

PALLIATIVE CARE IN PRISONS PROJECT

UTS: IMPACCT



Message from Project Lead

PROFESSOR JANE PHILLIPS

Welcome to the seventh issue of the Palliative Care in Prisons (PiP) Project Newsletter.

We have lots of exciting news to report in this edition as the Project team continue to work through the ethics approval processes in each state and territory. Since our last newsletter, we have received ethics approvals from ACT Health, Queensland Correctional Services, Corrections Victoria, Justice Health Victoria, South Australian Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Committee and the Department for Correctional Services South Australia. We continue to progress further applications in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia.

We have also reached a huge milestone for the Project, the commencement of data collection! In partnership with the Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network, we have completed data collection for the retrospective prison-based medical record review in New South Wales. The review has gathered detailed information about the palliative care that patients received whilst in custody and provides a foundation for further learnings. We are now moving to review the hospital medical records of these patients, and will then commence interviewing stakeholders.

In June, the Correctional/Justice Health Services Working Group developed and submitted feedback to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' regarding their revised Standards for Health Services in Australian Prisons (2nd edition). You can read more about this submission below.

In this issue, we profile Dr Christine Sanderson and Ms Robyn Hopkins, who have played key roles in facilitating PiP Project work in the Northern Territory. Chris is a specialist palliative care physician in Alice Springs, who brings a wealth of knowledge and insight from her ongoing work caring for people in prison with palliative care needs in Central Australia. We farewell Robyn, who has recently resigned as the Primary Health Advisor for Northern Territory Correctional Services. Her support of and commitment to the Palliative Care in Prisons Project is greatly appreciated.

We would like to thank all our investigators, project partners and contributors for their ongoing guidance and support in progressing the work of this Project.

Kind regards, Jane Phillips

Wambinya Update: Hearing about Elders' work among people in prison

As part of hearing about the work Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do in the criminal justice system, some of the PiP Project team were fortunate to meet with Juanita Jones, the Northern Territory (NT) A/Director Aboriginal Strategy and Coordination Unit and Manager Elders Visiting Program. Since commencement in 2005, the Elders Visiting Program (EVP) has enabled Elders to regularly visit people in prison in Darwin, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek, to support and encourage them to take a new direction in their lives and develop plans after their release. There are between 70-80 Elders involved in the EVP from 20 communities across the NT. Western Australia and South Australia also have established Elder Visiting Programs.

The loss of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lifestyles and customs since colonisation has directly contributed to an increased representation of Indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system. Research undertaken in 2020 by the Australian Institute of Criminology (1) evaluated the positive effects of the EVP in the Northern Territory to support young people in prison from a cultural perspective. The Report found that through every stage of the criminal justice system from prison to Community Corrections and post-release, the Elders were instrumental in supporting and strengthening traditional systems to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all matters of incarceration and post-release placement and activities. The final report recommended strengthening the Elders' Visiting Program to empower the Elders to have greater input into the support of Indigenous peoples in prison.

The EVP also plays an important role in establishing cultural links between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison and correctional services staff. Elders advise staff on cultural and community issues to support the health and wellbeing of people in prison. The Elders are active in working with and participating in activities with people in prison and lead community mediation and conflict resolution, and are instrumental in resolving issues between correctional services staff and family and community members. One of the most important roles of the EVP is to provide support with important family and community issues such as offering support to the person in prison when a family member passes on.

In this [video](#), the Elders describe the purpose and importance of the Elders Visiting Program.

(1) Tubex.H; Rynne. J & Blagg H. Building effective throughcare strategies for Indigenous offenders in Western Australia and Northern Territory. Australian Institute of Criminology: 2020



THE GWANDALAN PROJECT

The provision of culturally safe care is a critical step to ensuring patients' needs are met at the end of life. The Gwandalan Project is a National Palliative Care Project that provides eLearning modules and resources for clinicians who provide care at the end of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Gwandalan Project provides three eLearning modules focused on: introducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander palliative care; cultural practices; and cultural factors, awareness and practices regarding death and dying. Each module is approved for CPD points, and is accessible [online](#).

Further, the Project presents an extensive [interactive toolkit](#) to help clinicians navigate culturally safe discussions about health and wellbeing, symptom management, carer support and grief and loss; as well as useful resources and links to additional information.

QUEENSLAND STATEMENT ON THE PROVISION OF END OF LIFE CARE TO PEOPLE IN PRISON

Queensland Health and the Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing have recently released a statement on the provision of end of life care for people in prison and those involved in community corrections.

The statement is designed to inform patients and their families or support networks about palliative care, how it is provided in prison, and specific related processes such as advance care planning and appointment of substitute decision-makers. It provides important information for people in prison and their families to understand their rights to palliative and end of life care, providing prompts of processes they may want to complete to ensure the care they receive aligns with their goals and preferences.

If you would like to read the statement, you can find it [here](#).

PROJECT PARTNER BIOGRAPHIES

MS ROBYN HOPKINS

Robyn has worked as the Principal Health Advisor in Northern Territory Correctional Services (NTCS) since 2008. Robyn is currently completing a Master of Public Health at Menzies School of Health Research. She also has a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Science at The University of Auckland, New Zealand and a Post Graduate Certificate in Management from RMIT, Melbourne Australia.

As Principal Health Advisor, Robyn managed the relationship between NTCS and the Department of Health which provides health care in NT prisons. This comprehensive role covers all areas of health including Primary Health Care, Forensic Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Disability across all parts of Corrections.

Robyn is passionate about the National Palliative Care in Prisons Project and understands the impact of an ageing population in Northern Territory Prisons. Robyn has been a committed advocate for representation of Northern Territory First Nations people on the PiP Project. As of June 2022, 87% of the people in custody in NT Correctional Services were First Nations people.

Robyn is an associate investigator for Menzies School of Health Research and has published several papers about tobacco use and cessation in prison. The PiP Project team acknowledges Robyn's extensive and invaluable contribution to both public health and correctional primary health care services in the Northern Territory. We wish Robyn all the very best in all her future endeavours.



DR CHRISTINE SANDERSON BA, MBBS, MPH, FRACP

Chris Sanderson is a palliative care physician who trained in South Australia. Before studying medicine, she studied sociology and a Master of Public Health. After working in Sydney and many other parts of Australia, she now finds herself living and working on Arrernte land as the palliative care specialist consultant for Territory Palliative Care Central Australia, based in Mparntwe (Alice Springs).

Over her years in palliative care, Chris has been lucky enough to work with many wonderful people – including patients, their families, and colleagues, and has been involved in research that has changed and improved clinical practice. However, the recent experience of working in Central Australia has shifted her focus and challenged her practice profoundly.

Chris' professional goal is to ensure that the palliative care services respond effectively to the immense needs of this community, and in particular, to promote culturally safe care and shared decision-making.

You can see Chris talk about her role providing palliative care in Alice Springs in this [video](#).



SUBMISSION TO THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Earlier this year, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) called for feedback on their revised Standards for Health Services in Australian Prisons. These standards, currently in their second edition, provide guidance for health professionals to support the delivery of high quality healthcare in Australia's prisons.

In June, the draft standards were reviewed by the PiP Project's Correctional/Justice Health Services Working Group to inform a submission of feedback to the RACGP. The Working Group highlighted the paucity of palliative care-specific guidance within the revised standards, and the importance of integrating best evidence-based palliative care principles and practices into routine practice.

The RACGP is commencing a pilot process for the revised standards in prison health services, and we look forward to reviewing the next iteration when it becomes available. If you would like to read the PiP Project's submission to the RACGP, please email the project team at palcareprisons@uts.edu.au.

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In partnership with:

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Sydney Partnership for
Health, Education,
Research and Enterprise



NEXT MEETINGS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Community
Engagement Strategy
Working Group

Tuesday 13 September 2022
14:00-15:00 AEST



Correctional/ Justice Health
Services Working Group

Tuesday 15 November 2022
14:00-15:00 AEDT



National Consortia Project
Advisory Group

Tuesday 6 December 2022
13:30-15:00 AEDT



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