

Weenthunga Health Network Inc



Annual Report
2012 - 2013

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It has been pleasing to see the steady growth of Weenthunga this year. We now have more members from around Victoria in a vast array of health roles. We have been very fortunate to have received a number of grants which have enabled us to undertake a number of projects and to gradually build the capacity of this Victorian network of First Australian and Australian health professionals committed to improving Indigenous health. Without the financial support and expressed support and belief in Weenthunga's endeavours by these small and committed philanthropic bodies and the people behind them we would have not made this progress.

The Weenthunga Health Network is a collegial Victorian network which encourages inter-disciplinary collaboration between Australian and First Australian health professionals, practitioners and workers with goodwill and commitment.

The Committee of Management has met during the year to review and confirm Weenthunga's objectives and to oversee its financial management and the steady work addressing its objectives - within its current capabilities.

It was particularly pleasing this year to be able to employ our first contracted staff member – Stephanie Armstrong as our Health and Education Consultant. Steff brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience as a Gamilaraay woman, early childhood educator and researcher and a commitment to working two-ways. We were very proud of Steff when she was awarded a Rowan Nicks Russell Drysdale Fellowship in Indigenous Health and Welfare (*see photo on front cover with NSW Governor receiving her award*). Steff has generously applied her fellowship funds to her work with Weenthunga, particularly focusing on First Australian senior secondary school girls – fostering local supportive networks in health and education, connecting with the girls and providing information about health career options.

The Committee appreciated members' interest in our second Annual General Meeting and the encouraging discussions held.

I thank my Committee of Management colleagues Karen Hill, Rebecca Crawford, Carol Mioduchowski and Delyth Lloyd for their Committee work and our honorary Executive Officer, Lin Oke for her passion, vision and sheer hard work in bringing our ideas into operation.

Kelli McIntosh
Weenthunga President



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

We organized our first Weenthunga Health Day: Women's Talk in August, which was so appreciated by both the senior secondary school girls and their teachers, as well as the presenters, that it is continuing as an annual event.

The women spoke of their health roles in a way that the students could appreciate, illustrating the strength of telling story is a part of Aboriginal culture. We video recorded some of these women's stories and they can be accessed on the Weenthunga website. By listening to these videos, it is hoped that more young women will consider taking on health careers. We were so pleased to have the grantor for this project – Val Johnstone, of the Johnstone Gumption sub-fund of the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust – to officially launch the website page with all of the recordings.

As Kelli has noted in her report, Weenthunga has greatly benefitted from the leadership, knowledge and wisdom that our Health and Education Consultant, Steff Armstrong brings to our work.

She and I have collaborated in meetings with leaders of philanthropic organisations and other key organisations working to objectives similar to Weenthunga's, as well as with Elders and other First Australian leaders in health in Victoria. Together we have drafted grant applications and mapped operational plans to achieve Weenthunga's objectives.

Weenthunga shares information and resource material with its members via regular emails and the members' section of the Weenthunga website and with the public via the news and events and public pages of the website.

Lin Oke
Executive Officer

WEENTHUNGA'S VISION: 'EQUALITY IN HEALTH FOR FIRST AUSTRALIANS AND AUSTRALIANS'

TO ADDRESS THE 'GAP' IN FIRST AUSTRALIANS' HEALTH:

Weenthunga aims to contribute to strategies to improve the health and well being of First Australians in Victoria.

Weenthunga Health Network's key objectives to meet this aim are to contribute to:

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

WEENTHUNGA'S GOVERNANCE MODEL

Weenthunga's Committee of Management comprises a mix of health professionals - First Australians and Australians. The position of President can only be held by a First Australian and there is a majority of First Australians on the Committee. The Committee members have responsibility for setting the strategic direction and parameters of the work of Weenthunga.

First Australians can be full members of Weenthunga and have voting rights at members' meetings. Australians can become Associate Members who can participate in members' meetings without voting rights.

WEENTHUNGA COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT 2012 - 2013



President
Kelli McIntosh



Deputy President
Karen Hill



Treasurer
Carol Mioduchowski



Committee Member
Delyth Lloyd



Committee Member
Rebecca Crawford

The Committee met during the year on three occasions to confirm Weenthunga's objectives and operational plan and to oversight its finances, as well as participating in the email discussions with the Executive Officer.

WEENTHUNGA HEALTH NETWORK - PEOPLE WORKING FROM A STRENGTH-BASED PHILOSOPHY

The Weenthunga Health Network has a strong belief in the value and benefits of collaboration between First Australians and Australians working together within the extensive field of health in Victoria – people who are devoted to working from a strength-based philosophy to “close the gap” in health.

Weenthunga offers membership to health practitioners keen to contribute to improved services for First Australian children, adults and elders and their communities in Victoria and will continue to liaise with the key Victorian Aboriginal health organizations, services and leaders to seek guidance on the Network’s objectives.

Weenthunga is demonstrating that its unique state-based grass-roots approach to facilitating networking amongst the health workforce - across all roles in health - is truly effective in contributing to improvements in the uptake of health careers by First Australian school leavers and in the knowledge and competencies of the Victorian health workforce working with First Australians.

Weenthunga’s membership is free – Victorians in health are encouraged to go online at www.weenthunga.com.au and join.

WEENTHUNGA MEMBERSHIP

Anyone in any health role in Victoria is encouraged to be a member of Weenthunga. Already our membership of First Australians and Australians is drawn from the fields of: Aboriginal Health Project Management; Aboriginal Health Research; Aboriginal Hospital Liaison; Community Development; Dental Therapy; Diabetes Education; Dietetics; Exercise Physiology; General Practice; Health Education; Health Promotion; Medicine; Mental Health Work; Midwifery; Neuropsychology; Nursing; Nutrition; Occupational Therapy; Optometry; Pharmacy; Physiotherapy; Podiatry; Public Health; Psychiatry; Psychology; Social Work; Speech Pathology – and we anticipate members from many more health roles joining us as the word is passed around.

By the end of June 2013 Weenthunga had 188 members from the Victorian health sector in a great variety of health roles - membership is not dependent upon qualifications or experience – Weenthunga is an inclusive network. Approximately 30 percent of the members are First Australians.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE YEAR 2012-2013

WEENTHUNGA HEALTH DAY: WOMEN'S TALK

The inaugural Weenthunga Health Day: *Women’s Talk* came about because of Steff Armstrong’s belief that strong relationships between First Australians and Australian people can improve educational and health outcomes. This philosophy was demonstrated in August 2012 when Stephanie partnered with Weenthunga and supported the development of a girl’s health day for a group of schools with First Australian students.

Nine young First Australian women visited Melbourne from the Kimberley town of Broome for a week. It was their teachers’ desire to expose this group of girls to ideas outside of Broome (Kimberly region) and broaden their views and career opportunities. Having worked in the Kimberley for 5 years and having a strong relationship with the coordinating staff of this group of teenagers, Stephanie initiated a discussion around preparing a day focused on health and wellbeing. Seeking a partnership that would support health she engaged the skills of the Weenthunga Health Network.

Having worked in various educational roles across Australia her decision to engage a larger number of young women through her contacts was a natural progression. Her relationships with various schools assisted in bringing a group of young women who were attending boarding schools in Melbourne from remote communities as well as a group from her home town of Bendigo. Twenty First Australian girls engaged in the Weenthunga Health Day. The girls had the opportunity to visit workplaces that highlighted First Australian women in health professions – the Wadja Clinic at the Royal Children’s Hospital and the Victoria Aboriginal Health Service. It is hoped that this will influence their understandings and decisions with their own health and career ideas and will be a beginning for some of these young women. Listening to these health professionals was a source of inspiration for these young women to continue with their schooling, seek scholarships and for some - undertake health courses – like these women before them. The women spoke of their health roles in a way that the students could appreciate, illustrating the strength of telling story is a part of First Australian culture.

Not only did the Health Day provide opportunities to meet and hear from the First Australian health professionals during the day but also at the dinner hosted by Reconciliation Victoria. Australian school friends were invited to also attend the dinner, with Inala Cooper and Fiona Stanley as guest speakers. Fiona openly acknowledged the skills and abilities of the young First Australian women at her table. One teacher commented “Fiona was able to make our girls so empowered after dining with them”.

Women's Talk Presenters August 2012

Denise McGuinness: Community Services Manager

Candice Liddy: Physiotherapy student

Jo Dwyer: Family Counsellor

Kaylene Williamson: Personal Trainer

Amanda Firebrace: Administration/Outpatient Support

Nyoka Morgan-Briggs: Aboriginal Health Worker

Moiray Raynor: Koori Emotional Well-being Worker

Erin Lowrie: Occupational Therapist

Rebecca Crawford: Wadja Clinic Coordinator

Dr Chantelle Stubna: Doctor

Weenthunga acknowledges the presenters generosity in sharing their stories



CONNECTING "CS" PROJECT

This project, which is associated with the Weenthunga Health Day: *Women's Talk*, offers a strategy of reaching out to and linking up First Australian senior school girls, not only with each other and their shared aspirations, but particularly with women in health roles - Aunties and Elders and Australians – on offer as mentors. It encourages *two way talk* and builds on the commitment of Weenthunga members to reconciliation.

It followed the Weenthunga Health Day: *Women's Talk* and feedback from the girls and their teachers who indicated that they would have liked to have had more opportunity to get to know each other. Firstly a social media discussion forum, *Shades of Purple*, was instigated as a means for the girls to maintain connection with each other and share ideas as well to showcase women in health careers, promote healthy lifestyles, good study skills and behavior - thus having a supportive and encouraging network around Australia. It is planned that their mentors, First Australian and Australian women in health careers, will join in the discussions. New articles, video clips and activities will be posted regularly to maintain the girls' interest.

Then the project *Connecting "Cs"* was commenced. In these community based events First Australian senior school girls are invited to join in some creative activities (painting, small gifts etc) at which women in health roles are also involved – to start some connections, have some conversations about courage, culture, choice, change and careers. It is anticipated that from these *Connecting "Cs"* events, girls will connect with others on their girls' own yarning place mentioned above - *Shades of Purple*.

When girls have expressed an interest in a particular health career, they have been offered a mentor in that field, relevant work experience opportunities and advice on scholarships. University academics have been approached to facilitate and support their entrance into the health course of their choice.

Steff and Lin were selected to 'make a pitch' for this project at a donor function organised by The Funding Network at the end of February. In April \$16,450 was received – the combined donations of many participants on the night.



WEENTHUNGA NETWORKING MEETING IN BENDIGO

Another strategy that Weenthunga's Health and Education Consultant has pursued has been connecting with and fostering networking amongst local community members, health and education professionals interested in supporting young First Australian secondary students through to career choices. A meeting in Bendigo was attended by over 20 personnel from many Bendigo organisations including: Rural Health School and Learning Theory and Indigenous Education Unit, La Trobe University; Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network; Bendigo Health Care Group; Local Indigenous Network; Loddon Mallee Region Department of Planning and Community Development, Aboriginal Affairs Vic; Bendigo Special Developmental School; Department of Health; Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises; and Rural Workforce Agency.

The group considered the need for First Australian secondary students, especially girls, to be encouraged and supported to continue with their schooling and to consider post school career choices, and discussed the topics of: what do we need to do; how can we help the girls hang in there with their schooling and traineeships? Many ideas, issues, and observations were offered during the lively discussion and concluded with everyone looking forward to further progressing some of the ideas and suggestions.

PRESENTATIONS

"Weenthunga Collaboration" – a presentation at the Indigenous Allied Health Australia Inc National Conference in Nov 2012 by Kelli McIntosh, President Weenthunga Health Network and an IAHA Director

"OTs developing organisations committed to the health of First Australians" a webinar developed by Kelli McIntosh and Lin Oke and presented by Lin in April 2013

TREASURER'S REPORT

2012- 2013 has been an amazing year of growth and development of substantial projects to help achieve our objectives for Weenthunga. With this growth has come a renewed look at our governance structures to ensure that we have a framework that we can build capacity to meet our vision and mission.

Of our \$76,584 income this year, \$73,450 was from philanthropic trust grants which have allowed us to take on projects and work on 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 as well and we thank these individuals, who support Weenthunga financially and in its vision.

Our expenditure of \$28,425 was primarily spent on project activities (which have included the Health and Education Consultant's costs and various resources) and small costs for administration infrastructure.

There are no outstanding liabilities for Weenthunga, with the seeding grant re-payments being finalised with the Koori OT scheme. We thank the Koori OT scheme for this initial grant and support to Weenthunga. A surplus of \$48,159 was recorded for the 2012-2013 financial year, which will be rolled over into further project and development work.

The Committee of Management also expresses its sincere appreciation to Trevor Donegan for his pro bono work as Auditor for Weenthunga Health Network Inc.

Carol Mioduchowski
Weenthunga Treasurer

Note: the Audited Financial Report 2012-2013 is available to members in the members' section of the Weenthunga Website

WEENTHUNGA'S PLANS FOR 2013-2014

1. Seek funding (from government and philanthropic sources) to establish core collaborative job sharing between First Australian and Australian staff and essential underpinnings to be able to efficiently and effectively operate.
2. Keep implementing the plans developed by Weenthunga's Health and Education Consultant to address the objective: improve the uptake of health careers by First Australian school leavers.
3. Continue working on the capacity building plans developed by Weenthunga's Executive Officer to enhance membership recruitment, promotional and publicity activities, website communication.

WEENTHUNGA'S FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

Weenthunga gratefully acknowledges the many grants and donations that have made all of Weenthunga's work and achievements possible.



Johnstone Gumption Sub-Fund



The Towards a Just Society Fund
A foundation of the Wellcome Community Foundation



Alf and Meg Steel Fund

Fairer Future Fund



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 Wurundjeri 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 – avoiding the implication of non-entities for others.

Graphic Design: Dixon Patten (Yorta Yorta and Gunnai)
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