



**Aboriginal  
Health Council  
of Western Australia**

December 2022

# AHCWA News



**AHCWA attends the Rural Health West**  
Aboriginal Health Conference

**AHCWA's New** Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pilot

**Aboriginal Environmental** Health Conference



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**This newsletter may contain images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that have passed away.**

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## Coffee break with: Des Martin

**Kaya and greetings,**

**Responding to the crisis at Banksia Hill, Premier Mark McGowan has announced a \$63 million plan to address conditions for youth in detention. It is clear that additional funding is desperately needed. But so is clarity around what is next for our young people in detention.**

We know that in Australia, Aboriginal youth are disproportionately represented in youth detention. A large majority of the youth detainees currently at Banksia Hill are Aboriginal. Aboriginal organisations and community leaders from all regions of Western Australia must be included in any future discussions in this space.

We know that these problems are complex and will require long-term changes across a range of areas. We know how troubled some of our young people are and the healing they need. We don't pretend these things can be fixed overnight. But we are certain that they won't be fixed without prioritising Aboriginal voices.

Premier McGowan has framed the issue in terms of public safety. In justifying the transfer of youth detainees to adult prison, he has stated his priority is protecting the community from violence. But these young people are members of our community. In fact, they are some of those in most desperate need of our protection. A significant proportion of young people at Banksia Hill have substantial neurodevelopmental impairment, and many have experienced disadvantage and neglect.

Use by Banksia Hill custodial officers of the restraint technique known as 'folding up', which has been outlawed in Queensland due to its suffocation risk, was reportedly ceased in recent weeks following intense media scrutiny. Reports have revealed self-harm, suicide attempts and mistreatment are ongoing within the centre. Amidst chronic understaffing and rolling lockdowns, children at Banksia Hill have faced extended stints in solitary confinement, being restricted to their cells in some cases for longer periods than detainees in adult prisons.

Our youth justice system is failing in its duty of care to the traumatised children with complex needs that we have in our charge. And by failing to provide the holistic supports that these children need to recover, it is failing to provide them with a path out of the cycles of crime they find themselves in.

This means it is failing to keep the community safe – the stated goal of the government.

The system that is in place is not protecting the community from violence, it is creating the very conditions that put the community at risk. The rates of recidivism related to youth in detention are a testament to that.

Trapping young people in the justice system diminishes their prospects of finishing school, gaining qualifications and finding employment - all of which raise the likelihood of them facing poverty and homelessness and turning to crime as adults.

It is the WA Government's responsibility to safeguard the health and welfare of these young people. To provide a system of care and rehabilitation that stops the cycle of reoffending by addressing its root causes.

Central to this is a trauma-informed model of care, and the provision of culturally secure, holistic health and wellbeing services for young people delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

We must ensure all work in this space is guided by the commitments made under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to partner and share decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about those issues that impact us.

These are just the first steps toward a more humane system and genuine rehabilitation. They do not begin to address the entrenched social issues and the legacies of colonialism that lead these young people to become caught in the youth justice system in the first place.

There is no doubt that this is a hugely complex issue. There is no easy solution. That is why it is vital our government forms real partnerships to drive strategic change. Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, and Aboriginal communities and leaders across WA, are ready to work with the government to deliver meaningful solutions.

Our youth in detention are members of our community, and we need to protect them. We need to help them heal and to flourish.



## Staff Update

This quarter AHCWA have welcomed the following staff:

### September

*Ear Health Program Officer* – Charlotte Duffy

*Graphic Designer (50D)* – Cherylynn Skeen

### October

*Tackling Indigenous Smoking Program Officer* – Rachel Radcliffe

*Sexual Health and Blood Born Virus Program Officer* – Rachael Corunna

*Public Health Program Officer* – Saba Danawala

*Traineeship Program Coordinator* – Josephine Cooper Panaia.

### November

*Secretariat Officer* – Katrina Bellotti

*Administration Trainee* – B Pedwell

*Care and Support Ready Project Officer* – Suzy Jasper

*Home Care Workforce Support Officer* – Nicole Leonard

*Tackling Indigenous Smoking Program Officer* – Daniel Hill

*Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pilot Project Officer* – Alison Scott.



*AHCWA hosted their annual Sexual Health Forum in November.*



*AHCWA's Sexual Health and BBV Program Coordinator Veronica Walshe presents at AHCWA's Sexual Health Forum*



*Delegates at AHCWA's Sexual Health Forum*

## **AHCWA's Annual** Sexual Health Forum

**AHCWA's Sexual Health Team hosted their annual forum on Friday, 18th of November. It was attended in person by 28 ACCHS staff, while four staff from ACCHS attended online. Overall there was representation from 13 WA ACCHS at the event as well as invited guests from one Northern Territory ACCHS, four staff from NACCHO and three staff from Flinders University Point of Care Testing program.**

The forum covered STI and BBV epidemiology by the WA Department of Health SHBBVP Epidemiology Team, an update from the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) around their on demand training, a whole group workshop on optimising syphilis point of care training in your health service and operator training with NACCHO and Flinders University. The day also included some fun prizes to win from under the Condom Christmas Tree which was decked out in its holiday best.



# Dr Seema Basil Named GP of the Year in the WA Rural Health Excellence Awards

**Mawarnkarra Health Service's Senior Medical Officer Dr Seema Basil has been named GP of the Year at the 2022 Rural Health West Excellence Awards.**

Dr Basil has been a passionate champion of Aboriginal health at the Roebourne Aboriginal Medical Service for the past nine years. Her role is to come with up with new ways to improve service delivery and to design the processes that help her team do the most good for the community.

Some of the projects she has initiated have included remote assessment and treatment of patients with Hepatitis C, allowing patients to stay on Country for management of their condition. She has also been instrumental in setting up visiting respiratory, endocrinology and cardiology services to address the needs of the community and reduce waiting times for access to specialist assessment. Dr Basil has also applied herself to supporting children with neurodevelopmental disability. She played a critical role in introducing a FAS-D clinic in 2021 in Roebourne so that children and families have the support they need to maximise their chances for educational and societal success. Most recently she has been working to develop a visiting hepatology service to Mawarnkarra to address the increasing incidence of liver disease, as well as securing an exercise stress testing machine to address issues around access to testing and prolonged waiting times.

Dr Basil is a British-Indian-Australian who grew up in Kenya. "I was first exposed to socio-economic disadvantage as a child and felt deeply moved by the poverty and hardship I witnessed," Dr Basil said. "I have always had a strong desire to contribute my part to society, especially to help those who are marginalised and disadvantaged."

After completing a medical degree at the University of Dundee in Scotland, Dr Basil worked for several years in Glasgow hospitals as a physician before commencing a career in General Practice, training in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the city. In 2009 she returned to London where she worked as a GP largely to ethnic minority groups before taking up a one year contract to work in Aboriginal Health at Mawarnkarra Health Service.

"After eight months at Mawarnkarra Health Service I was offered the role of Senior Medical Officer and my one year outback adventure has turned into nearly 10," Dr Basil said.

"It has been a journey of great personal discovery. By taking a leap of faith to come out here, I have been rewarded with trust and opportunity. My connection to the community is invaluable. I love the people of Roebourne and what's even more special is that I feel loved by them.



*Mawarnkarra Health Service's Senior Medical Officer Dr Seema Basil has been named GP of the Year at the 2022 Rural Health West Excellence Awards*

Dr Basil said that although she is far away from her family, the Mawarnkarra family has helped fill that space. "I love Ngarluma Country, I find it beautiful and peaceful and a special place to live. I have also loved the opportunity to be a doctor who does more. It has been very stimulating to go beyond the standard of metro general practice, to learn greater skills because specialists are not so readily available," she said.

Dr Basil said Mawarnkarra had a collaboration underway with hepatology services at Royal Perth Hospital, with telehealth clinics commencing in November.

"This clinic will address not only advanced liver disease and viral hepatitis, but it will also help with specialist support for managing increasing numbers of metabolic-associated fatty liver disease cases," she said.

"It is on my wish-list to get a Fibroscan for the clinic which will remove the need for patients to travel to Perth for imaging to rule out advanced liver fibrosis or cirrhosis when there is diagnostic uncertainty. Additionally, we have now secured our own stress test equipment and it's very exciting to soon be able to provide this service on site with support from Western Cardiology. I am still working towards increasing access to diagnostic assessments for children with neurodevelopmental problems, not just related to Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Autism, but also the largely overlooked developmental delay that can happen as a result of trauma. I would like to see a sustainable model for assessing children in the Pilbara with easy to access pathways for therapies and education supports," Dr Basil said.

Dr Basil has been named a finalist by Rural Health WA for the past two years, and her innovation and commitment to improvement also helped Mawarnkarra Health Service be named as a finalist of the Pilbara Community Service award.

**Congratulations to Mawarnkarra Health Service and to Seema Basil for this great acknowledgement.**



AHCWA took part in the Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference 2022 on the 19th and 20th November in Fremantle



Social and Emotional Wellbeing Coordinator Gemma Daniels presents at the Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference 2022



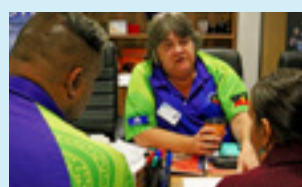
AHCWA's Public Health Program and Sexual Health Promotion Officer Ragilen Kristnasawmy presented at the conference on AHCWA's experience achieving Sexual Health Promotion During a Pandemic

## AHCWA attends the Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference

AHCWA took part in the Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference 2022 on the 19th and 20th November in Fremantle. The Conference focused on healing from the past and strengthening the future, and provided an opportunity to come together and learn from those who came before us. The conference program featured five streams: mental health, sexual health, cultural competency in health, chronic conditions and health across the life stages.

In the Sexual Health stream, AHCWA's Public Health Program and Sexual Health Promotion Officer Ragilen Kristnasawmy presented on AHCWA's experience achieving Sexual Health Promotion During a Pandemic. In the mental health stream, AHCWA's Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pilot Coordinator Gemma Daniels presented on the AHCWA pilot currently underway in the regions. The conference reflected on how we as a sector can move through the challenges faced over the last two years in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic. By learning from the past, we can strengthen our future.





AHCWA held Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pilot Planning Workshops on Wednesday, 28th and Thursday, 29th September

## AHCWA's New Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pilot is Recruiting

**The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia's new \$17.6 million pilot program to enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people in regional Western Australia is recruiting for staff.**

Led by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in their communities, the regional Social and Emotional Wellbeing Model of Service Program will increase access to holistic mental and healthcare services for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Mid-West, Goldfields and South-West.

Programs will be delivered at Bega Garnbirringu Health Service in Kalgoorlie; Derby Aboriginal Health Service in Derby; Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation in South Hedland; Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service in Geraldton; and South West Aboriginal Medical Service in Bunbury.

AHCWA held Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pilot Planning Workshops on Wednesday, 28th and Thursday, 29th September, at which positive feedback was received from participants, and a Community of Practice was resolved to be formed as an outcome.

Program facilitators have held ongoing stakeholder meetings, with constructive relationships being built with the Mental Health Commission and Transforming Indigenous Mental Health and Wellbeing staff.

In November, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pilot Coordinator presented on the program and AHCWA's Model of Service at the Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference.

AHCWA Chair Vicki O'Donnell said the pilot would work to improve quality of life for Aboriginal people through culturally secure prevention and community development, psychosocial support, targeted interventions and coordinated care by multidisciplinary teams.

"Aboriginal people have a holistic conceptualisation of health," Ms O'Donnell said. "Community, family, culture, spirituality, language, country, emotions and the physical are all understood as integral to wellbeing."

"Social and emotional wellbeing is influenced not just by physical health, but by mental health, and the social determinants of health; such as education, housing, employment and economic engagement," she said.

"The Social and Emotional Wellbeing framework identifies that for Aboriginal people, prevention of mental illness, access to support, treatment and recovery are all enhanced when a person's needs and aspirations are considered holistically, and interventions are culturally safe."

The three-year pilot program also works to increase the Aboriginal workforce, with three of the seven roles to be created within each service 50D identified.

**You can find the advertised positions at [ahcwa.org.au/ahcwa-jobs/](http://ahcwa.org.au/ahcwa-jobs/)**



*This November, AHCWA's Cancer Education Course for Aboriginal Health Professionals was held in Broome*

## Cancer Education Training in Broome

AHCWA's Training and Development Centre delivers a number of accredited and non-accredited qualifications and workshops providing culturally appropriate education and training to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across Western Australia. This November, AHCWA's Cancer Education Course for Aboriginal Health Professionals was held in Broome. Nine participants attended the training, three of whom had travelled from Umoona Tjutagku Health Service Aboriginal Corporation in Coober Pedy, South Australia. They were joined by AHP's from Kununurra, Karrartha, Halls Creek and Broome.

Various subject expert presented to the group as part of the training, including Cassandra Clayforth and Liz Bakowski from Cancer Council Western Australia. Presentations were also made by Kay Walley from Cervical Cancer Screening and Kaylene Bowes-Smith from Breast Cancer Screening Western Australia. Dr Hooi Ee, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital's leading gastroenterologist presented on the bowel cancer screening program.

The training featured site visits to Broome Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation, Blue House and Broome Hospital Tele chemotherapy unit, and participants completed various assessments, including group presentations on bowel and cervical cancers.



**To find out more about the this free training program for Aboriginal health professionals, please contact AHCWA's Training and Development Coordinator at [training@ahcwa.org](mailto:training@ahcwa.org) or call (08) 9227 1631**



# COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign for Regional Youth

With COVID-19 vaccination rates for Aboriginal children and adolescents under the age of 18 still lower than average, AHCWA and our Member Services have launched a COVID-19 awareness campaign targeted at regional youth. Rolling out across regional TV, streaming services, and our social media platforms, the campaign draws on peer health promotion methodology, which has a longstanding history of effectively changing health behaviours.

AHCWA has worked with our Member Services in the Kimberley and Goldfields to create content specifically aimed at the regions and including Aboriginal phrasing and videos of Aboriginal young people, which has been shown to be effective in previous social media campaigns targeting this group.

**Please help us share this campaign throughout our networks by sharing or downloading the videos at [www.ahcwa.org.au/covid-19/](http://www.ahcwa.org.au/covid-19/)**





*Public Health Program & Sexual Health Promotion Officer Ragilen Kristnasawmy presented at the Australian Association for Adolescent Health 2022 Youth Health Conference.*

## AHCWA Presents at AAAH 2022 Youth Health Conference

**The Australian Association for Adolescent Health 2022 Youth Health Conference provides the opportunity for researchers, health care professionals, academics, youth advocates and policy makers to come together with young people to network, share experience and showcase the latest findings, practices and models of care in adolescent health. The meeting allows for like-minded people to exchange ideas, make connections and inspire action, ensuring that young people are heard and that their health and wellbeing is seen as a priority.**

This year's conference, themed of 'Recovery. Resilience. Rights' encouraged a focus on the strengths of young people and how we can work together with them to identify needs and co-design services that address the right for young people to receive quality health care within their communities, in a post-Covid environment.

AHCWA's Sexual Health Team's abstract and poster on Sexual Health Promotion During a Pandemic were accepted by the AAAH committee as a presentation at this year's AAAH Youth Health Conference. Public Health Program & Sexual Health Promotion Officer Ragilen Kristnasawmy travelled to Melbourne for the conference, presenting on behalf of AHCWA. He had a great learning and networking experience joining his colleagues from the sexual health sector all over Australia.





AHCWA's Tackling Indigenous Smoking Team sponsored shirts for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Golf Championships

## AHCWA's TIS Team Represents at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Golf Championships

**AHCWA's Tackling Indigenous Smoking team participated in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Golf Championships this November, taking an opportunity to engage and yarn about smoking cessation with competitors.**

The TIS team sponsored shirts for the championships, which were held on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja, at the Vines Resort in Ellenbrook on Monday, 7th until Friday, 11 November.

The team also hosted a stall on the Wednesday, with information and promotional material shared throughout the day.

Around 90 competitors from across Australia took part in the event, which ran over four days, with a presentation dinner held on the final day of the tournament. The competition, which was launched with a Welcome to Country on the first day by Noongar Elder Nick Abraham, featured A, B, C and social grades. Michael Bell was the A-grade champion, while AHCWA's Dan Mason won the C-grade division. Following a few COVID-19 interrupted years, the tournament was the first held nationally since 2019; when it was hosted in Ballarat.



## Registrations are now open for the 2023 WA Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Conference

Registrations are now open for the 2023 WA Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Conference happening on the 29th and 30th March 2023 at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle. Early bird discounts are available until 16 December 2022.

Find more information or register at [events.ahcwa.org.au/waacchs2023](https://events.ahcwa.org.au/waacchs2023)



# The Aboriginal Environmental Health Conference Hears from the ACCHS Sector

AHCWA hosted the second Aboriginal Environmental Health Conference on the 24th and 25th of October, 2022 in Boorloo at the Parmelia Hilton Hotel. This was an invite-only forum, for representatives from each ACCHS and ACCO in the Environmental Health Sector. The forum heard from the sector about progress and challenges around the prevention and control of communicable and environmental disease in Western Australian communities, and a range of other environmental health issues, and worked to further collaborate and share knowledge related to these issues.



*AHCWA's 2022 Environmental Health Conference was held in October*







## AHCWA's Public Health Training Programs on the Road in Regional Western Australia

**AHCWA's sexual health training program, The Birds and BBVs, has been on the road again this quarter, working with ACCHS staff and other partner organisations to increase their skills, knowledge, confidence and motivation to yarn with their clients and community about the importance of STI and BBV testing. The program is facilitated in partnership with Hepatitis WA and Western Australian Aids Council and works to normalise sexual health within primary health care, and due to recent outbreaks in Western Australia, current training has had a strong focus on syphilis prevention.**

The team travelled to Albany and Roebourne, delivering the training at the Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service in Albany to 10 staff and one intern from Fiona Stanley Hospital who was doing placement at Pioneer Health in Albany.

The trainers then travelled to Roebourne, where they delivered the program to 12 people, including staff from Mawarnkarra Health Service, Yaandina, Western Australian Country Health Service and Karratha Emergency Department.

AHCWA Nurses Joe Staniszewski and Veronica Walshe also travelled to South West Aboriginal Medical Service to deliver the Aboriginal Health Practitioner Immunisation training course. The training ran over three days, with AHPs from SWAMS and one AHP from WACHS participating.

The course works to raise awareness about the importance of immunisation within communities and the successful completion of this training offers AHPs the knowledge and skills to administer vaccinations to their clients.



*AHCWA's Birds and the BBVs training was held in Roebourne, with staff from Mawarnkarra Health Service, Yaandina, Western Australian Country Health Service and Karratha Emergency Department.*





*AHCWA's Sexual Health and BBV Program Officer Katiska Davis and Tackling Indigenous Smoking Program Officer Samuel Stubbs presented at the NACCHO Youth Conference in Canberra this October*

## AHCWA Attends **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members Conference**

**A large delegation of AHCWA staff attended this year's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members Conference in October on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country (Canberra).**

The NACCHO Members' conference is an annual gathering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector leaders from across the country. With over 400 delegates each year, the conference provides opportunities for attendees to network, learn, influence and celebrate an ongoing drive to self-determination.

The 2022 NACCHO Members' Conference focused on the theme 'Hounour the Past, Prepare for the Future' and delegates conferred on shaping the future of the sector, and the revision of the NACCHO constitution, an opportunity to build an even stronger direct voice for NACCHO's 144 members.

The NACCHO Youth Conference was also held during the week, and AHCWA's Sexual Health and BBV Program Officer Katiska Davis and Tackling Indigenous Smoking Program Officer Samuel Stubbs presented to their peers on their work in Aboriginal health.

## AHCWA Partners with Mirrabooka NAIDOC Cultural Celebration

Each year, AHCWA joins with Western Australian organisations celebrating the rich history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for NAIDOC Week. This year, AHCWA partnered with the Mirrabooka NAIDOC committee, assisting with their Mirrabooka NAIDOC Cultural Celebration 2022.

The event featured live music, children's entertainment, information stalls, a free sausage sizzle and kangaroo stew. Celebrations on the day included a smoking ceremony by Mr Lenny Yarran, a Welcome to Country by Ms Dulcie Donaldson and performances by Torres Strait Islander dancers, Corroboree for Life, Boorloo Hustle Dance, Natasha Eldridge Band with Naala Djookin Choir, Flewnt and Proud Noongar Boys, Jamahl, Struggling Kings and the South Summit Band.



*AHCWA staff supported the 2022 Mirrabooka NAIDOC celebrations in October*



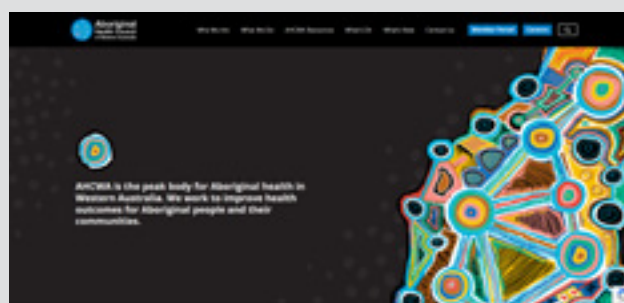




## Connect With Us Through Our New AHCWA Website

**AHCWA has launched a new website to support our work improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities.**

Head to [ahcwa.org.au](http://ahcwa.org.au) to access our Sector Support programs or sign up for our Education and Training Programs. You can also find all our publications and submissions, the latest COVID-19 resources, and quick links to all the Member Services we represent, state wide. The new website lists upcoming conferences, events and workshops – including our upcoming State Sector Conference – the latest news from our sector and a comprehensive listing of employment opportunities both at AHCWA and across our ACCHS. You can also sign up to receive our digital bulletins by heading to [ahcwa.org.au](http://ahcwa.org.au) and entering your email address.



*This November, AHCWA staff celebrated Diwali. The 'Festival of Lights' celebrates the triumph of light over darkness and is one of the major religious festivals in Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism.*

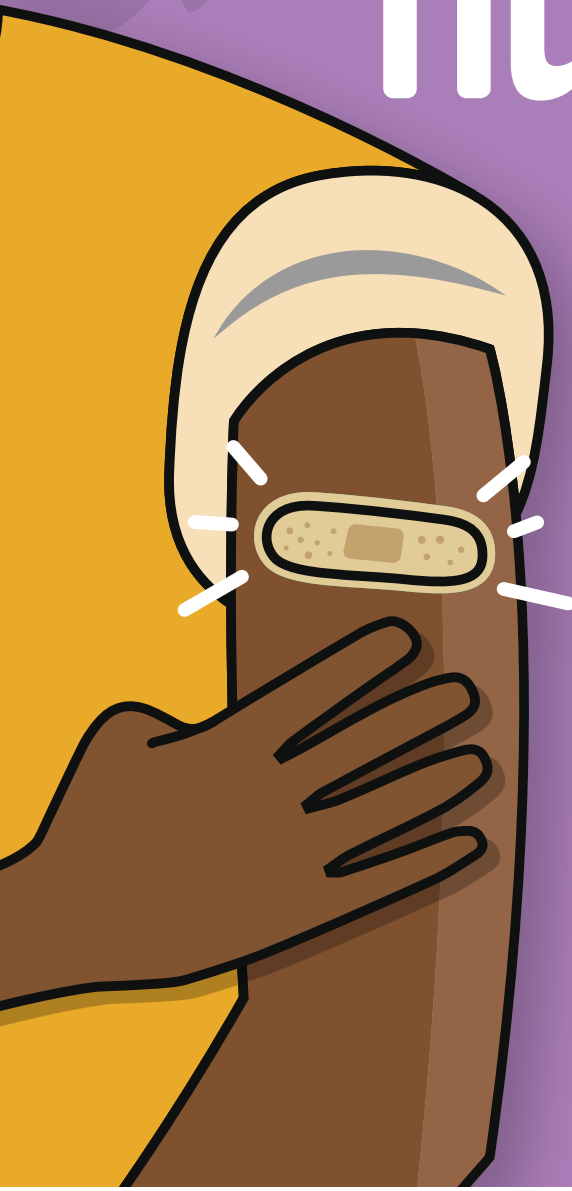


*AHCWA's People and Culture and Tomorrow's Dream teams visited Dianella Secondary College in November as part of careers afternoon for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families.*



The background is a solid purple color. Scattered throughout are several stylized virus particles. These are depicted as grey spheres with red, triangular spikes protruding from their surfaces. Some particles are in sharp focus, while others are faded into the background.

# Get booster number 4!

An illustration of a person's arm and hand. The arm is brown-skinned and is wearing a yellow sleeve. A white bandage with a yellow center is wrapped around the forearm. The hand is shown in a relaxed, slightly curled position.

**Do it to keep  
you and your  
mob safe.**

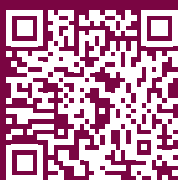


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# Go along Philis!

## Go Along Philis! Syphilis Flipchart Out Now!

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#### **Aboriginal Health Council Of Western Australia**

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AHCWA is committed to Continual Quality Improvement.  
Please feel free to give your feedback by requesting a  
'Compliments, Suggestions & Complaint Form':  
Phone: 08 92271631 | Email: [reception@ahcwa.org](mailto:reception@ahcwa.org)