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Recruitment Panel Members

Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health
The University of Melbourne
Gratton Street, Parkville
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To the Selection Panel Members,

RE: EOI for the 2024 Indigenous Leadership Program

I am a Saibai Koedal clansman (Guda Muluilgal, Isua/Ibuai family) and early career academic with a clinical background in Physiotherapy who is interested in participating in the 2024 Melbourne Poche Indigenous Leadership Program. Throughout my career, I have sought to align my work with my passion to positively impact health, education, training and workforce outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As a researcher, I am currently completing the last year of a PhD investigating the epidemiology of rheumatic heart disease (RHD) in Queensland. My work in this space started 2019 as a clinician treating patients following heart surgery when I learned this wicked disease was acquired in childhood though preventable bacterial infection and RHD was largely eliminated in the broader population last century. I was appalled that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents still need to worry about their kids acquiring heart disease this way in a time of unprecedented prosperity for most Australians. I was frustrated that I was only involved in the 'downstream' post-surgical care as a hospital clinician, so I chose research to help drive 'upstream' disease prevention in the public health research setting. In my research program, I use linked health data to provide a contemporary epidemiological description of RHD in Queensland with the aim to help inform the Queensland action plan to eliminate RHD by 2031.

Although I maintain a part-time clinical role at TPCH, my main role is as an Associate Lecturer position in the School of Rehabilitation Sciences, the University of Queensland (UQ). The greatest passion I have pursued in this role (besides my research) has been establishing and leading the Mabuig UQ Partnerships Project; a project exploring educational and research partnership opportunities between the University of Queensland and the Mabuig Island community (Gumuilgal and Mabuilgal) of Mabuig Island, in the near western cluster of the Torres Straits (Muluilgal). This project commenced in 2021 when I led a trip to the region exploring allied health, training and education priorities and partnership opportunities over 2-weeks. Since then, through the commitment of champions in UQ and the Mabuig Island community, we have continued work culminating in a 1-week community stakeholder workshop in September 2023 to develop a community-wide and UQ-wide memorandum of understanding with aims including the leveraging UQ resources in support of community health, wellbeing, cultural, environmental, and economic aspirations.

Within the health and education institutions in which I am employed, I have worked for change from within as well as acted as a conduit for communities to explore partnerships. I have navigated these spaces, inspired by my Elders, called to action with pen in hand in place of the guba gub of my forefathers, learning valuable lessons along the way. I hope to participate in the 2024 Melbourne Poche Indigenous Leadership Program to help me to be more effective within these spaces while also providing me the opportunity to connect with fellow First Nations academics who are on a similar journey.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Carl Francia