



Northern Territory Update – March 2008

Since the last update, things have been quiet in the NT Branch with a number of our members away and the remainder kept busy with cyclones, floods and a myriad of other unique 'Territory' issues. We of the Territory are a small group tasked with a phenomenal amount of barriers and challenges facing health promotion practice. However, in face of all this adversity, there are a number of opportunities for health promotion and health promoters alike. For those looking for a challenge, working as a health promotion practitioner/policy officer/researcher in the NT will open doors of opportunity that you won't experience in the rest of Australia. Just recently, Menzies School of Health Research won a grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council commencing 2008, totaling nearly 3/4 million over 3 years to investigate a model for continuous quality improvement in Indigenous health promotion.

Any outsider to the NT would probably be appalled that we still have clubs and pubs with smoking, indigenous health at rates far below the non-indigenous population, and STI rates 10% above the national average. That outsider would then stop and imagine what it must be like to provide services to a population of 221 555 people of which 24% identify as Aboriginal over a land mass that covers 17% of Australia. Then to really make things complicated, 24.5% of Northern Territorians speak a language other than English at home compared to the national average of 15.5%. There are over 20 indigenous languages alone that are taught and spoken across the NT.

So with all of this stacked against us, where do we start? There are plenty of health promotion programs alive and active in the NT at the moment and there are a number of passionate health promoters in both the Government and NGO sector – some of these are the wonderful members of the NT AHPA branch. As branch members, we seek to consolidate our experience and to build on our professional strengths by hosting professional development activities and advocating for health promotion change in our respective organisations.

The start of 2008 will see an AGM, planning day and a workshop on the Bangkok Charter – challenges and possibilities for the future of health promotion in the NT. With a membership base of only 15 people/organisations scattered across the Territory – achieving and maintaining health promotion professional development and other activities is a big accomplishment. I look forward to our branch work and reporting back to the AHPA membership on what the NT branch will be up to over the coming 12 months.