



Addressing Challenges in Aboriginal Health Services

Project 64: Learning from action: Management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services

What's the project about?

Managers of Aboriginal health services face a broader range of challenges than their mainstream counterparts. In this project, twelve Aboriginal health service managers worked with the project team to look at what these challenges are and how they can be addressed. The learning program consisted of four workshops, in which both formal seminars and 'learning set' meetings were conducted. The real-life stories of management challenges that the participants discussed in the 'learning set' meetings provided the data. The stories were then analysed to generate findings about the professional development needs of managers and the management challenges facing the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector.



'Salubrious Sapphire' by Nellie Green, 2005, was used as the artwork for the Learning from Action project.

Who's involved?

- Flinders University
- Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council
- La Trobe University
- University of Queensland
- Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH)
- CRC for Aboriginal Health

- Ongoing accredited training: three of the participants in the Learning from Action project enrolled and were successful in getting postgraduate academic credit (equivalent to one subject in a Master of Health Administration).
- The Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, with funding provided by OATSIH, has formed a partnership with Griffith University to deliver its Graduate Certificate in Health Service Management for managers within the community-controlled health sector in Queensland.

Outcomes

- A report summarising the accumulated observations, reflections, deliberations and learnings of the project, as well as suggestions for future research, has been widely disseminated.
- Direct influence on policy: the results of this project were used by OATSIH to inform its capacity development funding for the sector, including in the 2007/08 budget.

Implications of findings for policy and practice

This project has demonstrated that Action Learning methods can be effective for Aboriginal Health Services managers, who also benefit from opportunities for professional development that are responsive to their contexts and challenges.

The Aboriginal health sector, which plays a critical role in bringing primary health care to Aboriginal people, needs supportive infrastructure for good management and governance practice, that is appropriate to the range of size, resources and geographic locations of the organisations.

The workshops were conducted in 2005, and the project was completed in 2007.



Mick Gooda, Stephanie Bell, Adrian Carson and Lizzie Adams with the Learning from Action report authors.



To find out more

Project Leaders: Judith Dwyer Email: judith.dwyer@flinders.edu.au

Cindy Shannon Email: shannonconsulting@bigpond.com

Shirley Godwin Email: s.godwin@ugrad.unimelb.edu.au

CRCAH Program Manager: Barbara Beacham

Email: Barbara.beacham@flinders.edu.au