

Winnunga News

ISSN 2206-3080

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 3

Inside this Issue:

AMC Tragedy	4
Pants On Fire	5
Victoria Leading The Way	6
Juvenile Detention	7
Indigenous Woman Alleges She Was Subject To Torture And Inhuman Treatment In ACT Prison	8
Julianne Williams Takes Court Action Against ACT Govt After Forced Strip Search In Canberra Jail	10
Aboriginal Health Assessments And The AMC	12
Over-Representation of Aboriginal Children in Care and Protection	13
Inspirational Georgia Tongs	14
COVID-19 and Influenza Update	15
ACT Ambulance Yarning Circle	18
Staff Profile	19

CEO Update

The Board, CEO and Staff of Winnunga are saddened by the death of Aunty Agnes.

Aunty Agnes was previously a Board Member of Winnunga and a much loved and respected client of the service.

I first met Aunty Agnes over 40 years ago and have loved and admired her since. Aunty Agnes was first and foremost an adored mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She was, put simply, a wonderful, kind, generous and loving person.

She was also an outstanding leader and a sterling role-model. While she could be tough when the situation demanded she will be remembered for her generosity of spirit, her happy nature and her love and dedication to her family and her people.

Aunty Agnes worked unrelentingly for much of her life to right the wrongs that she and her generation suffered as children and which persist to this day, almost a century later. Aunty Agnes was born in 1931, just as the great depression was beginning, at Oak Hill, outside Yass. She grew up there and later at Hollywood Aboriginal Mission.

Aunty Agnes describes Oak Hill as 'an open bit of ground on the stock route.' She described her home as a gunge, a dwelling with a dirt floor, stringybark walls and a galvanized iron roof. There was no electricity or running water and the inner walls were lined with newspaper.

Aunty Agnes' childhood was unrelentingly hard, reflective of the racism and bigotry which defined Australia at that time. The death of her father when she was only eight years of age, would have compounded that hardship. Aunty Agnes would, however, when reflecting on her childhood speak positively about the strong sense of community which existed at Oak Hill and Hollywood Mission and of the good times they experienced.

Aunty Agnes was a true champion of the Aboriginal community and a great Canberran. She will be sorely missed. May she rest in peace.



Julie Tongs OAM, CEO



Aunty Agnes at one of many Winnunga events

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

'The reason for this review project is to look objectively into how Winnunga delivers its services and what we may be able to do to improve the client journey and our quality of care.'

Now that we have settled into the new Winnunga building I have appointed Professor Shane Houston, managing director at 'Cultural Fusion' and Robert Griew, founder and director of 'Think Change Resolve' to work with us on the 'Better Care, Better Organised' project, over the next 9 to 12 months. The reason for this review project is to look objectively into how Winnunga delivers its services and what we may be able to do to improve the client journey and our quality of care.

Cultural safety is at the heart of the care we offer our clients. Throughout the year we will, as a team take time to reflect and learn from our past efforts and take a fresh look at new knowledge and experience from other Aboriginal health services. We will expand the level of cultural safety/competence we provide to our clients, through the development of a cultural competency and cultural safety framework titled 'Working and Walking Together'. This will involve several group workshops and the development of standards for the cross-cultural competencies and behaviours Winnunga wants to achieve. We will further strengthen the Winnunga Model of Care, Quality Assurance Standards, and Continuous Quality Improvement processes.

This is an exciting time for Winnunga, and I look forward to delivering the benefits of this work to you all.

I was pleased to participate in and provide evidence at a hearing recently conducted by the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, as part of an inquiry it is conducting into poverty in Australia.

I acknowledge that my involvement in the hearing was facilitated by Senator David Pocock and I thank him for his interest in issues of particular importance and relevance to the Aboriginal community and for his ongoing support.

I have, coincidentally, been calling on the ACT Government for some years now to initiate a major inquiry into all aspects of the lived experience of Aboriginal residents of Canberra, including poverty but unfortunately while the ACT Liberal Party is fully supportive of such an inquiry neither the Labor or Greens Party see it as important and have consistently opposed its establishment.

I provided evidence to the Senate Committee on the wide-ranging extent of poverty and disadvantage endured by the Aboriginal community of Canberra. I highlighted the fact that on a wide range of indicators the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of the ACT are either the worst or among the worst in Australia.

***CULTURAL
SAFETY***



If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Nothing about us without us

I also took the opportunity to highlight the extent to which the ACT Government, by its actions in selling off thousands of units of public housing in the inner north and south of the city and rehousing tenants in the outer suburbs, disbursed the Aboriginal community with the consequence that it is less visible and the extent of poverty and disadvantage suffered by Aboriginal peoples, and indeed other residents of Canberra for whom life is a struggle, less obvious. In other words the inner north and inner south of Canberra, the one-time home for considerable numbers of Aboriginal families, have been subjected to good old fashioned social cleansing.

In the week before appearing before the Senate Committee I had, quite coincidentally written to the ACT's five federal representatives, namely Senators David Pocock and Katy Gallagher and MP's David Smith, Andrew Leigh and Alisha Payne.

My purpose in writing to them was to seek their assistance in ensuring that the Aboriginal community of Canberra receives the same level of support and consideration from the Federal Government and Commonwealth Parliament as those in the States and the Northern Territory.

I pointed out to each of them that the latest series of Productivity Commission Reports on Government Services reveal once again that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of Canberra experience either the worst or among the worst outcomes of any Aboriginal community anywhere in Australia.

I further advised each of them that despite the ACT Government's poor record in relation to meeting the needs of the local Aboriginal community I was not aware that the specific needs of the Canberra Aboriginal community have ever been raised in the plethora of speeches and announcements in the Federal Parliament in debate associated with the Voice or recent announcements and Ministerial statements related to the Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. I reflected, by way of example, that since the ACT has the highest Indigenous incarceration rate in Australia, if not the world, that it is surprising that the words 'Canberra' or 'the ACT' appear to have not been uttered in any speech or debate in the Federal Parliament relevant to Aboriginal disadvantage.

Among the other issues I brought to the attention of our Federal members of Parliament were:

The high levels of Aboriginal children in Canberra in touch with the care and protection system and in out of home care. The Productivity Commission has reported that despite the ACT having the third highest rate of Aboriginal children in contact with the care and protection system and in out of home care in Australia that the ACT Government provides the lowest level of funding for intensive family support of any Australian jurisdiction.

I also drew attention to the excoriating criticism of the ACT Government by ACTCOSS in its response to the Productivity Commission's latest findings on the provision and availability of public or other social housing in the ACT. ACTCOSS described the ACT Government's actions in relation to housing as 'alarming and unacceptable' and said further that the ACT Government was responsible for causing 'thousands of ACT residents severe financial and emotional stress'. The ACTCOSS response to the failings of the ACT Government in relation to the provision of social housing centered on the fact the Productivity Commission reported that despite a population increase of over 80,000 people in Canberra over the last decade ACT Labor and the Greens had actually reduced the number of habitable units of public housing in Canberra by more than 600 and that the wait time for public housing had blown out to five years.

I noted as well the poor state of the ACT public health system which was also highlighted by the Productivity Commission confirming once again the ACT continues as the worst performing jurisdiction in treating

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

'Julie said that Justin's death is a tragedy and she cannot imagine the depth of the heartache and grief which his untimely death will be causing his loved ones and friends.'

patients on time across all emergency department categories with only 48% of patients treated within clinically acceptable times. The Commission also published expenditure and activity data for each State and Territory which reveals the ACT Government cut health funding in the years 2016 to 2019 by 1.1% on average despite an increase in activity and that even during the COVID pandemic while recurrent expenditure in ACT public hospitals increased by 2%, the lowest in Australia, separations or activity, increased by 9%, the highest in Australia.

I look forward to the support of each of the ACT Federal representatives in addressing the dire circumstances which confront many of their Aboriginal constituents and in ensuring that the ACT and region Aboriginal community receive an appropriate and fair proportion of all available Commonwealth funding and assistance.

AMC Tragedy

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga wishes to convey her sincere condolences to the family and friends of the young man who has been identified as Justin Coady, who died in the AMC on 26 February.

Julie said that Justin's death is a tragedy and she cannot imagine the depth of the heartache and grief which his untimely death will be causing his loved ones and friends. The circumstances of Justin's death have not yet been made public and are the subject of a coronial inquest.

Coincidentally it is exactly one year since the AMC suffered the death of another young man being held in detention. That death is also the subject of a mooted coronial inquest which despite the effluxion of a lengthy period of time is yet to commence. It is perhaps unfortunate that that inquest has suffered such a long delay and any findings or learning that may arise from that investigation are too late so far as Justin is concerned.

It needs to be remembered by all of us that Justin was a member of our community. He was one of us. He was detained in the AMC, a prison which is managed by the ACT Government in our names and on our behalf. Justin's welfare and safety was our collective responsibility. We each need to reflect on whether we have met that responsibility.

In the review undertaken by the Inspector of Corrections, Mr. Neil McAllister, following the death in custody that occurred in February 2022, the Inspector prefaced his report by quoting General David Morrison, the immediate past Army Chief of Staff who famously said that 'The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.'

It is appropriate we all reflect on that sentiment as we contemplate this latest sad and tragic death in the AMC.



*The Alexander Maconochie Centre
(photo source: City News)*

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Pants On Fire

'...promises made by the two ACT governing parties prior to the election have either been almost completely ineffective or are at best not on track or have not been implemented at all.'

It is interesting, if not rather depressing to revisit the raft of election promises which ACT Labor and the Greens made prior to the last election, now over two years ago, and compare them with the reality.

Attention has recently been brought to bear on the promises made at that time by the recent release by the Productivity Commission of its range of Reports on Government services in several different policy areas including, housing and homelessness, health, child protection, incarceration and juvenile justice across all Australian jurisdictions. Suffice to say the reports reveal that a raft of promises made by the two ACT governing parties prior to the election have either been almost completely ineffective or are at best not on track or have not been implemented at all.

To take just one example the Government went to the last election with a clearly articulated plan, which it titled, Building Communities Not Prisons, the center piece of which was the establishment of an 80 bed Reintegration Center with the aim of reducing the massive over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of the ACT in touch with the criminal justice system or in prison.

It is now more than two years since the last election and not only have the plans for a Reintegration Centre at the AMC been abandoned, without explanation, but both the Indigenous incarceration and recidivism rates in the ACT are the highest in the nation. In light of this particularly graphic failure it is instructive to return to the election manifestos of Labor and the Greens for an insight into the status of the other commitments made.

The following are, for example, some of the promises made by the Greens the status of which is not clear.

- Repeal and replace the Namadgi Agreement.
- Fund and support dedicated culture and language program in schools and after school programs.
- Establish an office of First Nations Social Justice Commissioner within the Human Rights Commission.
- Reduce the incarceration of First Nations women and men to parity with the non-Indigenous community by 2030.



ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr
(photo source:
parliament.act.gov.au/members)

Fact: The 2020 policy platforms can be found at <https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2020-06/2020%20ACT%20Greens%20Policy%20Platform.pdf> and at <https://www.actlabor.org.au/our-vision/2020-election-commitments/>

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Pants On Fire (cont'd)

- Move the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs into the Chief Ministers Directorate.
- Give First Nations Community control over Boomanulla Oval, Yarramundi Cultural Centre and the Bush Healing Farm.
- Establish a Ngunnawal Language Centre at the Yarramundi Cultural Centre.
- Establish a dialogue between the ACT Government and traditional custodians on intangible heritage.
- Implement all the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review.
- Increase funding for family group conferencing.

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga said now that we are more than half way through the current term of the ACT Legislative Assembly that she, and she believed the broader Aboriginal community, would be most grateful if both the Labor and Greens Parties were to publish a detailed update on the status of each of the promises they made prior to the last election.



Leader of the ACT Greens

Shane Rattenbury

(photo source:

parliament.act.gov.au/members)

Victoria Leading The Way



If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Juvenile Detention

'...what steps have been taken or progress made in the implementation of Professor Morag McArthur's report...'

The recently released Productivity Commission report on Youth Justice Services 2023, while not attracting the same level of attention as other reports in the series, is deserving of noting.

While it does need to be acknowledged that because of the relatively low number of juveniles detained in the ACT the trends revealed across the years should be treated with caution, the fact remains that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children/ juveniles are nevertheless massively over-represented among young people who are detained in the ACT.

The Productivity Commission reports that in 2021-22 the rate per 10,000 young people aged 10-17 years who are Aboriginal and who were detained in the ACT was 22.8 compared to a non-Indigenous rate of 1.9. This is the fourth highest rate of incarceration of Aboriginal young people in Australia and interestingly higher than the rate recorded last year.

A question raised by the publication of this latest Productivity Commission report on juvenile detention is of course, the status of the ACT Governments' stated commitment to raise the age of criminal responsibility. The primary or threshold question in that respect is what steps have been taken or progress made in the implementation of Professor Morag McArthur's report, on the process for and minimum requirements - logistically and funding wise, in raising the age. Coincidentally that report was commissioned exactly two years ago this month.



*Professor Morag McArthur
(@moragmca)/twitter*

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga notes that Professor McArthur made a number of recommendations in her report which related specifically to the Aboriginal community and to the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in contact with the justice system.

She also notes that Professor McArthur highlighted the importance of the Aboriginal community being deeply involved in the planning of the support systems and programs which will be required to divert and/or support Aboriginal children at risk of coming into contact with the police and the justice system. Julie says she is not aware of the current status of the Aboriginal specific recommendations in the report.

Fact: The rate per 10,000 young people aged 10-17 years who are Aboriginal and who were detained in the ACT was 22.8 compared to a non-Indigenous rate of 1.9.

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Indigenous Woman Alleges She Was Subject To Torture And Inhuman Treatment In ACT Prison

The Guardian, 6 March 2023, Christopher Knaus

Julianne Williams will tell court she was forcibly strip-searched despite informing guards she couldn't breathe and was experiencing pains in her chest.

An Indigenous woman will this week allege in court that she was tortured and treated in a "cruel" and "inhuman" way by prison officers who pinned her down, forcibly strip-searched her while holding a knife, and ignored screamed warnings that she couldn't breathe and was experiencing chest pains.



Julianne Williams will allege she was subject to torture in the ACT's Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Photograph: AAP

The ACT supreme court will on Monday begin hearing disturbing allegations about the treatment of Ngunawal woman, Julianne Francis Williams, while on remand in the territory's only adult prison in early 2021.

The territory government has kept handheld camera footage of the incident secret, rejecting an earlier request from the Guardian for its release through freedom of information laws and arguing for its suppression in earlier court hearings.

Court documents show that Williams, who has consented to being identified, had been moved to the jail's crisis support unit due to her distress at a decision refusing her leave to attend her grandmother's funeral.

A guard noticed her put something down her pants and assumed, wrongly, it was a weapon or other contraband. Williams was, in fact, menstruating and had placed sanitary tissues down her pants.

A team of officers decided to use force to strip-search her. Before they entered the cell, Williams says she was lying on her bed in a "calm state".

She had a pacemaker for a heart condition and a collapsed lung, according to court documents. Prison authorities allegedly knew about her medical conditions, but did not bring a nurse or doctor with them.

Williams was pinned down. Officers discussed using a knife to cut her clothes off. According to transcripts of the recordings of the incident, one officer asked colleagues "who's got the knife?", prompting another to reply: "I do".

The first officer then said to Williams: "If you comply, I'll get them [your clothes] off you and we'll get this over and done with."

Williams yelled that she couldn't breathe and was experiencing pains in her chest. She alleges this did nothing to interrupt the search.

Indigenous Woman Alleges She Was Subject To Torture And Inhuman Treatment In ACT Prison

The court documents allege two male officers were in the “immediate vicinity” of Williams’ cell as the strip search was carried out, though a previous report into the incident found “the search did not occur in front of male officers”.

It was also watched live in the jail’s operation room via CCTV, the court documents allege. The court documents say that Williams agreed to comply if the knife was not used, and she was then taken to a bathroom with two female officers.

The incident was recorded on a handheld camera. Last year, the Guardian used freedom of information laws – with Williams’ consent – to apply for release of the footage. The application argued the release of the footage was clearly in the public interest, given it depicted the alleged mistreatment of an Indigenous Australian behind bars.

The government rejected the request. It said the footage could not lawfully be disclosed due to secrecy laws related to the ACT’s prison facilities, and feared the vision would reveal the identities of prison officers, despite the Guardian indicating a willingness to have their faces blurred.

The ACT supreme court has also previously suppressed the footage after it was tendered during a bail application made by Williams and her lawyers, Ken Cush and Associates.

In 2021, the ACT’s Inspector of Correctional Services (ICS) released a report finding the search was “not a last resort as required” and did not comply with the territory’s Human Rights Act. The inspector reviewed the footage of the incident and recorded that the woman had told officers she “cannot breathe” at various times while detained.

“During the use of force there are up to 12 staff in the immediate vicinity, some at times enter the cell, and others stay by the door or in the corridor outside the cell,” the report said. Williams is arguing the search breached her rights under the territory’s Human Rights Act – including her rights to not be tortured or be treated in a cruel, inhuman, or degrading way – and is seeking a declaration from the court to that effect.

The ACT’s prison, known as the Alexander Maconochie Centre, is supposed to be human rights-compliant. Julie Tongs, chief executive of Canberra’s Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, said: “The ACT Labor/Greens government should be ashamed of themselves. They hold themselves up as the most progressive government in Australia – definitely not when it comes to Aboriginal issues. It’s a huge fail.”

The ACT government is expected to argue that many of Williams’ allegations were not supported by the evidence. It will also argue that, for something to constitute torture, the ill-treatment must reach a minimum level of severity.

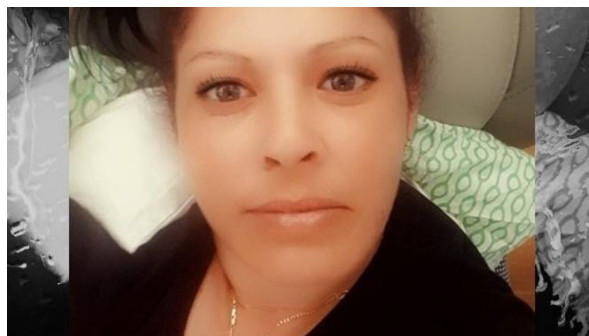
It will argue that the term “torture” is reserved for the deliberate inhuman treatment causing very serious and cruel suffering. “It has been held that interrogation involving ‘stress positions’, full-time ‘hooding’, continuous loud noises, sleep deprivation, and deprivation of food and drink did not amount to ‘torture’,” the government argues in an outline of its opening argument.

'...video footage of the incident, which cannot be published until after the hearing, was "utterly chilling".'

Julianne Williams Takes Court Action Against ACT Govt After Forced Strip Search In Canberra Jail

The Canberra Times, 7 March 2023
By Hannah Neale

An Indigenous inmate "screached for mercy" when correctional officers allegedly used a knife in an attempt to forcibly strip search her, a civil court has heard.



Julianne Williams, who launched court action against the ACT government. Picture Facebook

Julianne Francis Williams, 39, has launched court action against the ACT government, accusing it of torturous, cruel and degrading treatment while she was locked up in the Alexander Maconochie Centre. The civil hearing in the ACT Supreme Court started on Monday.

Barrister Mark Dennis SC, who represented Ms Williams, started his opening address with the words: "I can't breathe." He said they had been spoken by Ms Williams in January 2021, after she refused to consent to a strip search while detained in jail.

Mr Dennis argued his client had "begged for mercy" when officers entered her cell and forcibly tried to strip search her with an unlawful use of force. He told the court that officers had a Hoffman knife on them at the time of the incident. Mr Dennis also claimed two male officers had been present and it was close to cells containing male prisoners.

Ms Williams, who had a pacemaker, found it hard to breathe and yelled "I've got f---ing pains in my chest", the barrister told the court. Footage of the incident was played to the court. It showed officers entering the cell and struggling with Ms Williams while she cries out "just let me go".

Eventually, Ms Williams consents to the search and is taken to a bathroom with two female officers.

Mr Dennis said video footage of the incident, which cannot be published until after the hearing, was "utterly chilling".

"The plaintiff reached a point where she was clearly filled with the utmost fear and the utmost terror," he said.

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

'Mr Dennis argued the woman's human rights were breached by "cruel, degrading conduct" and she was "not treated with humanity and dignity".'

Julianne Williams Takes Court Action Against ACT Govt After Forced Strip Search In Canberra Jail (cont'd)

"The fear, panic, the terror in her voice as she screamed, yelled and screeched for mercy at the top of her voice."

Mr Dennis argued the woman's human rights were breached by "cruel, degrading conduct" and she was "not treated with humanity and dignity".

The court heard that before the strip search, a leave request by Ms Williams to attend her grandmother's funeral had been denied.

She was then transferred to the crisis support unit after threatening self-harm.

Mr Dennis argued the denial of the request was also an alleged breach of human rights, with it being "a matter of particular cultural significance" for the indigenous woman.

The barrister told the court that before the attempted strip search, a correctional officer had seen Ms Williams putting toilet paper down the front of her pants and became concerned she might have a razor concealed.

He argued the woman was menstruating at the time, didn't have sanitary items and was using toilet paper.

The barrister said the strip search was in fact a body search and it was unlawful.

Counsel for the ACT government, Houda Younan SC, told the court some claims the woman's human rights had been violated were "a heady cocktail of assumption and speculation".

She argued the strip search was lawful and conducted with the suspicion Ms Williams had hidden an item which could be used for self-harm.

Ms Younan said Ms Williams had made several specific threats to harm herself in the lead-up to the incident.

She said the footage played to the court was "misleading" without context and the knife was not used at all, "let alone used as a weapon".

While on the stand, Ms Williams became distraught and was excused early with her evidence set to continue on Tuesday.

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Aboriginal Health Assessments And The AMC

'...AHA is accepted across the whole of Australia as a health service which has been specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that it plays a vitally important role in ensuring and maintaining their health and wellbeing.'

The ACT Court of Appeal is currently deliberating on an appeal launched by a courageous young Aboriginal woman against a prior ruling of the ACT Supreme Court that the failure by the ACT Government to ensure that while incarcerated in the AMC she was able to access health care of the same standard as available to her in the community, did not breach the Human Rights Act and the Corrections Management Act.

The issue at the heart of the case is that while detained in the AMC this young Aboriginal woman was not able to access an Aboriginal Health Assessment (AHA). An AHA is accepted across the whole of Australia as a health service which has been specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that it plays a vitally important role in ensuring and maintaining their health and wellbeing.

Winnunga for example, carries out AHA's on clients as a matter of routine.

It seems clear that the failure to ensure Aboriginal detainees in the AMC are able to access an AHA is a clear breach of both the Corrections Management Act and the Human Rights Act, but even if that is not the case it is quite remarkable that ACT Labor and the Greens have engaged high priced lawyers and expended enormous resources to argue before the ACT Supreme Court that the ACT Government is fully entitled to deny Aboriginal detainees in the AMC access to an AHA - in other words denying the same quality and standard of health care as people are able to access in the community.



Source: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/715-health-check>

Fact: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all ages can get their free 715 health check at Aboriginal Medical Services and bulk-billing clinics. This health check helps identify whether you're at risk of illnesses or chronic conditions (Source: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/715-health-check>).

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Over-Representation of Aboriginal Children in Care and Protection

'The rate per 1,000 children aged 0-17 years [under a care and protection order in the ACT] was 91.4 for Aboriginal children and 6.8 for non-Indigenous children.'

Unfortunately the latest Productivity Commission Report on Child Protection Services contains little if anything to suggest that the massive over-representation of Aboriginal children in Canberra who are in touch with the care and protection system is improving.

To take just one measure, say, the number of children under a care and protection order as at 30 June 2022. The number of Aboriginal children under such an order was 279 while the number of non-Indigenous children was 636. The rate per 1,000 children aged 0-17 years was, however, 91.4 for Aboriginal children and 6.8 for non-Indigenous children.

In order to gain some insight into the progress being made by the ACT Government in addressing this significant failing it is pertinent to note the situation on, for example 30 June 2018, four years ago. On that day in the ACT there were 267 Aboriginal children and 623 non-Indigenous children in the ACT under a care and protection order. The rate per 1,000 children aged 0-17 years was 91.1 for Aboriginal children and 6.8 for non-Indigenous children.

In other words, nothing has changed in the last four years.

The rate of Aboriginal children in the ACT under a care and protection order is the third highest in Australia.

A further measure reported on by the Productivity Commission is the number of children in each jurisdiction in out-of-home care.

In the ACT as of 30 June 2022 there were 216 Aboriginal children and 472 non-Indigenous children in out of home care. The rate per 1,000 Aboriginal children aged 0-17 in out of home care was 70.8 while that of non-Indigenous children was 5.0.

The stark question raised by the consistently poor outcomes being reported in the ACT in relation to child protection services is why, in light of its obvious shortcomings which have been revealed time and time again has the ACT Government stubbornly refused to implement as a matter of urgency all recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review.

**EVERY
CHILD
MATTERS**

Fact: All the 2022 Productivity Commission Reports on Government Services can be found at <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services>

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Inspirational Georgia Tongs

'...the idea of a career where you're constantly solving problems and helping people, whilst occasionally slicing into, or sewing things up excited me.'

My background:

My name is Georgia Tongs. I'm a Wiradjuri woman who grew up in the south of Canberra. I attended K-12 in south Canberra before deciding to make the leap to move away to study to become a doctor. I moved to Newcastle, a 5 hour drive from Canberra which was very difficult to do being so far from my family, but I hoped in the long run it would all be worth it.

Why did I want to do Medicine/ become a doctor?

Growing up I always wanted to become a doctor, I'm not sure of the exact reason, no one in my family is a doctor nor did I know anyone that was. But the idea of a career where you're constantly solving problems and helping people, whilst occasionally slicing into, or sewing things up excited me. Perhaps it was also the multiple TV programs that revolved around doctors/surgeons on the TV. Now 5 years later as I approach the end of my degree, did I make the right decision? Yes, without a doubt.

As of January 2021 there were only 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors in Australia. This number is increasing yearly with more and more students graduating each year and I'm excited for the downstream effects that this increasing number will bring with it. I'm proud to be an Aboriginal graduate from the University of Newcastle and I encourage anyone with the goal of working in the health field to persevere for their goals because the end result can be so rewarding.

Throughout my time at Winnunga on medical student placement, it has been amazing to see the vast scope of services that they provide.

Every staff member I have talked to and worked with has cared so deeply for their clients which is evident in the relationships which they have created. I can see how important Winnunga is in the community of Canberra and its surroundings and the incredible support structures they provide for thousands of clients.

*Georgia Tongs with proud
Aunty Julie Tongs*



Fact: Prof Helen Milroy was Australia's first Indigenous doctor and is now a highly regarded expert in child and adolescent psychiatry (source: <https://cms.australianoftheyear.org.au/>).

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

COVID-19 Update

2023 COVID-19 boosters are now recommended for all adults if it's been 6 months or longer since your last COVID-19 vaccination OR last COVID-19 infection. We have both Moderna and Pfizer bivalent vaccines available.

The Winnunga Respiratory Clinic has moved to Reception 2 in the main building. Please go to Reception 2 if you have symptoms or need a COVID-19 test.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

Everyone aged 5 years and older is eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. Two doses are required to start with (3 for people with severe immunocompromise), followed by boosters.

You are due for a booster if you are:

- Aged 18 years and over, and you completed the primary course 6 months or more ago

OR

- Aged 5-17 years, you completed the primary course 6 months or more ago AND you are severely immunocompromised or have a disability or complex health condition that increases the risk of severe COVID-19

If you have been infected with COVID-19 OR had a COVID-19 vaccination you should wait 6 months (whichever was later) before getting your next COVID vaccination.

Please come in to Winnunga for your vaccination or call reception on (02) 6284 6222 to book in.

If you are unsure about getting vaccinated, we encourage you to discuss this with one of our healthcare workers.

For the latest advice and updates from the Department of Health, visit: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>



Winnunga Respiratory Clinic

The Respiratory Clinic has recently moved and is now located in the main Winnunga building at Reception 2.

Anyone who has a fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath or loss of taste or smell should go directly to this entrance.

If you require testing for COVID-19 please also go directly to the Respiratory Clinic.



If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

COVID-19 Update (cont'd)

Temperature, symptom and exposure screening is in place for all clients presenting to the main Winnunga entrance and you will be redirected to the Respiratory Clinic if you have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID.

Rapid Antigen Tests

Winnunga is providing rapid antigen tests (RATs) to eligible Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients. Winnunga can provide Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients and families with rapid antigen tests if you are having difficulty accessing them.

If you have a positive RAT test at home please notify Winnunga nurses by calling 6284 6222.

You may be eligible for antiviral treatments, which must be given in the first 5 days. This is particularly important for people who are immunocompromised, have chronic conditions or are not fully vaccinated.

Although it is no longer mandatory to report positive RATs to ACT Health, we encourage you to still report positive RAT results by completing the online reporting form: <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/rapid-antigen-test-rat-positive-result-registration-form>

Please stay at home if you are sick or test positive to COVID-19

While isolation for people with COVID-19 is no longer mandatory, if you catch COVID you should stay at home and minimise your contact with others until your symptoms have gone and you are feeling much better.

If you test positive for COVID:

- Speak to your health care provider about your symptoms and check if you are eligible for antiviral medications
- Maintain separation from other people in your household
- If you need to leave your house wear a mask
- Avoid attending large gatherings or crowded indoor places
- Don't visit high risk settings (like hospitals, aged or disability care) or visit people who are at high risk for at least 7 days
- Follow ACT Health advice for people who test positive: <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/information-for-people-who-test-positive-for-covid-19>



If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

COVID-19 Update (cont'd)

What to do if you are exposed to someone with COVID-19

- Closely monitor for COVID-19 symptoms
- If you become unwell, get tested and stay home
- Wear a mask indoors if you are not at home and on public transport
- Consider testing regularly for COVID-19 using a RAT
- Avoid visiting people at high risk of severe illness, anyone in hospital, or an aged or disability care facility
- Follow ACT Health advice for people exposed to COVID-19: <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/exposed-to-covid19>

Attending Winnunga and telephone consultations

Please maintain social distancing while attending Winnunga. Please do not gather in groups while waiting for services. Please use the hand sanitiser provided before entering the clinic, while waiting in the clinic and on your way out. You will also be required to wear a surgical mask while visiting Winnunga.

If you cannot attend Winnunga in person our doctors can do telephone consultations. To organise a telephone consultation call Winnunga on 6284 6222.

Winnunga COVID-19 vaccinations Update

Up to the end of February 2023 Winnunga has administered 11,412 COVID-19 vaccines



1,180 AstraZeneca
9,632 Pfizer adult
581 Pfizer paediatric
19 Moderna Bivalent



Pfizer Bivalent (BA4-5) vaccines arrive at the beginning of March 2023.

ACT AMBULANCE SERVICE YARNING CIRCLE

🕒 9 AM - 11 AM

📅 Tuesday, 21 March 2023

📍 Yarramundi Cultural Centre

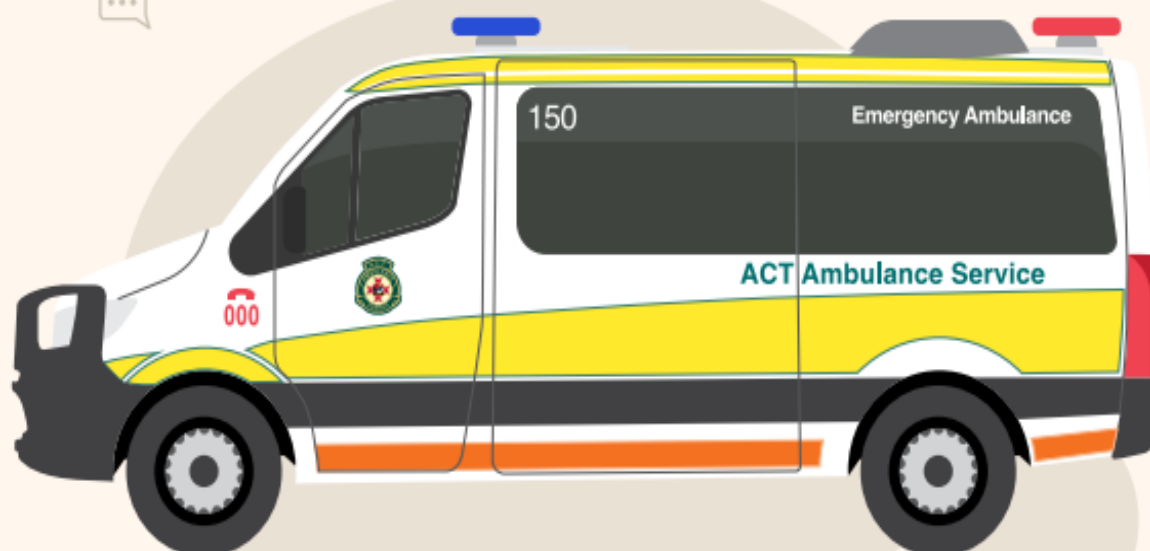


SCAN HERE



The ACT Ambulance Service has commenced a First Nations Inclusion project, to embed First Nations culture and awareness into healthcare practices.

First Nations community members are invited to a Yarning Circle, to share stories and lived experiences, and provide ideas and direction for the future.



<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/558417711407>

If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem

Staff Profile



Name: Caitlin Blissenden

Position: Tackling Indigenous Smoking Coordinator.

Who's your mob?
Wonnarua Mob.

Where's your country?
Hunter Valley NSW.

Who is your favourite singer/band?
Luke Combs.



What is your favourite song?

These two are my favourite out of many:
She got the best of me or Refrigerator door.

What do you do on the weekends?

FWD with my husband, catching up with family/friends and relaxing.

What is your favourite food?

Lasagna, potato bake and Sunday roast.

What do you like most about working at Winnunga?

Making a difference within the community.

My Favourite pet?

My toy poodle Penny.

What is your pet hate?

Back stabbers and liars.

We're on the web:
winnunga.org.au as
well as on Facebook!