



*Unity & Strength
Through Caring*

CONFERENCE EDITION

NOVEMBER 2009

Catsin NEWSLETTER



Congress of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Nurses & Midwives

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The Story Behind Our Photo

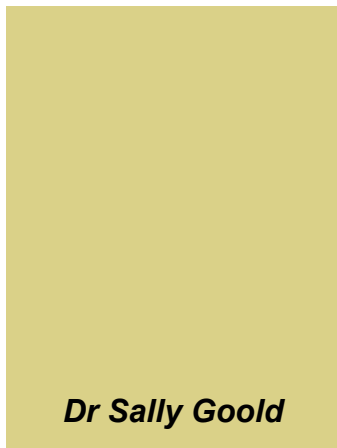
The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses affectionately know as CATSIN whose motto is “Unity and Strength through Caring” has on the cover of each newsletter a photo of the founding members of CATSIN.

The photo taken in August 1997 is of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses who attended the National Forum. This forum was generated by Sally Goold’s paper “Why are there so few Aboriginal registered nurses?”

The photo is always visual at each of our conferences to acknowledge and pay tribute to the wonderful women and men who were trail blazers and had the vision and courage to challenge a system that excluded them. The photo is also a reminder that these nurses are our inspiration and our role models.

Patron - Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC





Dr Sally Goold



Executive Director's Report

It has been another busy few months, a particularly busy time in organising the conference, a difficult time for all involved, the attendance figures were quite markedly reduced this year, which was disappointing, however, anecdotal evidence from other conference organisers suggests that most conference numbers were down this year

We need to look at the timing of our conferences, as there are several held at the same time of the year.

Despite the smaller numbers of delegates, the conference was a great success, wonderful speakers presented a wide range of very interesting, relevant topics. I thank them all!!!

I need to say how impressed I was with the group of students who attended; they engaged in all parts of the conference, actively and with professionalism beyond what would have been expected of them. The student forum was again a success and so much a part of our conference, this year we had two new graduates join the forum speaking on their 'grad year' this really added interest to the forum, thank you Hayley and Joshua.

I wish all the students very well for their exams and assignments as well as their clinical placements in their last semester for the year. Remember to 'keep your eye on the prize'

Thank you all for taking part in the merchandise fashion parade, wonderful! The choreography was great!

I hope to see you again next year.

My friend Olga Kanitsaki spoke so eloquently about her life, she received a standing ovation for her very inspirational and moving talk, it is a wonderful lesson for us all to hear of the struggle that some people have in overcoming adversity and to do so with such grace and humility. It was wonderful to see members of the profession honouring this wonderful woman who has contributed so much to the profession with her work in transcultural nursing and

education Olga has been a true friend of CATSIN for many years, her continuing support is so appreciated,. I am so very proud to be able to claim Olga as my friend.

Our patron, Her Excellency Mrs Quentin Bryce AC, opened the conference, Her Excellency spoke about the inspiration she gains from our book, 'In Our Own Right; Black Australian Nurses' Stories'. She spent some time mixing with the delegates and spent time speaking to most of the conference delegates, especially the students with whom she spent a considerable amount of time. It was wonderful having her Excellency and Mr Bryce there.

I also need to let you know that we have a new member to the board, as voted at the AGM. David Copley, David will be in the position as a casual vacancy for the Northern Territory, welcome David.

I would like to thank Emily Marshall for the work she has done. She has been a valued member of the CATSIN board, Emily has made a significant contribution to CATSIN as a member, then as a board member, I would like to extend my very best wishes, thank you dear Emily for your wonderful support and friendship and the wisdom that you brought to the meetings, not forgetting your participation and entertainment at the dinners, (so much talent in this room you wouldn't believe)

Thank you to the conference organisers and the chairpersons of the sessions.

Special thank you to Nola and Noela (the merchandise officers and choreographers extraordinaire)

Thank you also to Cameron for his work with the audiovisuals and multimedia, another conference well done.

Cameron is missing a few USBs that were on his table, work area, if anyone picked them up by mistake would they send to the CATSIN office please, they weren't all his, some belonged to the presenters, so they would appreciate their return please.

We are planning on publishing another book, a follow on to 'In Our Own Right, Black Australian Nurses Stories' and are calling for stories to be submitted for inclusion.

Would you submit your stories by the end of November please?

CATSIN greatly appreciated the support of our sponsors at our annual conference; it's exciting to see the numbers increasing each year. We value our partnerships and collaboration with all of the organisations who contribute to the success of our conference

May you and your families have a wonderful, safe and festive season.

Sally





Roslyn Lockhart **Research / Project Officer's Report**

The CATSIN Conference was by far the highlight of the year. The students were inspirational. The program was packed with a broad and varied array of speakers who made us think, laugh, cry and leave renewed with the challenge to use what we learnt.

Nathan Simpson from Centrelink let us know about a number of ways that students can be supported by our social security system. The key to his presentation was to talk on behalf of Centrelink about what is available for your individual circumstances. Don't assume that they cannot help you.

The students gave us an insight into the experiences of being a student nurse. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student nurse's came with stories about both the trials and tribulations of studying and their clinical placement. The students talked about the support and the barriers to completing their nursing course. They were a particularly interested and proactive group this year.

When I talked to the students about being linked with a mentor, they were very enthusiastic and had already approached Catsin members as mentors. They seized the moment to identify what criteria they were looking for in a mentor. I wish you all the best in your relationships with your new mentors and your studies.

The conference evaluation identified that the attendees were very positive and responded quite favourably to the three day conference. Some of the remarks included that the presentations were wonderful and diverse and that the networking opportunities and the student forums are great. The dinner as always is a momentous occasion. Since the conference it has been a very busy time. I

was in Perth for the National Palliative Care Conference where I did a short address. I have travelled to Canberra for three different meetings/committees as well. My apologies to anyone trying to contact me during the last couple of weeks, my hard drive crashed for over a week (lost a lot of information) however all is working well now and it's great to be back on line.

Please email me.

- Mentors and students to let me know how things are going?
- CATSIN members, to let me know how you are going, even if just to say hi!
- Anyone who has sent me an email in the last two months, could you just reforward it to me as with the crash, I have lost these emails.

But mostly, I look forward to hearing how you are all going? Keep in touch and take care.



CATSIN is looking at publishing a second edition of our book "In our own right" Black Australian nurses stories!

Are you interested in contributing and sharing your story?

Our first edition has been an overwhelming success and is used as a resource in every school of nursing in the country.

Nurses and students are able to access the book for research purposes on Indigenous nursing and health from their libraries. The positive feedback that we have received has been great.

Contact the CATSIN office on: (07) 34107236 or email: catsin@bigpond.net.au for more details





**CATSIN's Patron
Her Excellency,
Ms Quentin Bryce**

**11th National
CATSIN
Conference**



CATSIN'S Patron Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia officially opened the 11th National Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses Conference in Melbourne, 16 September 2009.

(Her Excellency's speech is reproduced with permission)

I give thanks to the traditional owners of our magnificent land, and to the elders, past and present: the keepers of precious song, art, story and dance, the guardians of a rich and ancient culture.

I can't tell you how delighted I am to join you for your national Congress. I am utterly warmed and inspired by your presence, and I want to take this opportunity to tell you how much you mean to Australia: to our Indigenous communities, to our health work force, to an equable and generous future for our country.

I know well the extraordinary roads Indigenous nurses travel and the contribution you make every single day. Particularly in remote communities, but in our big urban hospitals and regional centres too. And I know the superb leadership of CATSIN, formed in the wake of the historic National Forum for Development of Strategies to Increase the Numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Nursing 12 years ago. Still gathering nurses from across Australia, sustaining their daily endeavours, providing a broad framework for their professional development and support, and creating a national voice and advocacy.

A few years ago, at Government House in Queensland, I found myself sitting next to a stylish and vivacious

young Aboriginal woman at lunch. Her name was Odette Best, and she was the Indigenous Nursing Adviser to Queensland Health. We talked about the need to close the gap in Indigenous health outcomes. I asked her outright: "What is the most constructive thing I can do towards closing the gap?" Without hesitating, she answered "More Indigenous nurses."

I saw immediately that she was right. That Indigenous nurses were the key to healthy families and communities, to building trust between patients and health services. I have taken every opportunity since then to promote the idea.

Indeed I have seen it for myself in Lockart River and the Torres Strait. Indigenous nursing aids help to deliver babies, and then get the mothers to come back for vaccinations. They are encouraged by the DONs – the Directors of Nursing – to pursue nursing and get their qualifications. For many of you I know, and for some of our best known and loved Aboriginal nurses, getting qualifications was a tall order in the early days. There were barriers and deep-rooted prejudice to overcome. Even when qualifications were attained, there was hostility and mistrust to encounter in hospitals. They were indeed hard roads. Now, enrolments are improving – steadily, but slowly. The University of Southern Queensland reports that they have the highest ever enrolment of Indigenous students in their nursing school, and that they have the highest in Queensland. They have 24.

Indigenous nurses are about 0.8% of all nurses in Australia, 0.6% of all registered nurses, and 0.4% of nurse managers. These are tiny fractions, but they represent huge steps along those hard roads. Behind each one of these statistics are many stories – of courage and endurance, determination to succeed, to make a contribution. There are amazing, heart-warming stories collected in the book *In Our Own Right: Black Australian Nurses Stories*, edited by Sally Gould and Kerryanne Liddle in 2005. I cherish my copy and often dip into it for inspiration.

There's the story of Sadie Canning. When she was growing up, north east of Kalgoorlie in the 1930s, there were no hospital births for Aboriginal mothers; Aboriginals were not allowed to train as nurses. She travelled to Richmond and Fitzroy in Victoria to do her training in nursing and midwifery. "I was so proud," she said. "I was now able to wear the veil – the starched



piece of voile – the pride and prize of graduating as a fully fledged nurse.”

Eventually she was able to work back in WA, as the only Aboriginal nurse at Leonora Hospital. She set out to end segregation of wards, spurred, she said, by “an incident I will never forget...My first Aboriginal mum was in labour...It was very hot even more so in that little tin shed.

It was then that I witnessed my first stillborn birth. I considered at that time it was an unnecessary death of an Aboriginal baby. I cried for the loss of that baby. Today, at Leonora, Indigenous Australian people enjoy the same treatment as the rest of the community.” Sadie was Matron there for 34 years.

In July I was in Darwin and caught up with a wonderful friend of mine, Professor Maryann Bin-Sallik. With a Masters and a PhD from Harvard, Maryann is an impressive and influential scholar. Her story is in the book too. As a young nurse in Darwin, she witnessed segregation, and worse: the sterilisation of Aboriginal women, the neglect of Aboriginal babies by white doctors. Yet she recalls how much support she received from the other Aboriginal people around her. From the gardeners and orderlies, to the older women who would bring her witchetty grubs at lunch time.

“There were times when the racism got the better of me,” she says, “and I had these people who gave all the love and support that I needed to stay the distance. This is what being Aboriginal meant to me. This is when I learnt how much love there is in our community. There was no way those people were going to let me drop out.”

Far from dropping out, Maryann went on to be instrumental in transforming tertiary nursing, recruiting more Indigenous students, and including more content on understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture.

Earlier this year, on the eve of their International comp, I caught up with the Australian Women’s Cricket Team for dinner at Admiralty House on Sydney Harbour. Among them was Alison Bush. She’s a nurse at the Royal Prince Alfred, and also the daughter of a very old friend of mine, Connie Bush – an elder from Groote Eylandt. Alison was decorated by the Royal College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians – she is outstanding and much admired.

There are many others who dazzle and energise us: Lowitja O’Donoghue. Lowitja is a person of immense standing in our country, respected and regarded by all of us. I first met her in Canberra in 1978, and have been in touch with her ever since. She told me about nursing in Coober Pedy in the late 60s, going out in a Toyota to do clinics in dry creek beds, shooting roos and sleeping under the stars. Every week the Protector of Aborigines would offer her exemption – which meant being an honorary white. Every week she refused. She was recently honoured by a NAIDOC Lifetime Achievement Award. It was my great privilege to present it to her at a ceremony in Brisbane. There were hugs and tears. I was touched, as I always am, by her dignity and leadership, her forthright and open approach. These days I see her often at Government House.

And, of course, Sally Goold. Sally was the first Aboriginal student nurse at the Royal Prince Alfred. She got involved with the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern – along with Fred Hollows, Dulcie Flowers, and Mum Shirl. Later, at QUT, she helped more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enrol and complete degrees in nursing. Her message to students and beginning RNs is simple: “We as Aboriginal nurses have to work that bit harder for what we achieve, and yes, you will have to walk the extra mile...You are not going to find the road easy, but nothing worth doing is ever easy.”

My friends, she is right. I know that none of you here today find the road easy, but I thank you for walking it, patiently, openly, bravely. I thank you, on behalf of all Australians, for who you are, what you do, what you represent.

As your conversations unfold this week, I hope you will carry with you the stories of so many whose footsteps are your guide and promise. Who urge you to go on, to remember who you are and hold the torch for the generations of your children.

There is one more Indigenous nurse in my thoughts today: Oodgeroo. She was born on Stradbroke, and did her nursing training in Brisbane during the war. She is one of Australia’s most loved and quoted poets.



I think of her poem "The Dawn is at Hand"

*Go forward proudly and unafraid
To your birthright...
You will be welcomed mateship-wise
In industry and enterprise;
No profession will bar the door,
Fringe-dwellers no more.*

*Dark and white upon common ground
In club and office and social round,
Yours the feel of a friendly land,
The grip of the hand.*

*Sharing the same equality
In college and university,
All ambitions of hand or brain
Yours to attain.*

My friends, it is my very great pleasure to open your 2009 Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses. Go forward proudly and unafraid.

Closing the Indigenous Health Inequality Gap By 2030

As a Keynote speaker at the National CATSIN Conference, Tom Calma the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner delivered a number of clear messages.

Significantly, Mr Calma pointed out a change in the statistical modeling used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to calculate the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in Australia. The revised modelling, introduced in April 2009, dropped the gap in life expectancy from a 17 year gap to a gap of 11 years. While not casting doubt on the statistical assumptions and methods used to obtain the new 11 year gap, Mr Calma was careful to point out that it makes comparisons between statistics from different times using different modelling extremely difficult. Making real comparisons to determine differences or improvements resulting from targeting funding, training and program delivery is fraught as the statistics are not necessarily comparable.

Mr Calma re-affirmed a need for a long term commitment to improving health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people. "The health issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not shifted overnight", Mr Calma said. "There needs to be more effort to change behaviours that lead to opportunities to be healthy. There is a difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander behaviours."

Mr Calma reiterated his previous statements that the health inequality that exists between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is a human rights issue. He reminded the conference that existing health inequality is the result of failure by consecutive governments. He continued, saying addressing health inequalities "requires special measures, but special measures can be seen as racist, as in the NT Intervention", if not done in a manner that is inclusive of and genuinely consults the people and communities involved. Mr Calma reaffirmed the view that positive measures must be taken that positively discriminate.



CATSIN Conference presentation by Karen Cook, CEO of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council September 2009



The future of nursing and midwifery regulation in Australia, a paper delivered by ANMC CEO Karen Cook at the CATSIN Conference, gave a run down on the state of play. As many CATSIN members are aware, in July 2010 nursing and midwifery regulation will change from being state-based to national regulation and accreditation of education. Nursing and midwifery along with nine other professions, including doctors, psychologists, chiropractors, are all involved in major change to national regulation.

There are many benefits to national regulation of nursing

- National regulation of nursing and accreditation of nursing education will provide for consistent protection of the public
- Workforce mobility will be more straightforward
- National license for nurses and midwives will negate the need for multiple registrations in each state.
- Protection of titles – registered nurse, enrolled nurse, midwife
- Two registers – one for nurses and the other for midwives

There are a series of steps to move from state to national regulation of nursing and midwifery, and the process is well underway. This is a complex and time-consuming process, bound by the legislative processes of state and Commonwealth parliaments. There are essentially three steps to the process, with three Bills having to be introduced to and passed by parliament.

- Bill A passed in November 2008
- Bill B into parliament first week in October.
- Referencing legislation will be passed by other states and territories.
- Bill C will repeal existing legislation in each state and territory.

The ANMC and the nursing and midwifery profession anticipates that the incoming national board will adopt

the existing professional practice framework, made up of:

- Codes of Ethics – the morals of the profession that can be relied upon by the community
- Codes of Professional Conduct – the expected standards, by which complaints can be measured
- National Competency Standards – standards for gaining and keeping a license to practice
- National Decision Making Framework
- National Continuing Competence Framework
- National Guidelines on Professional Boundaries

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia has been appointed by the Minister

Practitioner members:

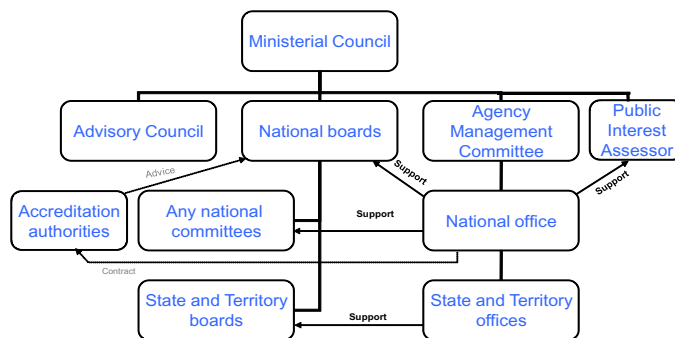
- Ms Anne Copeland – QLD - Chair- RN and Midwife
- Ms Angela Brannelly – NT - RN and Midwife
- Professor Mary Chiarella – NSW - RN
- Dr Lynette Cusack – SA – RN
- Professor Denise Fassett – Tas - RN
- Mrs Lynne Geri – Vic – EN
- Ms Louise Horgan – WA – RN
- Ms Mary Kirk – ACT – RN and Midwife

Community members:

- Ms Gillie Anderson – Tas
- Ms Heather Sjoberg - NT
- Ms Margaret Winn – NSW
- Dr Christine Murphy - VIC

The new national regulation and accreditation scheme will look like this:

The new scheme



Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council
National Registration and Accreditation Implementation Project



Congress of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Nurses

National Maternity Care Reforms, and the Implications for Midwives and Women



Dr Barbara Vernon, Executive Officer of the Australian College of Midwives presented this paper which looked at the major reforms of maternity services initiated by the federal government. The presentation gave an overview of the National health reforms that were announced in the federal budget and the implications for women receiving maternity care and their families and what it will mean for midwives and nurses in providing care.

Dr Vernon stated that the Maternity Services review has been in progress since 2000 and a discussion paper was released in September 2008 addressing several areas including interventions, access, closing the gap outcomes for Indigenous families, successful models of care, strengthening social and emotional support, workforce and funding issues and infrastructure needs. The response to the Discussion paper recorded 960 submissions which showed women welcomed the need for reform and there were constructive ideas on solutions. It showed that they were discontented with the system and there were also safety and quality concerns particularly for Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander women and babies. Workforce supply concerns were another significant issue.

The paper showed the Maternity Care Outcomes for Indigenous Women and Babies.

Dr Vernon spoke about the recommended reforms which included funding and supporting midwives to offer continuity of care in private practice within 'collaborative teams', medicare rebates for midwifery care, PBS rebates for tests and drugs administered by midwives, professional indemnity insurance for community based pregnancy and post birth care, and for labour care "in a clinical setting", improving outcomes for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander women and babies through:

- All government committing to closing the gap
- Services to be developed in partnership with communities
- Expanding successful programs
- Recruit and train more Indigenous maternity care providers
- Cultural awareness training for all maternity carers
- Rural services be restored and enhanced in collaboration with state governments
- Midwives to be funded to provide outreach care
- Support for CPD for rural doctors + midwives
- National telephone support line for women
- Develop National Maternity Services Plan
- Creating agreed evidence based guidelines
- Targeted research on improving quality & safety
- Improved data collection and reporting

She also talked about what the National Maternity Plan would cover which included re-opening rural maternity services and more Birth Centres, expansion of successful programs for Aboriginal mothers and babies, and extra \$107million over 5 years to increase access to pregnancy care for young Indigenous mothers as part of the National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

She also highlighted some of the implications for women who will have greater access to choice of continuity of care by a known midwife / midwives, improved access to a known midwife for pregnancy care, continuous support during labour and access to midwifery care at home up to 6 weeks following birth.

Rates per thousand births	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Maternal deaths (per 100,000)	21.5	7.9
Fetal deaths	11.7	7.2
Neonatal deaths	7.1	2.8
Preterm births	13.7	5.1
Low birthweight	124	64



Dr Vernon reiterated that women living in remote communities may still have difficulty accessing midwifery care because of lack of indemnity for labour care outside a 'clinical setting' which will make it hard for midwives to support births in local communities that lack a maternity service. Women will need to be 'private patients' to access an MBS funded midwife and there will be no separate funding for Aboriginal Health Workers.

The paper concluded with the following areas that still needed to be addressed which included designing MBS

rebates, determining eligibility for midwives, defining 'collaborative teams', securing professional indemnity insurance, supporting midwives to engage in relevant CPD, identifying and credentialing interested midwives and supporting transition to private practice.

How to register your interest

ACM is putting together a list of midwives who are interested in becoming a Medicare provider
Email the National Office on: members@midwives.org.au or phone 1300 360 480

Irene Fisher - CEO Sunrise Health Services Aboriginal community control under the shifting sands of Government policy



Sunrise Health is a community primary health care service operating in the Katherine east region of the NT. Sunrise provides acute and preventative care to 10 remote Indigenous communities, an area covering 12,000sq km. Governed by a board of 16 community elected Directors, sunrise has established a national reputation for effective governance practises based on the fundamental principle of community control.

This management style has seen effective engagement with communities resulting in more comprehensive services at all levels in the community. Intrinsic to this success is the concept of empowerment of Indigenous people to have ownership to the solutions to the appalling gap in health standards experienced by Indigenous people.

Despite operating in the remote outback Sunrise is a sophisticated organisation with a state of the art electronic health recorded system with the capacity to generate comprehensive health data for all their clients. In recent years the turmoil of unprecedented social change is already showing disturbing trends in health statistics.

Since July 2007, there has been a tremendous upheaval at every layer of government service provision to the prescribed communities under the NT Intervention.

At a Territory government level the introduction of draconian child protection laws have raised grave concerns by health practitioners for the sexual health and well being of Indigenous youth.

Local government reforms have seen the amalgamation of local government councils into 8 shires and disempowered the former role of community councils as the major governing body.

The government control over the lives of Indigenous people in remote communities has reached levels not seen since the days of assimilation policies of the 50's. The presentation will examine how the impact of the disempowering changes has been reflected in negative trends in health statistics.





Olga's Wonderful Career

“Dare to dream and to never give up”



Dr Olga Kanitsaki AM

In her own words, with great dedication and emotion, Dr Olga Kanitsaki told those at the CATSIN National Conference her nursing story. Laughter and tears flowed freely as yet another audience was truly inspired by this amazing woman, who struggled against discrimination and conquered ignorance to rise to the top of the nursing profession in Australia.

Olga came to Australia from Crete in Greece when she was in her middle teens. She had come from a very rural lifestyle, where school was mostly for the boys and from an area known for olive production, definitely not known for producing PhDs and professors of nursing. She had what was considered in Crete to be a comfortable upbringing, however it would be seen today as poor, ignorant and insular.

When Olga first came to Australia, she had a series of jobs including light manufacturing as a process worker and dressmaking. They lived in a few rooms in a poor suburb that was shared with many family members and swelled each time another relation immigrated to Australia.

Olga had her audience in stitches, explaining her ignorance of the 1950's Aussie culture. Her description of some of the close calls she had with men and her safety in general were the kinds of stories where we didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The pictures she painted about some of her jobs and some of her workmates were excruciating because of Olga's honesty and openness about her ignorance.

Olga wanted to be a nurse. More than anything, she wanted this. After a while and many dud jobs, Olga got a job as a “pinkie”, a ward helper – not quite a cleaner,

not quite an orderly, not quite a food services worker but a bit of all of these - a gopher.

In time, and after a lot of begging, and a few lucky breaks, Olga was offered to do her nursing training at the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital in Melbourne. She took to nursing like a duck to water. Despite the fact that she could barely speak English, much less write it. Olga found ways to cope and manage. One of Olga's lucky breaks was that she had caught the eye of the Matron, one of Australia's most celebrated nurses, Miss Vivien Bullwinkle. Of course at the time, Olga had no idea who Miss Bullwinkle was – but Olga did think herself very lucky indeed to have a chance to be a nurse!

Olga lived in the Nurses Home, where the regimen was very strict. Those were the days when trainee nurses had to be in the building by a certain time, where there were no visitors to your room, and where the lights went out at the same time every night. The “lights out” was a big problem for Olga, who needed a lot more time to study. Her solution was to go sit in the toilet block where the lights stayed on all night. Once there, she could work at translating her notes, learning them, then turning her work back to English so the tutor sisters could understand it. This worked for a while – and then she was caught. Good old Miss Bullwinkle got wind of this and exceptions were made so that Olga did not have to continue to sit on the toilet to study, but could have her lights on in her room.

Though quite exhausted, Olga managed her studies and her workload – trainee nurses provided the bulk of the workforce in public hospitals in those days – and became a nurse.

Olga then had a long period of serious illness where she took the opportunity to consolidate her thinking about nursing and about racism and discrimination. When she returned to her beloved profession, she set about changing the attitudes of nurses to people from other cultures and backgrounds. Having borne the brunt of discrimination and ignorance in its many ugly forms, she was determined to make a difference to the way nurses thought about and treated people.

Olga became an advocate and an academic. She did this long before it was popular to stick your neck out



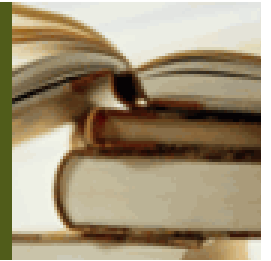
for others and long before nursing courses went into universities.

Olga changed what was taught to nurses and what was expected of nurses in their conduct with people from different cultural backgrounds. Among many other things, Olga became an active member of the International Transcultural Nurses, and shared her ideas and methods with other nurses around the world. She developed a bit of a reputation as she stuck to her convictions and became well known internationally for her courage and her strength in trying to eradicate discrimination from nursing.

Olga became a great friend of CATSIN. She totally transformed the undergraduate nursing curriculum at RMIT in Victoria. As the Head of School, Olga made sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, history and culture were taught to all student nurses in a way that helped them understand the injustices of the past and that racism and discrimination thrive still. She set up the course to be taught as an important, stand-alone aspect of nursing, not as an add-on or afterthought.

Olga has since retired from nursing. At CATSIN, we laugh at this idea. We know that while Olga is not head of school, or delivering babies, or managing a unit, she is still a nurse. We know that she is still a strong and courageous advocate against injustice and a staunch friend of CATSIN. We know that if you let Olga near a microphone she will sound the call against racism long and clear. We are glad she is a friend of CATSIN and we are glad she spoke at our conference. Olga reminds us all that no matter how we get to nursing, no matter what it takes, the struggle is worth it. We can make a difference and we can dare to dream and never give up.

CATSIN Library



CATSIN wishes to advise all Members that we have a rather large and impressive collection of books. They refer to nursing and Torres Strait Islander issues and many topics that influence or relate to these matters. We are in the process of cataloging these books so that they may be easily referenced. As Members these books will be available to you for reference, they will not be available for loan, but if we can help source articles or facts we will be happy to do so.

You can contact us at: catsin@bigpond.net.au
We look forward to being of assistance to you all.

Launch of New Trust Fund for Aboriginal Midwifery Students



The national midwifery conference held in Adelaide last week was delighted to launch a new trust fund known as the Rhodanthe Lipsett Trust, after the midwifery elder and longstanding ACM member of the same name, whose idea it was to create this trust.

The trust aims to provide annual scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander midwifery students, to assist them in their study to become midwives. It is improvements in outcomes for Indigenous women achieved in New Zealand and Canada, where care is routinely provided by midwives who are Maori or Inuit respectively.

The trust needs to gather at least \$200,000 to enable annual scholarships to be paid to eligible students. To read more visit :

Trust Website: <https://amaw.midwives.org.au/>

**Self Regulation:
What does it mean for
a nurse or midwife
in practice?**



Self-Regulation by Alyson Smith, Registrar and CEO of the South Australian Nursing and Midwifery Board

Alyson Smith delivered a paper that focused on nurses and midwives ability to keep up with changes in practice, to practice safely and ethically and earn the trust of the public. Alyson reminded the audience that nurses remain the most honest and ethical profession in the eyes of the public.

Alyson pointed out the core characteristics of professions

A recognized profession that has the responsibility, legally and morally, to take leadership in areas of:

- Qualifications and competence, both pre-registration/enrolment and when in practice
- Control of those who may enter or remain in the profession
- Definition of the nature of the work
- Ethical standards and rules of conduct
- Accountability of the profession to the public

Alyson went on to describe the characteristics of the nursing and midwifery profession regulatory system

- A privilege (not a right) granted by state or territory government that can be withdrawn
- To maintain this privilege, the profession must be accountable to government and the public it serves

- The profession needs to maintain the public's trust through meaningful and effective public consultation in decision making processes including public representation on Boards and Committees

Nurses and midwives must be able to self-regulate in order to maintain their integrity and professional status and must be able to:

- assess and articulate their own professional Competence and Scope of Practice
- be accountable for their decisions and professional practice
- lead the development of nursing and midwifery practice to meet client needs rather than reactively adopt roles through health industry transition and change

In line with the theme of the CATSIN Conference Can we do it? – Yes we can, Alyson reminded us of the fundamental responsibilities we have as nurses and midwives

We can

- ensure that those who hold the title nurse or midwife have acquired the requisite knowledge and skills and demonstrated they are of good standing;
- take responsibility for maintaining our own continuing competence through reflective practice, continuing professional development;
- articulate our own competence and scope of practice;
- practice in accordance with the codes of ethics and conduct, standards and guidelines of the ANMC Professional Practice Framework;
- be accountable for our decisions and standard of professional practice to the public;
- contribute to the standards of professional practice for all nurses and midwives e.g. role model, supervision, guidance, support, involvement in the establishment and implementation of professional codes and standards, Director on the Board or its Committees.





Lesley Salem Gender issues in Health Care

*Lesley Salem Nurse Practitioner Chronic Disease
Aboriginal Health Hunter New England Health
NSW*

Lesley was the Federal Indigenous Women's delegate on the Diplomatic Party to the United Nations for the 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

The introduction to Lesley's paper stated that there are many concerns regarding gender imbalance and the health profession that are either visible or unconsidered. Two significant issues, for Aboriginal people are the gender balance in nursing and the gender impact of caring for Aboriginal women.

The paper discussed Gender balance in nursing and the Gender impact of caring.

Nursing is a female dominated vocation, yet we provide care to men and women. Care delivery by a female to a male patient is often inappropriate across many cultural boundaries including race, gender and age, as well as being socially inappropriate at times. This is not a new issue yet we still fail to recruit adequate numbers of Aboriginal men to the profession and then fail to retain them in clinical roles.

Aboriginal women (and all women) are recognised as the dominant caregivers for family, those of kinship relationships and for the Community including children, elderly and those with chronic illness or

disability. The gender imbalance of care-giving is strongly associated with financial, physical, social and emotional impacts on Aboriginal women yet those with chronic illness are being sent home, by us, earlier, sicker and with complex needs.

Our women are being asked to provide a range of unpaid or low paid care from activities of daily living to technical procedures. This requires emotional and physical exertion with the cost of being relegated to the lowest socioeconomic bracket, being socially isolated, mentally challenged and suffering increased susceptibility to chronic illness themselves.

There are many circumstances that perpetuate gender imbalance. We need to understand that equal opportunity and gender antidiscrimination laws have not led to an outcome of gender equality for Aboriginal women. We are not a homogenous group (as women or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people) so one size does not fit all and Aboriginal women must always have a voice as equal partners in all decision making. As health professionals we must develop strategies and health care models that do not perpetuate and add to gender inequity.

Lesley concluded her paper with the following quote "All humans are born equal in their right and freedom, to have individual qualities of their own humanity. They must give consideration and benevolence in all actions towards each other. Such is my dreaming 2008."





CATSIN Annual Conference 2009



Stories from our students...

My name is Roslyn Wharton-Boland. I am a descendant of the Kooma & Mardigan tribes of South West Queensland and was born and bred in Cunnamulla, Queensland. For the past 10 years my husband, children and I have been living in Toowoomba on the Darling Downs.

I found out about the CATSIN conference through the Indigenous Nursing Lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland (Toowoomba campus), Mrs Lynne Stuart. As I was in my final year of studying the Bachelor of Nursing at USQ in registered nursing, I thought attending the CATSIN conference would be a great insight into what other Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander nurses and students are or have experienced.

The conference did not let me down in that I certainly got what I came for. I networked with people from different areas of nursing from all over Australia, including regional, rural and remote areas. People showed me how important it was to be involved in the care of our own people in a clinical format which is why I decided to study nursing in the first place.

From the conference, I received great support, advice, encouragement and a sense of belonging, and that I am not going to be alone at that professional level and that fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses are out there to assist me with any issues that I may face in my new chosen career. Knowing that these people are more than willing to support me, was the absolute highlight of the conference.

I have and will continue to tell other students and nurses that CATSIN is a great organization that gives you a sense of belonging at a national level, which is important particularly for indigenous nurses. It provides you with the opportunity to network with fellow students and nurses from all around the country along with organizations such as The Royal College of Nursing Australia, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, Australian Nursing Federation etc. With organizations

such as these attending provides a sense of pride, that they are interested in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.



Roslyn with Mentor, Nola White

I was fortunate to have formed many new friendships by attending CATSIN. But two things in particular stand out for me. Firstly, is meeting Claire Saunders from the Royal College of Nursing Australia – Puggy Hunter Scholarship for which I have been a recipient for the past 2 years. Being able to thank this lady in person for ensuring more of the Puggy Hunter Scholarships are available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Without her and the scholarships I wouldn't have been in a position to complete my nursing studies within the 3 year normal period and probably would have delayed university for many years. Secondly, in meeting and discovering my mentor, Mrs Nola White, who thankfully took on the role of mentoring me into my registered nursing career, which will begin in 2010. I look forward to being guided by such an experienced Aboriginal registered nurse who knows exactly what I am in for, and can offer me the best advice.

Finally thank you to Sally Goold and all the CATSIN people for making me feel very welcome at the conference in Melbourne and gave us a great insight into the nursing profession. I look forward to networking with you all again in 2010.

Roslyn Wharton - Boland





Calendar of Events

November

Reforming Australia's Health Workforce Conference

Promoting national collaboration and coordination in health workforce development and training
23-24 November 2009 | Sofitel Wentworth Sydney
Email: registration@informa.com.au

December

Integrated Cancer Centres Symposium

Improving the cancer patient's journey in Australia
9-10 December 2009 | Hilton on the Park, Melbourne
Email: enquiries@informa.com.au

March 2010

12th Annual Health Congress

Informa is pleased to host the 12th edition of the annual Health Congress. This three-day event brings together government representatives and leading experts to discuss the federal and state agenda for healthcare reform.
3-5 March 2010, Sydney Harbour Marriott
Email: enquiries@informa.com.au

Missed the conference, or want a keepsake?

Remember if you would like a copy of all the presentations and photos from the conference, you can Purchase a CD for \$10 from the CATSIN office.

Contact details: Ph. (07) 34107236
Email: catsin@bigpond.com



Membership Enquiries

CATSIN MEMBERS

This is a reminder that membership fees are due as of 30th September.

Membership forms can be downloaded from our Website: www.indiginet.com.au/catsin
Full Membership: \$ 60.00 a year
(renewals 30th September)
Associate: \$ 20.00
(student and retired registered nurses)

Contact Details

CATSIN Office
Hours: 8:30am – 4:00pm Monday – Friday
Mailing Address: 14 Cassia Ave Banksia Beach QLD 4507
Phone: (07) 3410 7236 Fax: (07) 3410 7235
Email: catsin@bigpond.net.au
Website: www.indiginet.com.au/catsin

Your friendly office staff:

Glenda Richardson: Office Manager / Executive Director's Assistant

Research / Project Officer:

Roslyn Lockhart
Hours 9:00am – 5:30pm Tuesday- Friday
Mailing Address: PO Box 124 Jerilderie NSW 2716
Phone/Fax: (03) 5886 0505
Mobile: 0439 892 677
Email: lockharr@bigpond.net.au

Policy Project Officer:

Robyn Coulthard
Mobile: 0450 223 042
Email: robyn.coulthard@gmail.com





Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses

Membership Renewal Application Form
Due - 30th September 2009

Treat this form as your Tax Invoice
Please print all details clearly.

Name: First Last

Address:

City/Town State Post code

Telephone: (work) (home) (mobile)

(fax) Email:

Status: Registered Nurse Enrolled Nurse Student Nurse Retired Nurse Associate Member

Qualifications:

(Please attach a photocopy of your Annual Practising Certificate / Registration)

Further Education:

Place of Employment or Place of Study:

Position Held:

MEMBERSHIP FEES:

Fees are made payable to CATSIN via Cheque or Money Order. A receipt will be forwarded to you via post.

Fees are tax deductible!

I would like to renew my CATSIN membership:

Full membership, Registered and Enrolled Nurses: \$60.00 per annum

Student Nurses and Associates: \$20.00 per annum

Please send your application and payment to:

CATSIN
14 Cassia Ave, Banksia Beach
Bribie Island QLD 4057

Ph: 07 3410 7236 Fax: 07 3410 7235 Mobile: 0438 808 739 Email: catsin@bigpond.net.au

Web: www.indigenet.com.au/catsin ABN: 64 085 000 120



