



including...



Greater Western
Aboriginal Health Service

ICN 792—under special administration

NEWSLETTER

Issue 4, January 2022

Dear members and other interested people,

Our names are Jack James and Paula Smith and we are from Rodgers Reidy in Perth. On 20 September 2021, the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations appointed us special administrators of Wellington Aboriginal Corporation Health Service (WACHS).

During the special administration, we will keep you informed of progress through newsletters and information meetings. Newsletters and meeting notices are on the public Register of Indigenous Corporations at oric.gov.au. Use the 'Find a corporation' tool, search for 'Wellington' and follow the link to 'documents'.

PROGRESS OF SPECIAL ADMINISTRATION

We are progressing well with stage 2 of the special administration, aiming to restore good operational order.

STAGE	ACTION	STATUS
1	Take control of the assets, including bank accounts; build a complete picture of issues and challenges; and establish a clear plan of action.	COMPLETE
2	Restore good operational order.	IN PROGRESS
3	Prepare the corporation for return to members control.	PENDING

INFORMATION MEETINGS CANCELLED

The health and safety of community members, employees and stakeholders is of paramount importance.

Due to the rise in the number of Covid-19 cases across New South Wales, we have canceled information meetings that were to be held during the week starting 31 January 2022.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

At this stage, we are unable to advise when information meetings will be held. It will depend on Covid case numbers, government restrictions and the risks to members, community members, staff and stakeholders.

OPERATIONS

Like many businesses in Australia and around the world, WACHS' operations have been impacted by Covid, as staff either test positive or isolate as a close contact.

Despite shortages, steps have been taken to maintain services and minimise disruption. The situation is ever-changing and further adaptations may be required.

UPDATE FROM THE CEO—DARREN GREEN

Despite the challenges presented by Covid, WACHS is continuing to meet community health needs and all requirements under our various funding agreements.

At present we are completing our 6 months activity plans, reporting under the Indigenous Australians Health Program and reviewing our health outcomes against national key performance indicators for submission to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

WACHS has recently updated its emergency response plan (ERP) so actions can be taken in response to any significant impacts from Covid. The ERP aims to ensure:

- high quality and timely care for the community
- safety for staff and clients
- ongoing compliance with our contractual arrangements.

Since my appointment as CEO, I have met with various community members and organisations in Moree, Wellington/Dubbo and Western Sydney to discuss current

operations and future opportunities. These discussions have been very positive and established strong working relationships that will lead to better service delivery and outcomes for clients.

Finally, I am pleased that staff were able to take a very well-deserved break over the Christmas / new year period and I thank all staff for their ongoing hard work and support.

An update on current key services follows.

CLINICS

Wellington

The Wellington clinic continues to provide in-person and/or telehealth appointments (as required). Faced with continued challenges due to Covid, staff are adhering to Covid-safe practices, undertaking risk assessments, complying with government restrictions and adapting practices to minimise disruption to services. Covid is reducing staff attendance, but the team are working together and supporting each other to ensure services continue for the community.

Booster and childhood vaccines have been ordered but their delivery is delayed. While they wait, the team is working on the design and set-up of clinics to administer these vaccines.

Clinicians are also providing advice and education for Covid-positive community members.

A new registrar GP commences in February 2022, which will help reduce current GP wait times. The clinic also has a registered nurse specialising in respiratory issues to meet patients' needs.

Mt Druitt

Clinic staff continue to work hard to deliver a high standard of health care for the community while dealing with the challenges of Covid.

The clinic team has resumed Covid booster vaccinations after the Christmas break and, pleasingly, there has been a very good uptake. Vaccinations for children aged 5 to 11 start on 17 January 2022.

The clinic is currently in promising discussions with the local health district (LHD) about resuming the dental service.

The clinic also has visiting specialists and allied health services including a paediatrician, podiatrist, a hearing specialist, psychiatrist, psychologist and optometrist.

Health checks are continuing at the clinic for eligible clients, who can go home with a free South Sydney Rabbitohs shirt.

The clinic team have also been working closely with the community to provide extra support for clients physical and emotional well-being such as childhood immunisations, depot injections, mental health, wound care and medication management.

Penrith

The Penrith clinic team have been busy planning Covid booster clinics for the coming weeks, which will include shots for children aged 5 to 11. The Penrith team to provide services during these ever-changing and unsure times. In-person appointments are still available, but telehealth is encouraged where possible. The Penrith clinic will also have psychiatry and hearing clinic from February 2022.

Katoomba

Like all clinics, Katoomba has been facing challenges presented by Covid, which also impacted not only service delivery but recruitment.

At present Katoomba is recruiting to positions in reception, nursing and general practice.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Wellington/Dubbo

Social emotional wellbeing

When restrictions lifted, mid-December 2021, the Social Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) team resumed programs and services, and planned to provide a calendar of events for community programs.

The increase in case numbers affected SEWB services and programs and the team is working with stakeholders to support clinical services and the community to manage Covid impacts.

Healthy for life

Healthy for Life program staff are also currently providing Covid support for clinical services, as well as monitoring program support in the community. New Directions are collaborating with childcare services to provide early intervention. The team are working with the LHD ensure health assessments, development milestones and immunisations are kept up to date.

Tackling Indigenous smoking

The Tackling Indigenous Smoking (TIS) team moved its operations online during the Covid lockdowns and has provided support to the clinic team at vaccination clinics. With the easing of restrictions, the TIS team were back out on the road, in communities visiting schools and working with the clinic and SEWB teams to provide health promotion activities that focus on:

- quitting
- harms of second and third hand smoke
- vaping
- workplace smoke-free assessments and policies in communities



- smoke-free homes and cars
- quitline referral
- working with target groups including elders, mums and bubs, youth, men's/women's groups

With case numbers increasing, the TIS team is planning service delivery changes, including sourcing professional development opportunities around health promotion.

Australian nurse family partnership program

The Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program (ANFPP) team in Dubbo provides first-time mums with nursing and midwifery support. A current focus is identifying locations for visits that meet Covid-safe requirements and provide safety and stimulation for toddlers. Recent successes include clients who have accepted referral to the Aboriginal Children's Therapy Team and completion of training in the Kimberly Mums Mood Scale and smoking cessation programs. The team will shortly commence recruiting qualified staff for home visits.

Aboriginal child therapy team

The Aboriginal Children's Therapy Team (ACTT) is based in Dubbo and works to improve:

- access to allied health for Aboriginal children in Dubbo
- child development and outcomes for children
- family knowledge and information regarding allied health
- structures for engaging families and the community
- allied health knowledge and skill base of the Indigenous workforce

This important work has continued despite the challenges presented by Covid.

Western Sydney

Australian nurse family partnership program

The ANFPP team in Blacktown continue to work closely with clients and other services despite the challenges of increasing Covid numbers. Experienced team members are supporting new staff who have recently joined the program despite interruptions to training because of Covid.

The team continue to support clients through in-person and telehealth appointments, while identifying supports for the families who are experiencing complexities.

Recruitment efforts are continuing for the positions of nurse home visitor and administration officer. Recruitment of the nurse supervisor is ongoing with coverage currently being provided by the ANFPP Dubbo nurse supervisor.

Connected beginnings

This program looks to organise and support a healthy childhood for Aboriginal kids.

The team focuses on prevention and cure and aims to reduce the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. To improve the health status of the kids, the team focuses on the preventative measures like immunisations, child and parental screening and 715 health checks. In addition, the team also aims to cure, focusing on speech deficits, hearing disorders and occupational therapies.

The team maintain effective and strong partnerships with stakeholders such as local preschools, including Ngroo Education, Yenu-Allowah Education and Doonside Education, to coordinate the success of the program.

With the impacts of Covid the team are planning to deliver the following to affected families:

- activity kits for the kids in every 2 weeks
- food, vegetables and baby formulas
- body wash, hand wash, sanitisers, shampoo and nappies
- home cooking program with the kids and moms to keep the kids engaged.

Social emotional wellbeing

SEWB clients are being supported with transport and follow-up for medical appointments at the clinic and specialist appointments. Visiting psychiatry case conferences will commence from 21 January 2022 and these will be available 3 sessions per month. The team is providing wellbeing checks to clients affected by Covid and are isolating at home. The team also deliver medications to clients as required.

Moree residential rehabilitation service (MARRS – Maayu Mali)

Maayu Mali continues to provide services for clients suffering the impacts of alcohol, other drugs and poor mental health. Recently an external review of operations was undertaken by The Glen. The report has been finalised which includes several recommendations. The team is now working through the recommendations to implement changes to improve operations and client services.

Also, the Maayu Mali team is working with the Aboriginal Health College at Little Bay to tailor training for the workforce, starting with Certificate IV Aboriginal Health. This training (restrictions pending) will be delivered on-site with some places to be offered to partner organisations to assist with their workforce development.



STAFFING

Executive management team

Work has commenced on looking at the structure of the executive management team (EMT). Consultation with affected staff is expected to commence at the end of January 2022.

In the meantime, a new human resources manager position has been created and will be advertised immediately. This role will ensure that human resources systems and practices support WACHS to achieve its business objectives and to deliver quality services to communities where it operates. The HR position will be based in Western Sydney and will support staff across all sites operated by WACHS.

SPECIAL ADMINISTRATORS' ADVISORY GROUP

We are pleased to advise the following new members of the advisory group:

- Paul Morris
- Michael Peachey
- Deanne Towney

We will work with the advisory group to review the rule book to strengthen governance and representation in WACHS.

Ordinarily, we would discuss the rule book and any proposed changes at information meetings, but as noted those meetings are on hold due to Covid. Instead, we will provide details and seek feedback on any proposed changes to the rule book in these newsletters.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

Our next steps will include, amongst other things:

- consult with affected staff regarding the proposed changes to the EMT structure
- commence recruitment of an HR manager
- review governance structure including the rule book—with the assistance of the advisory group

THANK YOU TO STAFF

We wish to acknowledge and thank all the WACHS staff for their ongoing hard work in very difficult and trying times. Your hard work and support has helped WACHS continue to provide vital services to clients and the community.

Thank you.

SPECIAL ADMINISTRATORS



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MORE INFORMATION

The Registrar has a fact sheet, Special administrations: what members and directors need to know—See oric.gov.au/special-admins or free call **1800 622 431**.