

Nganampa Health Council Dental Program Annual Report 2011/2012

Sandra Meihubers Program Advisor

- NHC Dental Program established 1986
- Continuity of clinical dental services for 26 years
- Sustained program with mobile clinic and two fixed surgeries
- Minimal Intervention Dentistry philosophy and practice
- Commencement of Aged Care oral health assessment on site

The Dental Program provides oral health care promotion and clinical services for residents of the remote communities of the APY Lands. Dr Sandra Meihubers, Program Advisor, Dr Simon Wooley, Dentist, and Ange Caulfield, Dental Assistant, have continued their roles this past year.

The new fully equipped mobile dental surgery is now bedded in, and it remains a mainstay of our remote program, essential to the reduction of barriers of access to appropriate clinical care. During this reporting period, 481 children and 444 adults received 1,014 courses of care. This represents an increasing number of people accessing dental care, reflecting in part the efficiency and reliability of the new mobile surgery.

The Program has several priority components, including a school dental program, and adopts a preventive and Minimal Intervention Dentistry (MID) philosophy and clinical approach. Our annual data reflect this approach, with clients receiving priority preventive services such as fluoride varnish applications and fissure sealants, as well as the appropriate therapeutic application of silver fluoride (AgF) to control decay. Tooth brushing programs are supported in all schools across the APY Lands.

The AgF application technique has been a feature of our MID practice since the Program's inception, and its non-invasive approach is at the heart of community acceptance and program sustainability. An National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funded study is looking at the AgF technique in controlling dental caries in the primary ("baby") dentition in comparison with the atraumatic restorative technique (ART). Our collaboration with the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health (ARCPOH) and the Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation, Broken Hill, in the evaluation of this clinical approach is ongoing.

Our recently acquired portable mobile kit funded by a Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) grant, has facilitated onsite examination and preventive care at Tjilpiku Pampaku Ngura, the Health Council's residential aged care facility in Pukatja. This has greatly assisted efficient and effective access to clinical oral health care for residents.

The Program acknowledges the continued support of South Australian Dental Service (SADS), and ARCPOH. We especially thank Julian Ide and his technical support team at SADS and Kaye Roberts-Thomson and Loc Do at ARCPOH. We are

ever grateful to Meg Simmons and her colleagues at the NT Health Flynn Drive Dental Clinic for their ongoing collaboration and support.