

Aboriginal Researchers Network

Workshop Report 9th September 2025



Supporting and connecting
Aboriginal people working in health and
health-related research.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following individuals and organisations for their contributions to the planning, preparation, delivery and support of the Aboriginal Researcher Network (ARN) held on 9 September 2025 in the Akaltje Room at the Desert Knowledge Precinct, 475 South Stuart Highway, Kilgariff, Alice Springs.

- Zania Liddle – Community Research Coordinator CAAHSN
- Wendy-Lea Lechleitner – Research Administration Officer CAAHSN
- Janey Fowler – Communications, Media and Marketing Manager CAAHSN
- Guy Krippner – Chief Operating Officer CAAHSN
- John Huigen – Chief Executive Officer CAAHSN
- Heather D'Antoine – University of Queensland
- Dr Michaela Spencer – Charles Darwin University
- Stuart McGifford – Purple House
- Living Well Summit 2025 Organising Team (Batchelor Institute, Charles Darwin University, Desert Knowledge Research Institute and Desert Knowledge Australia and CAAHSN)
- Treat Me Good Café, Desert Knowledge Precinct (catering)

CAAHSN also thanks its Partners and Members:



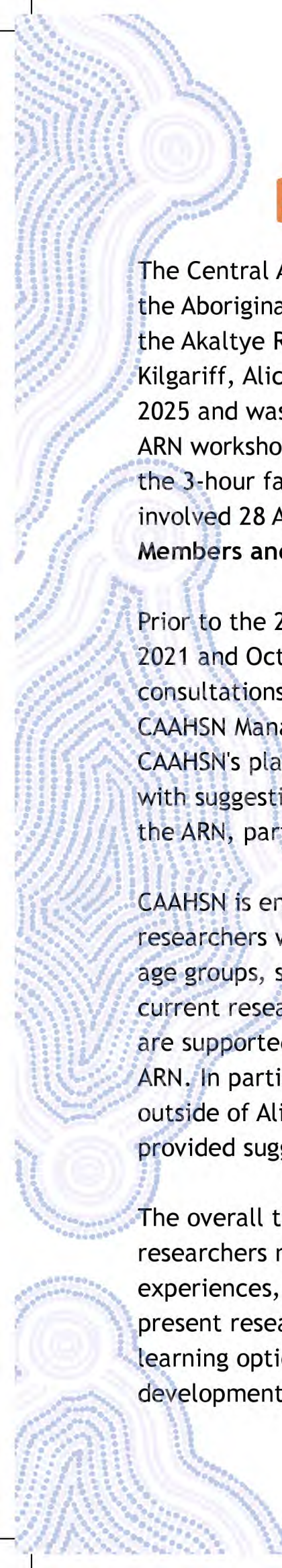
ANYINGINYI
HEALTH
ABORIGINAL
CORPORATION



Ngaanyatjarra
Health Service



Ngaanyatjarra
Pitjantjatjara
Yankunytjatjara
Women's Council
(Aboriginal Corporation)



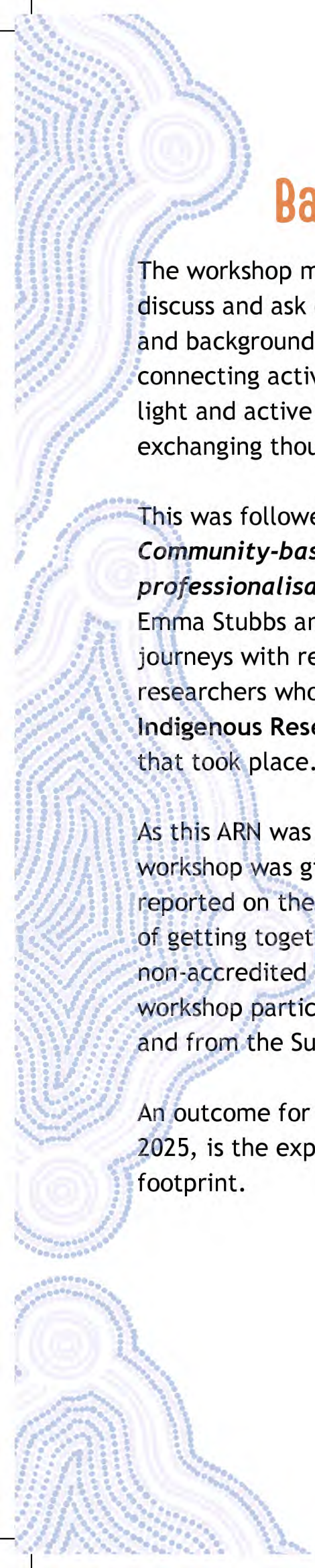
Background and Introduction

The Central Australia Academic Health Science Network (CAAHSN) hosted the Aboriginal Researcher Network (ARN) on Tuesday 9 September 2025 in the Akaltje Room at Desert Knowledge Precinct 475 South Stuart Highway, Kilgariff, Alice Springs. This workshop was part of the Living Well Summit 2025 and was the fifth workshop in a series hosted by CAAHSN. Previous ARN workshops in 2025 were held in January and in May. This is a report of the 3-hour face to face workshop which took place on 9 September. It involved 28 ARN members and guest speakers (**see Appendix Two - ARN Members and Guests List**).

Prior to the 2025 ARN workshops, and the ARN workshops held in October 2021 and October 2020, there were a series of planning meetings and consultations held with Aboriginal people involved in research and with the CAAHSN Management Committee and Governing Council. For 2025, CAAHSN's plan was to facilitate a total of 4 workshops. This plan aligns with suggestions regarding frequency of workshops made by members of the ARN, particularly from those who have attended workshops in 2025.

CAAHSN is encouraged by the level of interest and support shown by researchers who make up the ARN. The researchers come from a range of age groups, stakeholder agencies, research backgrounds, work roles and current research experiences, all of whom attended the workshop and who are supported by their workplaces and colleagues to participate in the ARN. In particular, the number of researchers who came from places outside of Alice Springs was considered favourable by ARN members who provided suggestions on how the workshop went.

The overall theme of the workshop was to connect researchers, including researchers new to the ARN, so they can talk about their research experiences, skills, training and development. As well, we aimed to present researchers with information and ideas about the professional learning options and opportunities available to advance their training and development priorities relevant to working in research.



Background and Introduction

The workshop mode was relaxed and friendly with the opportunity to discuss and ask questions. Following lunch, introductions, housekeeping and background information, Wendy-Lea Lechleitner facilitated the group connecting activity, Desert Bingo where the researchers participated in light and active discussions on a range of topics for the purpose of exchanging thoughts and ideas about those topics.

This was followed by guest speaker, Dr Michaela Spencer's presentation on ***Community-based Researchers - Opportunities for recognition and professionalisation***. Michaela was joined by community researchers, Emma Stubbs and Elaine Williams who shared aspects of their personal journeys with recognition and professionalisation with the group. Other researchers who were in attendance and who are involved with the **CDU Indigenous Researcher Initiative** added to the rich discussion and sharing that took place.

As this ARN was part of the Living Well Summit, a report on the ARN workshop was given at Day 2 of the Summit by Heather D'Antoine. Heather reported on the importance of getting together and networking, the value of getting together highlighted by attendees, the different accredited and non-accredited courses available to researchers, the locations from where workshop participants came from, and the logistics involved in travelling to and from the Summit.

An outcome for CAAHSN for the ARN being part of the Living Well Summit 2025, is the exposure to other groups and individuals not within the ARN footprint.



ARN Background

The overall focus of the ARN is to support and connect Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples working in health and health-related research in Central Australia.

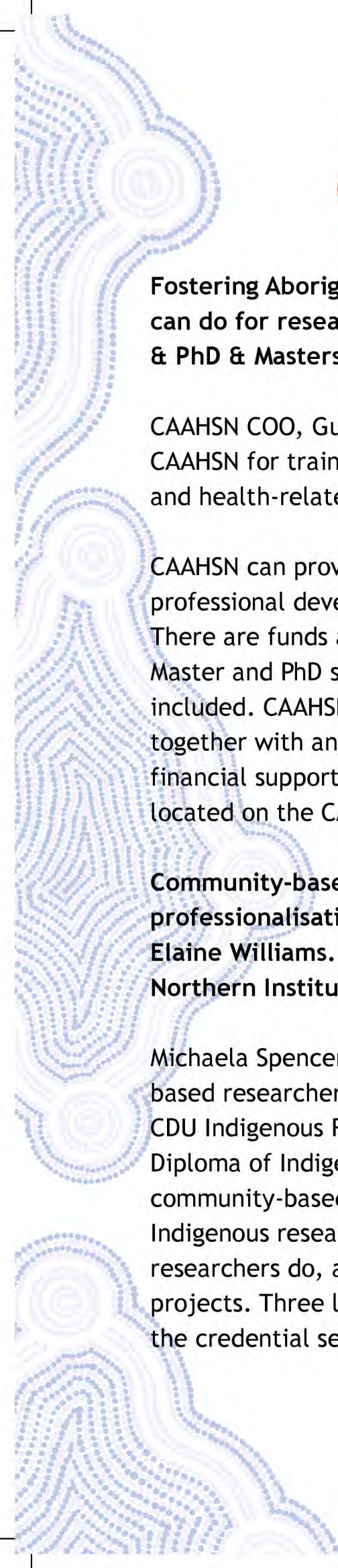
Over time, Aboriginal people working as researchers have said that they would like discussion of such themes such as, research terminology, best practice research, capacity building, communications and consumer driven research, to be included in ARN workshop programs.

The terms of reference for the ARN are underpinned by CAAHSN's commitment to foster Aboriginal community driven research which facilitates better health and social outcomes for Aboriginal people living in Central Australia. As per its Terms of Reference, the ARN exists to:

- provide a forum for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (henceforth Aboriginal people) involved in health and health-related research to share ideas, knowledge and experiences;
- support the professional development of Aboriginal people involved in health and health-related research;
- promote and support the leadership development of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples involved in health and health-related research;
- assist in monitoring the implementation of Doing it Right across CAAHSN research activities; and
- discuss, consider, evaluate and/or make recommendation to the CEO of other culturally appropriate research practices, tools or frameworks.

Supporting the professional development of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples involved in health and health-related research and promoting and supporting their leadership development in health and health-related research has been a key focus for ARN workshops in 2025.





Professional Learning Options & Opportunities

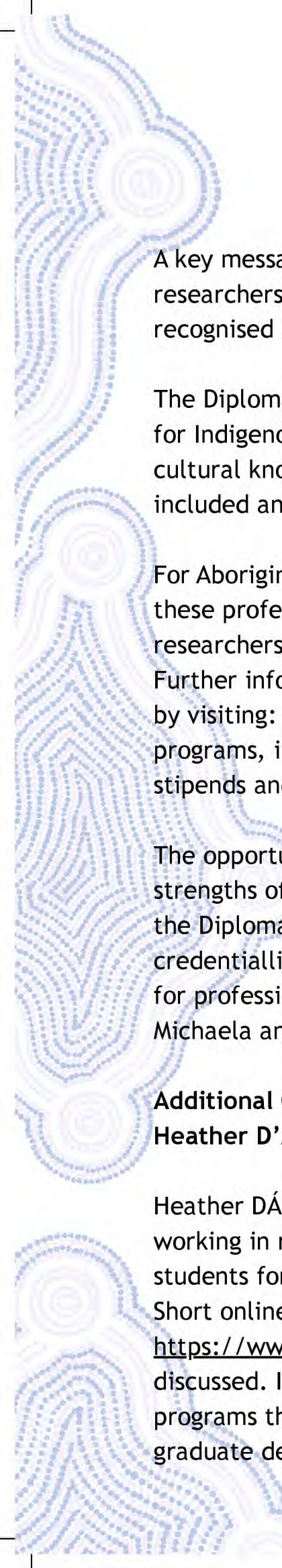
Fostering Aboriginal Leadership in Research Initiative - What CAAHSN can do for researchers - Financial Support for Entry Level Qualifications & PhD & Masters Stipends/Sponsorships - Guy Krippner

CAAHSN COO, Guy Krippner talked about specifics of funds available from CAAHSN for training and development for researchers working in health and health-related research in Central Australia.

CAAHSN can provide financial support for ARN members to undertake professional development through various training or education programs. There are funds available for Entry-level qualifications as well as for Master and PhD stipends. Financial support to attend conferences is not included. CAAHSN has developed an information sheet with the guidelines together with an application form for potential applicants to apply for financial support. For easy access to researchers, these documents are now located on the CAAHSN website: <https://caahsn.org.au/network/>

Community-based Researchers - Opportunities for recognition and professionalisation. Community-based researchers - Emma Stubbs and Elaine Williams. Dr Michaela Spencer - Ground Up Research Team, Northern Institute (See Appendix Five) michaela.spencer@cdu.edu.au

Michaela Spencer provided a recap of the CDU Indigenous community-based researcher credentials (**See Appendix Four**) as well as details of the CDU Indigenous Researcher Initiative (**See Appendix Four**) and the CDU Diploma of Indigenous Research (**See Appendix Four**). The CDU Indigenous community-based researcher credentials program has been co-designed by Indigenous researchers with a focus on recognising what community researchers do, and the value of their work guiding and facilitating projects. Three levels of digital badges (similar to certificates) make up the credential set hosted by CDU.



Professional Learning Options & Opportunities

A key message from Emma and Elaine and other Community-based researchers was the value of professionalisation, and people getting recognised for what they bring to research.

The Diploma of Indigenous Research is a one-year full-time course of study for Indigenous students only, with entry granted on work experience and cultural knowledge, with no formal prerequisites. An application fee is included and HECS fees are charged for each of the eight units of study.

For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people working as researchers, these professional learning programs all foster learning that equips researchers with skills that enable them to work safely as researchers. Further information on all the CDU programs presented, can be obtained by visiting: <https://iri.cdu.edu.au>. Where costs and fees relate to these programs, it is recommended that potential students apply for bursaries, stipends and scholarships to assist with costs and fees.

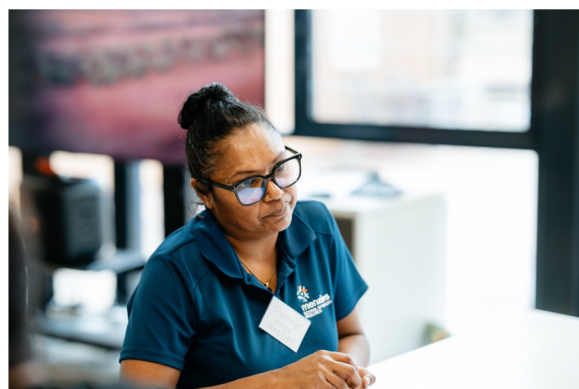
The opportunity to ask questions as well as discuss the practice and strengths of micro-credentialling, the Indigenous Researcher Initiative and the Diploma of Indigenous Research was provided. As a student of micro-credentialling, Emma highlighted the importance of the support around her for professional learning success, including from key people such as Michaela and the Ground Up program.

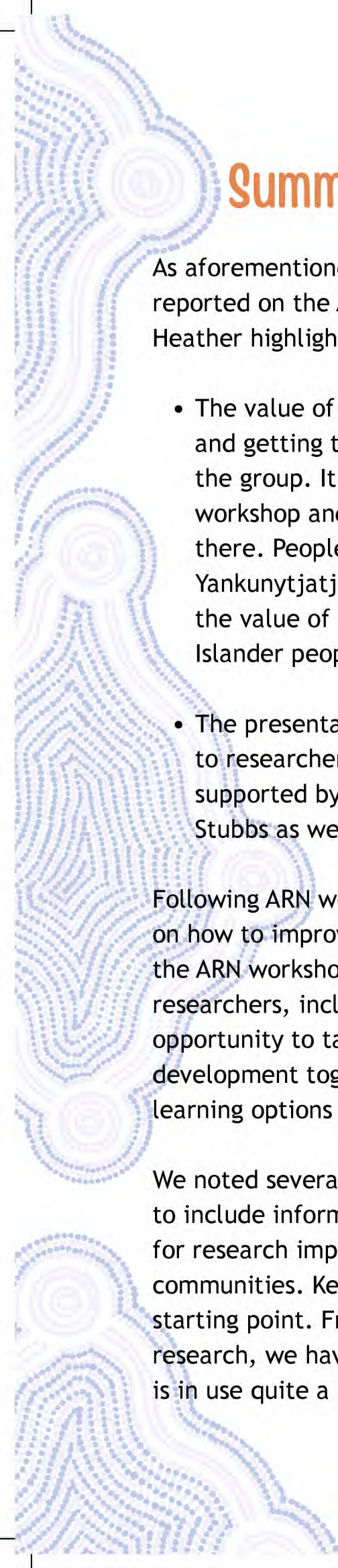
Additional Opportunities relevant to people working in research - Heather D'Antoine

Heather D'Antoine highlighted different courses available relevant to working in research and the potential of these programs to prepare students for getting ready to complete a Masters and/or PhD program. Short online courses such as the Lowitja Institute programs <https://www.lowitja.org.au/lowitja-learning/courses/> were viewed and discussed. In addition, a couple of the well-known universities offer programs that prepare students to undertake and complete a post-graduate degree.

Professional Learning Options & Opportunities

Michaela and Heather and others were available to chat informally to members of the group about aspects of the sessions on informal and formal professional learning options and opportunities likely to be of interest to people working in research.





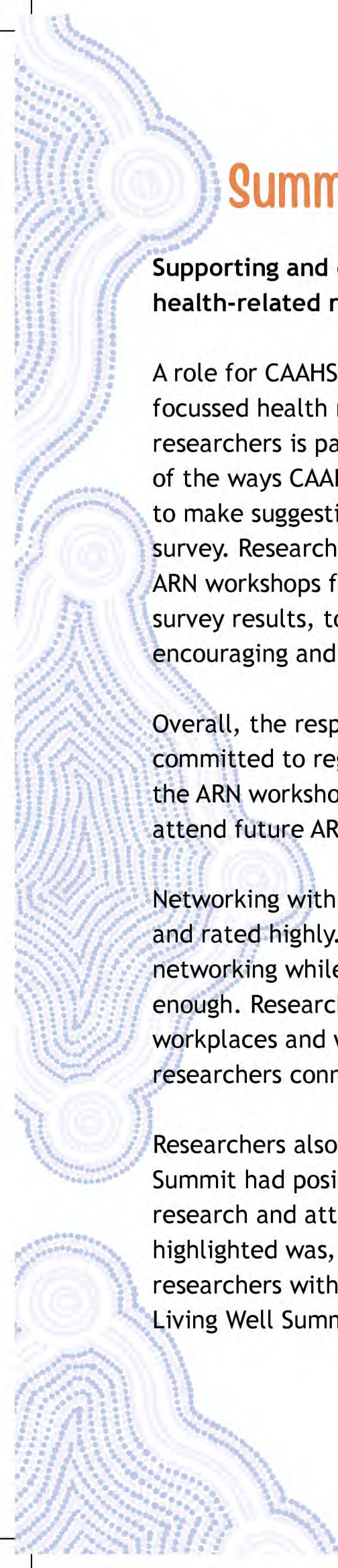
Summary, Thank You & Next Steps.

As aforementioned, on Day 2 of the Living Well Summit, Heather D'Antoine, reported on the ARN workshop. In her report back, as alluded to earlier, Heather highlighted the following:

- The value of networking amongst the ARN members. The connection and getting together as people working in research is rated highly by the group. It is recognised that there were new members at this ARN workshop and that some members had travelled long distances to be there. People came from Warburton, Darwin, the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands and Adelaide. This shows recognition for the value of such a group to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples working in research.
- The presentations on different courses available/likely to be of interest to researchers. Those programs presented by Dr Michaela Spencer supported by community-based researchers, Elaine Williams and Emma Stubbs as well as Heather D'Antoine.

Following ARN workshops, CAAHSN conducts a survey to collect feedback on how to improve future workshops. The survey is sent to attendees of the ARN workshops and determines the following: how well we connected researchers, including those researchers new to the ARN to provide the opportunity to talk about their research experiences, skills, training and development together with providing information on what professional learning options are available to researchers.

We noted several questions and general Interest for future ARN workshops to include information about artificial intelligence (AI), and what it means for research impacting on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities. Keeping oneself informed about AI was highlighted as a good starting point. From informal conversations with a few people working in research, we have established that in the workplaces of ARN members, AI is in use quite a bit.



Summary, Thank You & Next Steps.

Supporting and connecting Aboriginal people working in health and health-related research - Summary of the Survey Results:

A role for CAAHSN is to be a connector and supporter of Aboriginal focussed health research. Hearing the views and perspectives of researchers is part of that connection and support. As aforementioned, one of the ways CAAHSN does this, is to provide the opportunity for researchers to make suggestions on how to improve future ARN workshops by way of a survey. Researcher responses and suggestions for improvement for future ARN workshops from the 9 September ARN Workshop contained in the survey results, together with informal and formal feedback has been very encouraging and positive.

Overall, the responses and suggestions show that the researchers are committed to regular support and connection amongst researchers through the ARN workshops. Ten out of ten responses in the survey said they would attend future ARN workshops.

Networking with other researchers as part of the ARN workshops is valued and rated highly. Some responders added that more time is needed for networking while others said that the time allowed for networking was enough. Researcher perspectives on strengths and support gaps in their workplaces and work roles were highlighted as something of value from researchers connecting and supporting each other.

Researchers also said that joining the ARN workshop with the Living Well Summit had positive impacts including connecting more people working in research and attracting researchers from outside of Alice Springs. Also highlighted was, that joining with the Living Well Summit provided researchers with an opportunity for a trial run to their presentations at the Living Well Summit.

Summary, Thank You & Next Steps.

The overall response is that researchers had a great day and found the workshop content interesting and enjoyable, thanking CAAHSN for showcasing current programs. The researcher responses highlight that providing a forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers involved in health and health-related research to share ideas, knowledge and experiences to support researcher professional learning is needed. As is the need to facilitate the delivery of training and other professional development activities as determined by ARN members.



Summary, Thank You & Next Steps?

Next Steps from 9 September Workshop include:

Action	Progress
Circulate a questionnaire/survey to participants (Survey was open until 18 October 2025). Results are included in this report.	Results have been collated and are reported herein.
Scheduling and planning and preparation for 26 November Workshop : -calendar invite -preparation of agenda -reminder notice -identify guest speaker on A.I.	Meeting was scheduled, with guest speaker Sally Davis (CDU) to present on A.I. (Sally presented at 26 November ARN Workshop.)
Publication and circulation of 9 September ARN Workshop report.	Electronic version of the workshop report circulated by 15 November. Limited numbers of hard copy workshop reports will be printed and circulated at the 26 November workshop. Ongoing
Visits/phone calls to agencies – in preparation for next workshop – particularly with people who have attended one or less ARN workshops in 2025.	Ongoing
Applying for Financial Support - CAAHSN Process and Forms for study & a framework for relevant courses of study – circulated to ARN members – links to the information and tools on ARN page on CAAHSN website.	Set of guidelines and application form for financial support introduced to researchers at the 26 November ARN Workshop and now available on CAAHSN website.
Explore options for connecting the group between workshops – identify a practice to connect ARN members based on existing examples from the research community.	Contacted R3SHARE Network with a view to modelling an ARN share network on R3SHARE. Received an introduction to David Schmidt from Alex Edelmann (Menzies), who in turn introduced CAAHSN to Emma Webster. Will schedule a video call with David and Emma sometime soon. Present findings on a connecting and supporting model at the 26 November ARN. Ongoing

Networking 3-4pm (optional)

The idea and intention behind networking as optional was a good one. However, everyone was tired and just wanted to go home and get ready for Day 2 of the Living Well Summit.

Aboriginal Researchers Network

Next Workshop

When: Tuesday September 9th 2025 12noon to 3pm
(with the option to continue to network til 4pm)

Where: The Living Well Summit
Desert Knowledge Precinct Stuart Highway Alice
Springs, NT 0870



More information to be provided in the coming weeks

Supporting and connecting Aboriginal people
working in health and health-related research.

RSVP zania.liddle@caahsn.org.au
by Tuesday 2nd September

We look forward to seeing you there



Appendix Two: ARN Members and Guests List

ARN Members

Gloria Baliva (Menzies School of Health Research)
Kureisha Wilson (Menzies School of Health Research)
Cheryl Ross (Menzies School of Health Research)
Lorraine Liddle (Menzies School of Health Research)
Sherrelle Khan (Menzies School of Health Research)
Elaine Williams
Walbira Murray (AMSANT)
Tim Ramm (AMSANT)
Alicia Grenfell (AMSANT)
Emma Stubbs (CAAC)
Yasmin Watts (CAAC and Menzies School of Health Research)
Vicki Hayes (CAAC)
Jessica McAdam (CAAC)
Lazarus Gallagher (CAAC)
Zania Liddle (CAAHSN)
Wendy-Lea Lechleitner (CAAHSN)
Belinda Wayne (CLC)
Glenda Wayne (CLC)
Joshua Tranter (Flinders University)
Angelica McLean (Ngaanyatjarra Council)

Guests

Heather D'Antoine (University of Queensland)
Robyn Ober (Batchelor Institute)
Michaela Spencer (Charles Darwin University)
Dom Barry (UniSA)
Jon Harris (National Wellbeing Alliance)
Janey Fowler (CAAHSN)
John Huigen (CAAHSN)
Guy Krippner (CAAHSN)

ABOR	
Center	
Time	
12noon	
12:30-1:15	
1:15-3pm	
3pm-3:15	

Supporting Aboriginal People Working in Health and Health Related Research

Program Overview: Tuesday 9th September 2

Time	Session	Facilitator/Presenter
12noon	Lunch and Introductions	Zania Liddle CAAHSN, Wendy-Lea Lechleitner CAAHSN
12:30-1pm	Welcome Acknowledgement of Country House Keeping Workshop Program Overview Background to ARN: Terms of Reference Participation Suggestions for Improvement Aboriginal Leadership in Research Initiatives- CAAHSN. Your Training and Development How CAAHSN can help	Zania Liddle CAAHSN Wendy-Lea Lechleitner CAAHSN Guy Krippner CAAHSN Housekeeping: emergency procedures; talent release form; sharing contact details; improving future workshops – survey results
1-1:15pm	Icebreaker Activity – group connecting	CAAHSN team
1:15-3pm	Options and Opportunities – Training and Development/Professional Learning Guest Presenter: Dr Michaela Spencer - Recap of the CDU Indigenous community-based researcher credentials. - CDU Diploma of Indigenous Research - CDU Indigenous Researcher Initiative Q&A session to follow each topic	Dr Michaela Spencer, Senior Research Fellow, CIFEa – Northern Institute Larrakia Country +61889467251 E:michaela.spencer@cdu.edu.au W:cdu.edu.au Emma Stubbs, Community Researcher, CAAC Elaine Williams, Community Researcher Indigenous Researchers Initiative – Indigenous Knowledge, Language and Culture Services
3pm-3:15	Thank you and Conclusion: workshop evaluation; next workshop	Zania Liddle CAAHSN Wendy-Lea Lechleitner CAAHSN John Huigen CAAHSN
3:15-4pm	Networking (optional) Informal session Afternoon Tea to be included	This allows more time for discussion of topics highlighted in the workshop program as well as the opportunity for further discussions with other researchers, the presenters, the facilitators



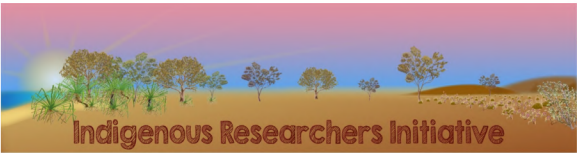
Alkalye Room, Desert Knowledge Precinct 475 Stuart Highway Kilgariff

Appendix Four: Community-based Researchers. Opportunities for recognition and professionalisation. Michaela Spencer with Emma Stubbs and Elaine Williams – PowerPoint

Community-based Researchers

Opportunities for recognition and professionalisation

GroundUp
Emma Stubbs and Elaine Williams
Community based-researchers
Michaela Spencer
Ground Up Research Team, Northern Institute
michaela.spencer@cdu.edu.au



<https://iri.cdu.edu.au/>

Community-based researchers



"Some Balandi, when they see me, they say here is Stephen Dhamarrandji coming. They do not see what is underneath. That I have a connection to trees, the land, and the sea through the songlines; that I travel the journey of these songlines and can pass through the Yirritja and back to the Dhuwa homelands"

- Stephen Maliku Dhamarrandji

CDU
Micro-credentials
and digital badges

Digital Badges

Digital badges are the visual icons and an online record of the learner's achievement. A badge provides digital evidence of an achievement, and can be shared to evidence such as proficiency or work samples. Digital badges provide the opportunity for individuals to tell and share the world about their accomplishments as part of their lifelong and flexible learning journey.

CDU Badges

Charles Darwin University offers a range of digital badges to recognise experience, skills and knowledge. These are offered by different schools across the university.

Badges can also "stack" together to achieve other credentials, or be pathways for education, employment or career progression.

CDU is continuing to develop new digital badges. The latest list can be found on the CDU Credentialed Academic Catalogue page.

[View CDU's current Digital Badges](#)

CDU Indigenous Research Credentials



- These credentials recognise:
- Skills shown on the job
 - Research skills in-place
 - Bilingual and intercultural facilitation
 - Cultural authority
- They are NOT a research training course



Indigenous Research Collaborator

- Criteria:
- Create a research profile (CV)
 - Participate in a research project by watching and learning
 - Approval of a supervising elder



Indigenous community-based researcher

- Criteria:
- Create a research profile (CV)
 - Demonstrate understanding of research ethics
 - Facilitate one research interview (or equivalent)
 - Produce one research output (e.g. video, presentation, report)
 - Approval of a supervising elder



Emma Stubbs



Senior Indigenous community-based researcher

- Criteria:
- Create a research profile (CV)
 - Produce a research portfolio
 - showcasing 4 or more past projects
 - including 1 output per project
 - Approval of a supporting/supervising elder



Appendix Four: Community-based Researchers. Opportunities for recognition and professionalisation. Michaela Spencer with Emma Stubbs and Elaine Williams – PowerPoint (cont.)

Elaine Williams



Costings...

• Independent researchers	FREE
• Researchers with organisations	
◦ Research collaborator	\$120
◦ Indigenous community-based researcher	\$270
◦ Senior Indigenous community-based researcher	\$840
◦ Resource pack	\$300

Questions...

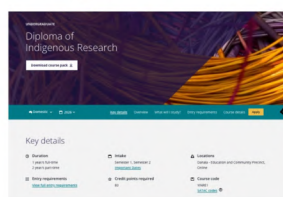


Entry and attendance...

- Indigenous students ONLY
- All classes are online
- Entry granted on the basis of your work experience/ cultural knowledge
- Acceptance via interview



Getting started...



1. CDU website
2. Create an account on the SATAC website

<https://www.cdu.edu.au/study/courses/diploma-indigenous-research-vision1>

Working with the support of your organisation...

They can help by:

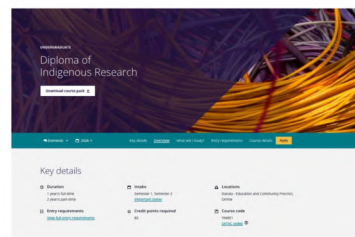
- Recognising credentials as professional development
- Aligning credentials with your current project work
- Supporting you to complete the criteria
- Covering the costs



How to start?

- Talk to others who are here today
- Speak to your organisations and ask for their support
- Contact me by phone or email
Michaela Spencer
michaela.spencer@cdu.edu.au
ph. 0487463850

CDU Diploma of Indigenous Research



What would I study?

Community-based (4 units)

- Indigenous research principles
- Indigenous research principles to practice
- Personal research project (x2)

Mainstream (4 units)

- 2 core subjects
 - Contested knowledges
 - Cultural capabilities
- 2 elective subjects
 - Your choice

Student supports...

- First Nations student support team
- Personal Tutor
- The organisations you work with can help
- Partial bursaries may be available



Appendix Four: Community-based Researchers. Opportunities for recognition and professionalisation. Michaela Spencer with Emma Stubbs and Elaine Williams – PowerPoint (cont.)

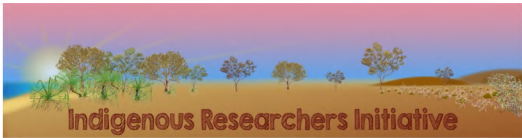
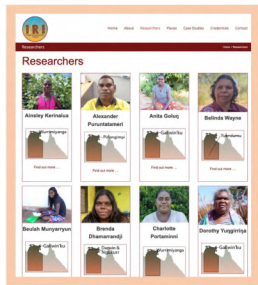
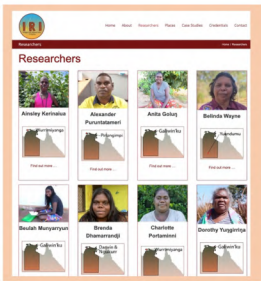
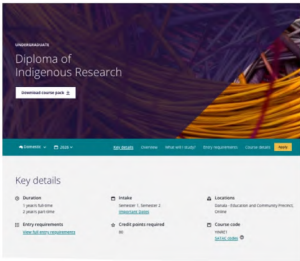
Opportunities for RPL...

Recognition of prior learning:

- Past research projects – up to 2 units
- Senior Researcher Credential – 1 unit
- 3 x Indigenous Researcher Credential – 1 unit



Questions...



Questions...

For more information:

CAAHSN: info@caahsn.org.au

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ph. 0487463850