

20th November 2024

## **2025 Melbourne Poche Indigenous Health Leadership Program**

Dear Dr Munro-Harrison and team,

I am writing to apply to be considered for the 2025 intake of the **Melbourne Poche Indigenous Health Leadership Program**.

I am a Wardandi-Nyungar leader with connections to the Pilbara region of Western Australia. I have worked in public health research since 2001. I began my research career conducting evaluations of community-led alcohol and other drug (AOD) interventions with First Nations Australians<sup>i</sup>. I have since completed my PhD at the [National Drug Research Institute](#) and the NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Indigenous Health and Alcohol. Now I primarily work in Indigenous genomics research as operations manager for the [Australian Alliance for Indigenous Genomics](#). Each of these roles have required me to demonstrate and further build my leadership qualities across a range of areas.

After working in public health research for more than two decades, I am ready to take the next step to further my leadership skills, especially from a First Nations Australian perspective. In my current role with the Australian Alliance for Indigenous Genomics, I work closely with First Nations Australian leaders across Australia. This is an opportunity that I highly value. I see your leadership program as an opportunity to further build my leadership skills and knowledge to benefit the health of First Nations Australians.

My leadership attributes are founded in values of trust, integrity, accountability, honesty, courage, and collaboration. I can confirm that I am able to attend all three modules throughout the year; I can attend the travel required, including long travel days; and I have a moderate level of physical health and fitness.

I layout below how I address each selection criteria for this leadership program.

### *Sound experience working in the health sector in community, policy, government or clinical areas with leadership responsibilities*

I have strong knowledge and experience working in the Aboriginal health sector. Throughout my career I have worked with Aboriginal community-led organisations and communities, primarily in SA, WA and the NT. As a public health researcher focused on preventing AOD related harms, I have worked closely with community-led organisations, including health services. In my alcohol and other drug prevention research, I have developed a strong understanding of the direct relationship of government and policy on the health outcomes of First Nations Australians, especially in the Northern Territory which was a focus in my PhD<sup>ii</sup>. In my PhD I showed how alcohol use by First Nations Australians has, and continues to be politicised. At the same time, the ability of First Nations Australian community leadership has been restricted by policy makers and government. While living in Mparntwe (Alice Springs; 2005–2008) I watched the impact of the federal government intervention and policies targeting First Nations Australians living in the Northern Territory. My current role in Indigenous genomics supports the development of structures and requirements for Indigenous leadership in Indigenous genomics research, in six jurisdictions across Australia. Through this role I have also progressed my understanding of clinical considerations in health care for First Nations Australians.

*Passionate, innovative and ethical and working to improve Indigenous health outcomes*

I have spent more than 20 years working in public health research, in both alcohol and other drug prevention, and more recently Indigenous genomics. Though both areas are very different, they are focused on improving the health and wellbeing of First Nations Australians. The decisions directing my career path have been led by my passion for Aboriginal community leadership in research, and ensuring a direct benefit for the wellbeing of First Nations Australian peoples and their communities. My most recent step has been a complete change of context, from AOD to Indigenous genomics. However, the move was motivated by my passion for First Nations Australian-led and leadership in research. This was a unique opportunity to develop First Nations Australian governance and leadership in an area that could directly improve the health and wellbeing of First Nations Australians. The innovative and ethical approach of the team to improve the health outcomes of First Nations Australians was and remains the catalyst for the change in my career.

*Motivated to build on your leadership, in your local context*

I am highly motivated to continue to develop and build my leadership within my local context, with the purpose of contributing to improve the health and wellbeing of First Nations Australians. This is a key reason for applying for this Program, so I can continuously seek opportunities to learn, grow, and contribute meaningfully to the community. I understand that effective leadership is rooted in a deep connection to the unique strengths and needs of the local context, and I am committed to fostering positive change by engaging with community members, listening to their concerns, and responding with thoughtful, culturally sensitive solutions. By drawing on my existing skills and the insights of those around me, I aim to strengthen local partnerships, promote collaboration, and create sustainable pathways that enhance well-being and empowerment for everyone involved. I believe that leadership is not just about directing but about inspiring and supporting others to realize their collective potential, particularly in ways that are relevant and impactful for each community.

*Willingness to contribute to discussions and be challenged by diversity of thinking*

I am committed to actively contribute to discussions and being open and challenged to the diversity of thinking and experiences that shape Indigenous health leadership. I recognise that effective leadership requires not only deeply listening but also being willing to engage with differing viewpoints and challenging my own assumptions. I embrace the opportunity to learn from the wisdom and experiences of others, understanding that our experiences, knowledge systems and cultural frameworks inform our viewpoints and in turn leadership approach. This is also I commit to learning from others, collaborate meaningfully, and recognise that I will be challenged throughout your leadership program.

I look forward to discussing my application with you.

Warm regards,



Annalee Stearne, PhD

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<sup>i</sup> *First Nations Australians*: I have used this term to reflect the collective diversity of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the nations they are connected to throughout the regions now referred to as Australia and the Torres Strait Islands.

<sup>ii</sup> Inclusion of Self-Determination by First Nations Australians in Alcohol-Related Policy Development in the Northern Territory