



Rhodanthe Lipsett Indigenous Midwifery Charitable Fund

Combined Chairperson's Report to AGM

8th December 2017

We provide this report as Co-Chairpersons of the Rhodanthe Lipsett Indigenous Midwifery Charitable Fund ('the Fund').

Leona has given her apologies for the meeting due to circumstances that she could not influence. As Co-chair, I acknowledge her commitment and dedication to the work of The Fund and thank her for her support and guidance throughout the year. Together we have worked with the Board of Directors and our partners and associates on a shared commitment to enhance the Indigenous midwifery workforce and 'Close the Gap' in health outcomes for Indigenous mothers and babies.

Working in Partnership

Achieving our key objective to increase the number of midwives who can provide culturally safe care and offer the best start in life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, babies and their families cannot be done alone. Throughout the year, in fulfilment of our partnership agreement, we have worked closely with the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health in Sydney University. We believe that the relationships and working in partnership with Poche has enhanced our reach and our profile this year, particularly with some of the Aboriginal controlled organisations. This takes time, but it is essential if we are to build a sustainable Charitable Fund whose reputation is one of being culturally respectful, effective and cohesive. Whilst it is obvious that we need to raise funds and comply with our legal responsibilities through good governance, we also need to have strong foundations supported by effective partnerships with a range of stakeholders and partners.

These foundations and effective partnerships have been forged over an almost four-year period, through the enthusiasm and leadership of Kylie Gwynne, outgoing CEO of Poche. In October this year, following her graduation with a PhD in Aboriginal Health, Kylie left her role to pursue her career as a researcher. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we wish to congratulate Kylie and thank her for her wisdom, strategic thinking and guidance as we move forward with Poche, working on new educational pathways in workforce development in midwifery. We look forward to working with the new Director and CEO at Poche, Boe Rambaldini.

We are continually seeking opportunities to work with others, to build our effectiveness and our cultural competence and work as true partners. Growing and maintaining key relationships with peak bodies and organisations such as the Australian College of Midwives, Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives, National Centre for Cultural Competence and many others are central to our core business.

Achievements

We have achieved a number of important outcomes for the Fund this year which will enhance our capacity to contribute to achieving the long-term outcome of Closing the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health through enhanced midwifery workforce, training and support.

Provision of scholarships

This year we awarded 14 scholarships with a total value of \$58,000 which is a significant expansion in the number and size of scholarships to previous years. The 2017 awards were allocated as follows;

Eleven Category A Scholarships valued at \$5,000 and
Three Category B Scholarships valued at \$1,000

To inspire you, we cite the words of one scholarship recipient:

“This scholarship will assist me through my midwifery degree as it can help pay for my campus accommodation, textbooks, my midwifery uniform and appropriate equipment. This scholarship will also allow my parents to focus on the cost of my other siblings in school and allow me to be independent and use this money wisely on my university degree.”

Raising our profile

We are becoming more recognised and known within the Indigenous health and health workforce organisations and peak bodies with an increasing number of invitations to speak and promote ‘The Fund’.

New website and Facebook page

Considerable effort has gone into revising our website to make it more user friendly, interesting and informative. We believe the new version has achieved this and more. The website is where you will see our news, events and current activities as well as the call for scholarship applications, announcements of winners and their testimonials as well where and how to donate. To assist individual donors with a streamlined process we have introduced ‘mycause’ – an online crowd funding and fundraising service on the website which makes donating quick, easy and pain free. See here: <https://www.mycause.com.au/payment/charity/9538>

Website www.indigenoumidwives.org.au OR www.indigenoumidwives.com.au
Twitter #indigmidwives

These improvements have been directed by Amy Tregear and earlier in the year, Abi Clarkson as our Project Officers. We thank them for their work and in supporting the Fund throughout the year.

Fundraising and supporters

‘The Fund’ relies on donations received from generous individuals and organisations who share our commitment to Closing the Gap. Many organisations including ACM, the Soroptimists of Southern Queensland, Kimberly-Clark Australia as well as

numerous individuals, are long-standing regular contributors to 'The Fund'. Some also contribute 'in kind' services and support and.

We extend our thanks and appreciation for the ongoing pro bono oversight, legal advice and support provided by Hamish Wallace and Gary Beath at Minter Ellison and Mark Godlewski from Pitcher Partners who provides accountancy advice and auditing services. The Board is continually looking to reduce any unnecessary costs and overheads and earlier this year we were thankful to the ACM for offering to provide pro bono bookkeeping services to support the financial administration functions of 'The Fund'. Christina at the ACM office has provided a polished service and our systems are now fully digitalised and archived electronically. Thank you, Christina and ACM.

Maternity Workforce Partnership Project

The success of Poche in building the Aboriginal health workforce in NSW over the past three years is exemplified in their statistics, which show that 99.24% participants completed their studies and more than 80% have gone on to further education and/or employment

In a strategic move to help build the midwifery workforce through more than one approach, the Board made a decision in late 2016 to work with The Poche Centre on a submission to seek funding for a 'Three-year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternity Workforce project'. This is based on the model that was successfully introduced by Poche for Allied Health and Oral Health programs. If we are successful in securing funding, Aboriginal people interested in becoming midwives would have the opportunity to join an education pathway that takes them through a Certificate III and Certificate IV and then onto a Diploma, in for example, Aboriginal Primary Health Practice and ultimately, for some, enrolment in a Bachelor of Midwifery. The proposal has provision for a number of both our Rhodanthe Category A and Category B scholarships to be awarded each year. In addition, the project provides opportunities to further expand our profile nationally through access to the network of Poche Centres in each capital city across the country. It should also further add to a strong and resilient base on which to build 'The Trust's' capacity to achieve results.

At the time of writing we are awaiting final approval from NSW Health for their financial contribution to the project in what is a three-way partnership between Poche & Rhodanthe Fund; four Local Health Districts in NSW; and NSW Health.

Board of Directors

A number of changes have occurred at Board level this year including the role of company secretary previously held by Ruth Inall being handed to Donna Hartz. Ruth has also decided to retire in December. In recognition of her tireless dedication and efforts in working for several years with Rhodanthe Lipsett as the initial driving force of 'The Fund' it was decided that Ruth receive an Honorary title: 'Co-founder and Inaugural Ambassador' of 'The Fund'. A small celebration and thank you to Ruth is planned following the AGM and strategic planning day in December. On behalf of the Board we say thank you to Donna Hartz for taking on the role of Company Secretary.

Rachel Smith has also decided to step down from her role as a Director. As an inaugural member of the Board, Rachel has helped organise and take responsibility for the preparation and implementation of our scholarship program in conjunction with the Scholarship Sub Committee. Rachel sensitively and respectfully contributes her expertise and understanding of issues and has been a solid contributor to the work of the Board. Rachel is committed to continue to provide support and guidance to the scholarship sub-committee which is much appreciated. Best wishes and thank you Rachel.

At the Strategic Planning Day on December 8th we will review the Skills Matrix and mix of expertise within the Board. We believe it is also now time to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Board. In particular we need to look to high-level executive leaders with experience in governance and negotiating with government and other organisations, including those in the corporate sector. It is also opportune that we set down our intentions regarding a succession plan for Director positions as well as Chairpersons.

Given that she is unable to attend the AGM, we are able to report that Rhodanthe Lipsett sends her warm regards to the Board. She wishes to convey her appreciation for the work we are doing and also her support and agreement with the strategic decisions and key relationships we are working on.

Our sincere thanks to the Board of Directors and others who contribute on subcommittees, for giving their time and expertise as we work towards achieving our objectives. We would like to particularly thank Donna Hartz for her hard work and commitment to supporting Leona and the Board whilst Pat was based overseas.

The role of Co-chair is an honour and a privilege. The responsibility this role brings is not taken lightly and we acknowledge the expectations that it holds. We welcome your feedback and suggestions for improvement on how we achieve our goals.

Leona McGrath and Pat Brodie AM
Co- Chairs
Rhodanthe Lipsett Indigenous Midwifery Charitable Fund