



## **Outstanding Contribution to Diversity and Inclusion**

This award celebrates the achievements of University professional and academic staff who excel in their contribution to advancing the inclusion of staff and students and visitor experience at the University, across one or more aspects of diversity (e.g. disability, gender, sexuality, racial and cultural). The award will be given to a person or team who can demonstrate a positive impact on diversity and inclusion for staff, students and/or visitors.

### **Criteria:**

1. Excellence or quality of contribution
2. Novelty or distinctiveness of the contribution
3. Cumulative impact of the contribution over a sustained period of time

Foundation members of the CnC:

**Emma Walke, Veronica Matthews, David Edwards, Tracey Piccoli, Susan Parker-Pavlovic, Aimee Waddell**

### **Aboriginal staff fostering cultural and racial inclusion for staff, students and community**

Aboriginal professional, education and research staff working at the Northern Rivers Rural Clinical School in Lismore comprise the Aboriginal Staff 'Caucus (not Caucus)' - the 'CnC'. The foundation members of the CnC have all worked for the UCRH for at least 3 years, some for ten years.

Formed in 2018, the CnC has enhanced the reputation of the UCRH and USyd. They have worked collegially to transform the UCRH to be more culturally inclusive and strengthened UCRH staff capacity to work in the Indigenous health education and research space.

The peer-to-peer support within the CnC has created a safe space for Aboriginal staff to draw on trusted mentoring support. This has assisted in retention and growth of CnC members from 7 to 12 (>15% of UCRH staff; >10% of USyd Indigenous staff; 10 times the overall percentage of Indigenous staff at USyd).

As a group, the CnC provide cultural advice when required to non-Indigenous colleagues, providing a safe environment for discussing issues around Aboriginal health, wellbeing and culture, the history of colonisation and the impact of this on Aboriginal people.

As outlined below, the CnC has collectively made considerable contributions to governance, leadership and engagement at the UCRH, the Faculty and USyd. This broader contribution is particularly notable given our rural location in Northern NSW.

### ***Community-engaged research and evaluation***

The CnC team have led and are all involved in nationally significant community engaged Indigenous health research and knowledge exchange projects. This includes the CRE-STRIDE (a nationally collaborative Centre for Research Excellence recently funded by the NHMRC), and WellMob (a resource to enhance online access to mental health and wellbeing resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).

The CnC also initiated the 'Health from the Grass Roots' project (<https://ucrh.edu.au/health-from-the-grass-roots/>), a pioneering grassroots/ground-up approach to working with the local Aboriginal communities to identify their health research needs and aspirations. By facilitating a voice for the community, they have provided a clear plan and focus for our research and have applied for research funding in partnership with local Aboriginal community organisations to progress this agenda. The project has strengthened skills for employment of Aboriginal community peer workers and for CnC members not experienced in research processes. Further stages to this project will engage community and knowledge holders in teaching, research and knowledge exchange, and design new ways to meet community health and wellbeing needs through building on the strengths of community and culture.

It is due to the CnC's demonstrated skills and achievements in this area that our reputation has improved over the years as a trusted partner in Aboriginal education, research and evaluation activities. Recently the CnC was sought out by a community organisation to assist with the development of processes and a framework that supported them to evaluate a locally produced wellbeing DVD resource, Bunyarabugalma, which was launched in July 2020.

### ***Contribution to education and research training***

Members of the CnC play lead roles in developing and delivering orientation and educational programs to several hundred medical and allied health students supported in rural placements by the UCRH each year. CnC staff have a remarkably sensitive and inclusive approach to what can be a very challenging area for both students and teachers. Their contribution in teaching extends to the metro campuses and other rural sites for USyd and for our partner universities, using diverse methods to engage students and staff in learning about Aboriginal health. The team consistently receives outstanding feedback from the students regarding teaching and orientation programs – many students identify their experience and learning in Aboriginal health as a highlight of their rural health placement.

The team has also developed and implemented a very successful program to encourage Indigenous high school students to consider careers in health. This program has expanded over the past few years and is now delivered in several sites in our region.

The CnC team have facilitated delivery in our region of regular teaching intensives for the Master of Indigenous Health Promotion that is offered through USyd School of Public Health. Their work has facilitated access to this training for Aboriginal people in our region. The team has been highly effective in engaging with health service partners in our region and with community-based organisations to bring depth, diversity and relevance to the students' learning experience.

### ***Culturally respectful and safe space***

Through the design and installation of unique art and sculpture works across the UCRH campus, the CnC have enhanced the visibility of the UCRH as a welcoming space for community. New projects underway include a bush tucker garden to facilitate connection to local culture and knowledge sharing between Elders and visiting students. This is an added component to a comprehensive cultural immersion experience facilitated by CnC members for medical and allied health students while on rural placement, this has been made possible from a grant from the DVC ISS - Unfinished Business Projects in 2020.

### ***Contribution to the broader university and local community organisations***

The CnC has been strongly engaged with general strategy development for USyd, the Indigenous Research Strategy and with Indigenous Staff networks. Recent consultations on the University of Sydney One Sydney, Many People strategy has highlighted the novel contributions of the CnC to the education and research programs of the UCRH, and the CnC approach has been referred to as a good practice model for broader adaptation within the university.