

Profession: Manager Quality  
Systems and  
Health Partnerships  
at Fitness Australia.  
Australian.

## Governance and Operational Model

Weenthunga's governance model is acknowledged for being First Australian led whilst emphasising First Australian and Australian collaboration. First Australians are the decision makers as they collaborate and share with the Australians in Weenthunga. The Committee of Management will always comprise a majority of First Australians, and the position of President can only be held by a First Australian. The model underpins Weenthunga's operations as we acknowledge the value of combining First Australians' knowledge, experience and skills in working with First Australian organisations, communities and people, with the Australians' knowledge, experience and skills in the health system and services and organisational management. To others it may appear inefficient, resource heavy, but we have learnt that it is most effective and contributes to sustainable progress.

## Weenthunga's Aims and Objectives

The Weenthunga Health Network aims to contribute to strategies to improve the health and well-being of First Australians in Victoria. To achieve this aim, Weenthunga's primary focus is to contribute to:

- Improving the uptake of health careers by First Australian school leavers; and
- Improving the knowledge, competencies and collaboration of the Victorian health workforce working with First Australians, better equipping them to provide culturally sensitive services.

## Executive Officer's Report

The 2014-2015 year has seen a significant growth in Weenthunga's staffing: both of the leadership roles, Steff Armstrong and mine, were doubled in time, the Business and Finance Managers' time has been increased, a First Australian Local Coordinator and her Australian Collaborator were appointed, as were two other very part-time staff into operational roles.

It is this growth in capacity which has enabled Weenthunga to increase its work: encouraging a greater uptake of health careers by young First Australians; utilising our networks to link young First Australians with support; providing advice and sharing our ideas with Victorian health services and their Aboriginal employment project officers; presenting at regional and state (health & education) conferences; and developing attractive promotional flyers, and letterhead.

Weenthunga's Committee of Management has provided great leadership this year. They are a great group to work with and I would like to acknowledge their significant voluntary contribution to Weenthunga.

I look forward to our year ahead extending Weenthunga's contributions.

Lin Oke  
**Executive Officer**



Above: Steff Armstrong, Rebecca Crawford and Lin Oke.

## Health and Education Consultant's Report

Working part time with Weenthunga as its Health and Education Consultant and with Bendigo senior school during 2014, observing first-hand the work-load and commitment required to complete year 12 and follow a pathway into health, provided cause for me to reflect: "How do we effectively support these girls?" "What will add value to their already busy lives?" The answers I believe are in forming friendships, fostering leadership skills, and knowledge and understanding of their identity. With this in mind, a number of Weenthunga's 'building resilience' activities occurred during late 2014 that was a combination of both roles. The girls were provided with opportunities to work together at events and learn about culture as well as reflecting on their own identity.

Many discussions have continued in our Bendigo network around mentoring/tutoring, key components of support for the girls to successfully study. In mid-2015 a relationship was formed with Monash Rural Health, where 3rd year medical students began to tutor students. We are continuing to improve this process. The many discussions required to form an effective network of supporters is continuous and time consuming. For the girls to be successful at school, engage in further education and then into the workforce, is a focus for many agencies. There is a challenge to manage this process of effectively connecting with the student and their family regularly and supporting them to succeed at school and follow their dreams.

A major activity, which commenced in early 2015, is an evaluation of our network model in the Bendigo region. Its effectiveness, outcomes and impact will be identified along with the elements of the model that are needed for scale up.

Stephanie Armstrong  
**Health and Education Consultant**

## Weenthunga Staff

Over the past year, staffing hours have increased due to the generous support of our donors. The Weenthunga Staff all work on a very part-time basis, with flexible working arrangements to be available as and when the capacity is required. The challenge of building a staff team, when all staff members work in disparate locations has been managed through the creation of a 'virtual office' and through valuable face to face team meetings. All staff contribute to building a solid framework from which Weenthunga will continue to grow.

Lin Oke, Executive Officer  
Steff Armstrong, Health and Education Consultant  
Melanie Dooley, Finance and Business Manager  
Tracy Smith, Communications Manager  
Sam Corrie, Senior Policy Officer  
Marianne Hunter, Volunteer Project Officer  
Marjan Geertsema, Volunteer Geelong Collaborator  
Geelong Local Coordinator (currently vacant)

## Treasurer's Report

2014 - 2015 has continued to see growth in Weenthunga's core business activities and its profile for the great work and impact it is making. With this growth, further resources have been invested by engaging project personnel providing a sound foundation for the sustainability of Weenthunga and meeting our vision and mission.

We continue our partnerships with Philanthropic trusts. Their generous grants have allowed us to take on projects and work in key areas to meet objectives. We would like to thank these organisations who have supported this opportunity to engage with young First Australians to look at health careers as an option. We have also had a number of individuals who have given personal donations and we thank these individuals, who support Weenthunga financially and assist us in achieving our vision.

Staff expenses and project activities have again been the main expenditure. The organisation is bespoke, gaining momentum, achieving successful outcomes. The surplus of \$108,474 for 2014-2015 has been managed to provide certainty of operations for the ensuing 18 months whilst we seek further funding from government grants and forge relationships with other associations to maintain sustainability. There are no outstanding liabilities for Weenthunga.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Melanie Dooley, who aptly looks after a number of business functions and preparing our financials and Lin Oke, who continues her stewardship and direction of Weenthunga.

Carol Mioduchowski  
Treasurer

*Note:* a full copy of the audited financial statements, provided at the AGM, are available on request from members.

	June 2011	June 2012	June 2013	June 2014	June 2015
Financial Report	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Income	4,640	33,023	76,584	85,631	212,198
Expenditure	(9,738)	(5,546)	(28,425)	(68,736)	(103,723)
Surplus/Loss	(4,738)	27,477	48,159	16,895	108,474

### Remunerated positions

Health & Education Consultant			0.13 EFT Sept '12	0.43 EFT Aug '13	0.6 EFT Jan '15
Executive Officer				0.1 EFT Aug '13	0.2 EFT Jan '15
Project Officer				0.2 EFT Aug '13	
Finance and Administration Manager				0.2 EFT Aug '13	0.26 EFT July '15
Communications Manager					0.2 EFT Feb '15
Senior Project Officer					0.1 EFT Feb '15

## Weenthunga's Financial Supporters 1 July 2014-30 June 2015

Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust



The Towards a Just Society Fund  
A sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation



Australian Communities Foundation sub funds:

- B B & A Miller Fund
- Alf & Meg Steel Fund
- Fairer Futures Fund
- Sunning Hill Fund
- Beecher Family Charitable Fund
- EM Horton Family Fund

## Weenthunga's Members

Weenthunga's membership has grown steadily to 255 by the end of August 2015 – with 27% of members being First Australians. This is a significant indicator of value when compared to the percentage in Victoria's health workforce which might be about 4% (in the public hospitals it is known to be 0.16%).

Weenthunga's members come from a great diversity in health roles, including: Aboriginal Health Project Management; Aboriginal Health Research; Aboriginal Hospital Liaison; Audiology; Chiropractic; Community Development; Dental Therapy; Diabetes Education; Dietetics; Exercise Physiology; Fitness Training; General Practice; Health Education; Health Services Management; Health Promotion; Indigenous Healthy Lifestyle Work; Medical Specialty; Medicine; Mental Health Work; Midwifery; Neuropsychology; Nursing; Nutrition; Occupational Therapy; Optometry; Osteopathy; Pharmacy; Physiotherapy; Podiatry; Public Health; Psychiatry; Psychology; Social Work; Speech Pathology.

## Members' Meetings and Resources

During the year we held two Member's meetings. For the topic: *"Asking THE question"*, Terori Hareko-Samios and John Whyte lead the discussion. Barriers to asking the question about a person's Aboriginality were discussed as well as talking through potential enablers, particularly noting that understanding our own identity is crucial to being able to be open and comfortable with other people's identity. Steff Armstrong was the speaker at the second meeting, sharing her knowledge and ideas *"Pay it forward: cultural connection and identity – the story of young First Australian women, leadership and health pathways"*. The Australian members attending the meetings spoke of their appreciation of being given insights and understanding and of their renewed energy to return to their workplaces with greater understanding to share with colleagues.



Above: Terori and Rebecca leading discussion.



Above: Steff and members.

Weenthunga's website is regularly updated with resources for members as well as information on upcoming events and further opportunities to learn, as well as relevant work and study opportunities.

Members receive informative monthly eNewsletters, in recent times produced on Publisher, thus enabling them to be printed off as attractive flyers for notice boards and work lunch tables.

## Awards

The Weenthunga Committee and staff were very proud of two of their Weenthunga colleagues who were honoured during the year with significant awards:

### Fellowship in Indigenous Leadership

Rebecca Crawford was awarded the Fellowship to support her work contributing to the health of First Australians in Victoria through raising awareness to the importance of good oral health.

### IAHA Young Indigenous Allied Health Professional of the Year

Rani Lawler's award acknowledged her commitment to supporting communities through her work as a young Podiatrist.



Above: Rebecca Crawford with Lin Oke (on left), Terori Hareko-Samios and Steff Armstrong.



Above: Jannine Mohamed CATSNaM, Rani, Lin, Trevor Ritchie IAHA

## Weenthunga Health Days: *Women's Talk*

### Metro / Melbourne

The ongoing successes of Weenthunga's Health Days: *Women's Talk* was evidenced in August 2014, with a day being hosted in Melbourne. Ten senior school girls attended the day, spending the morning at the Royal Children's Hospital and the afternoon at VACCHO, and concluding with a dinner where networking continued. The girls were mentored and inspired by an impressive list of speakers throughout the day: Terori Hareko-Samios, Social Work studies and A&TSI Team Leader; Sharon Mongta, Aboriginal Case Manager; Kerrie Thomsen, OT and Regional University Manager; Tanya Druce, Speech Pathologist; Marika Jackomos, Manager Aboriginal Programs; Cath Chamberlain, Midwife and academic; Ngaree Blow, Student Doctor of Medicine; Tracey Williams, Team Leader Medical Services; Theresa McNally, Acting Manager Dental Services; Faye Clarke, Nurse; Leisa Leon, Occupational Therapist; Kath Coff, Community Engagement Coordinator; Stephanie Blyth, Chiropractor; Rani Lawler, Podiatrist.



### Regional / Bendigo

Weenthunga hosted their first regional health day in Bendigo in May 2015. Eight young women from Bendigo and Castlemaine enthusiastically participated in a day full of interesting presentations from local health professionals, many of whom were First Australians: Jasmine Vendargon & Jenni Galvin, TAFE Nursing and Allied Health; Kerrie Thomsen, Occupational Therapist & Regional University Manager; Daniel Hogarty, Wildfire Rural Doctors group; Louise Holland, Women's and Sexual Health; Helen Aikman, Manager of Nursing and Midwifery Education; Deborah Webster, Aboriginal Community Development Broker; Leanne Fary, Aboriginal service advisor acute, aged and continual care; Daria Atkinson, Aboriginal health project officer; Kathryn Coff, Community Health Coordinator; Sue Ellen Radford, Mental Health Worker; Barb Gibson – Thorpe, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer.



Weenthunga appreciated the strong support from members in our local network, such as those from La Trobe University School of Health, Medicare Local, Bendigo Local Indigenous Network (BILN), Koorie Uni at Bendigo TAFE and Bendigo Health, as well as from key staff at both the Catholic College Bendigo and Bendigo Senior School. St John of God Health Care (SJOG) funded three scholarships to support the future studies of the students. It is pleasing that two students have now applied for nursing in 2016, and another two are undertaking a traineeship in aged care, whilst others have more schooling to complete.



The quality of the speakers and their passion for their careers, their communities and for the girls, are key to the success of the health days and we acknowledge and thank them for giving their time.

### Weenthunga Video: *Young Women Choosing Health*

In September 2014, the Weenthunga produced video "*Young Women Choosing Health*" was launched at a members meeting. The video tells Danika's story as she attends a health day and decides on her health career. It features presenters at the 2012 Weenthunga Health Day: *Women's Talk* as well as Danika, one of the students attending that day, and Steff Armstrong, Weenthunga's Health and Education Consultant.

The purpose of the video is to reach a wide audience of First Australian students – to capture their interest in the great variety of health careers and to illustrate good online resources which showcase health careers. It is hoped this might influence their understandings and decisions with their own health and career ideas. Listening to these health professionals and to Danika may inspire them to continue with their schooling, seek scholarships and maybe even undertake health courses – like Danika and these women.

The video link is available on our website. A Teacher's Resource is being developed to accompany the video and be used in school environments.



## Presentations and Participation

In March 2015 Lin Oke and Steff Armstrong presented at a forum in Gippsland on Aboriginal Employment in Gippsland Health Services. The forum was organised by the Department of Health and Human Services and brought together representatives from the health services in the Gippsland area. The opportunity allowed us to advise them of the way in which Weenthunga works through local networking to connect with young First Australians, promote health careers and provide support and encouragement which may lead to uptake of health roles.

Steff and Lin also presented at the Ngar-Wu Wanyarra Aboriginal health conference in Shepparton in April 2015, showcasing how Weenthunga uses its networking model to effectively achieve its two key objectives.

In May 2015 Rebecca Crawford and Lin Oke were invited to present on Weenthunga's model of local networking at a Department of Health and Human Services' Aboriginal Employment in Health forum.



Above: Lin and Steff with Carol Williams, VACCHO.

## Evaluating Weenthunga's Networking Model - The Girls Resilience Project.

Late in 2014, Weenthunga appointed Natalie Moxham and Nikki Brannigan from the consultancy firm, Leanganook Yarn, to evaluate the Weenthunga networking model, identifying the key factors for success and contributing to the evidence base around effective engagement of young First Australians, and particularly young women, leading to post-secondary choices in health careers.

The evaluators, with Steff Armstrong's assistance, have spoken with many of the young First Australians involved in her building resilience program and who have attended a Weenthunga health day, as well as some of their family and local supporters in Weenthunga's local network. Weenthunga is very appreciative of everyone's generosity with their time as well as their ideas and feedback.

The evaluation is due to be completed by December 2015. The evaluators will be guest speakers at the AGM in November.



## Strengthening Weenthunga's Capacity and Effectiveness in 2015-2016

In 2015-2016 we plan to grow and extend our staffing model and with this greater capacity Weenthunga is aiming to:

- Grow its membership
- Gain core funding from Government
- Establish partnerships with one or more national and Victorian Indigenous health organisations
- Establish more regional Weenthunga fostered networks of those working in education and health committed to supporting First Australians into health careers
- Hold more Weenthunga Health Days: *Women's Talk*
- Provide leadership in Victoria in fostering collaborative planning of how to effectively implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health curricula in Victorian health courses.



**Weenthunga Health Network Inc**  
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ABN: 95 615 678 762

Weenthunga Health Network Inc has ATO Income Tax Exemption and DGR status.

*Weenthunga means 'hear / understand' in Woiwurrung, language of the Wurunjeri people of the Kulin Nation*

Weenthunga artwork by Shawana Andrews 2010: Connecting Through Conversation: the flames represent the campfire, a focal point for sharing knowledge and listening. The circles represent communities, which have an abundance of knowledge to share.

First Australians is our preferred term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – regardless of where they live and avoiding the implication of non-entities for others.

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