Aboriginal Community Researchers

Informing policy and practice in remote and rural health

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population distribution - 2006(a)

1 Dot = 100 Indigenous persons

Remoteness Areas
- Major Cities
- Regional Areas
- Remote Areas

(a) Final estimates based on the 2006 Census of Population and Housing.
Source: ABS data available on request, Australian Demographic Statistics (cat. no. 3101.0)
Aboriginal Community Researcher (ACR) Program

A network of nearly **250 Aboriginal Community Researchers** working in **over 100 communities**.
Shared Space approach – the way we work

(ACRs)…felt they were part of the ‘thinking as well as the doing’,

“I’m having so much fun doing this!”
– Aboriginal Community Researcher
Participatory Action Research

- ACR’s **engage** and **consult** with the end-user Aboriginal people and communities using **Participatory Action Research**.

- ACR’s are **trained in research** and **evaluation methodologies**.

- ACR’s have an ongoing role **during design** and **implementation phases** of the research.

Adapted from: jareddonovan.com/blog/on/research/
Aboriginal Community Researchers

- Research needs are scoped and communities identified.
- Senior Research Officers (SRO) co-design the research program with researchers, such as Chief Investigators (CI) from university, government, industry or NFP.
- SRO select and train local ACR’s.
Aboriginal Community Researchers

• Some cases data is collected in language, translated and uploaded onto pre-programmed iPads.

• The SRO’s and Chief Investigator analyse the information and provide report highlights.

• ACR’s return to communities and disseminate and discuss the findings.
Aboriginal Community Researchers

- Enhanced integrity of the research information.

- ACR’s gain meaningful short-term employment.

- ACR’s create role-models for their families and communities.

- A residual capability is able to be built in the communities for future research opportunities.
Case Studies
Evaluation of the National Trachoma Health Promotion Program

• Ninti One was invited by Indigenous Eye Health (IEH), University of Melbourne to conduct an evaluation of the Trachoma Health Promotion Programme (THPP).

• The project evaluated the work of IEH at the University of Melbourne and its contribution to the goals of the National THPP in six remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia.

• The ACR’s contributed to the project helping to identify community knowledge and perceptions of the THPP and what impact this knowledge had on the respondents and their actions.
Remote Indigenous Cardio-metabolic health research in 54 communities – contracted to the Uni of Canberra

The EnRICH project aims to evaluate the impact of community environments on the heart health of community members living in remote regions of the Northern Territory and Queensland.
This project developed and delivered the world’s first intelligent retinal camera, designed to scan the eyes of patients in real time and detect early signs of disease, enabling better treatment for people living in remote areas.

Over 2 years, Ninti One’s ACR’s worked with communities on the ground to ensure the needs and wishes of patients were listened to in the development and testing of the technology.

A final report was delivered back to the community.
Population and Labour Mobility Research Project

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote communities travel large distances to access services.

• The Mobility sought to provide a better understanding of the drivers of mobility and generate estimates of the extent and patterns of mobility of people in remote communities.

• ACR’s were employed to conduct over 2,000 surveys within Aboriginal Communities around Alice Springs, to find out where they go, why, how and what problems they encounter, and what trips they wanted to make but could not.

• The surveys were repeated three times with 550 of the respondents.
National Best Practice Unit for Tackling Indigenous Smoking

• The national Department of Health Tackling Indigenous Smoking programme aims to reduce smoking as the most preventable cause of ill health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

• Ninti One was commissioned to lead the National Best Practice Unit.

• This TIS program has 37 grant recipient organisations across Australia.

• ACR’s are employed to gain access to ‘hard-to-reach’ Aboriginal Community in remote settings.
Proven methodologies delivering better research and community development outcomes

- community engagement
- program evaluation and monitoring
- social and economic systems
- business enterprise development and entrepreneurism
- function and sustainability of remote settlements
- intellectual property management
- natural resource management and land issues
- cultural knowledge and its uses
- governance in remote regions
- remote tourism
- health & well-being
- remote services
- energy and water
- partnerships