

SUMMARY

ARIIA First Nations Aged Care Workforce Needs and Opportunities Roundtable – Summary Report

16 October 2024, Tarndanya/Adelaide

Introduction and purpose

ARIIA's remit is to lead the positive transformation of aged care across Australia through support of opportunities that strengthen the aged care workforce. For this Roundtable, this involved the exploration of current activities and future opportunities for aged care workforce capability and capacity building in a way that is relevant for First Nations seniors and the communities who support them. As the first step in shaping the capacity of ARIIA to provide practical, useful, and culturally safe support for those who provide care for First Nations seniors, we brought together more than 20 Community stakeholders and First Nations aged care experts for a *First Nations Aged Care Workforce Needs and Opportunities Roundtable* (see [Appendix 1](#)), funded through ARIIA by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing with additional support from Flinders University.

The Roundtable was held in Tarndanya/Adelaide on Wednesday 16 October 2024 and was facilitated by Uncle Bill Wilson (Ngarrindjeri, Kaurana), Principal Cultural Facilitator with KSJ Consulting. An introduction by ARIIA CEO Reuben Jacob was followed by comments and national insights from the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner, Andrea Kelly (Warumungu, Larakia) which was particularly useful given that she has only recently completed a 6-month national engagement activity for her own portfolio. A series of table- and whole-room discussions were then held to address key questions (see [Appendix Two](#)) and identify opportunities for ARIIA to support the sector with their work. Summaries of these discussions are provided below.

Table discussion one: current workforce

In the first discussion to set the scene and identify opportunities and barriers, participants sat in mixed groups of five to six individuals to share descriptions of the current aged care workforce and service provision for First Nations seniors in Australia.

Conversation prompts included:

- Who is the workforce providing care for your old people? Family? Informal care?

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- **What factors drive this? Culture/community? Geography?**

Following 20-30 minutes of discussion, table spokespeople reported the main themes from their table discussions on the current workforce back to the whole group. Themes were discussed at the broader group level and unpacked and challenged where appropriate. As a summary these themes are presented briefly here:

- **Historical experiences of inappropriate, institutionalised care remain as barriers to provision of current care:**

- Care has been/is still dictated by regulations that are inflexible to the needs of First Nations seniors and their surrounding communities, and do not allow for enhanced support of those needs.
- There is a strong need for culturally appropriate relationship-based care, where individual and cultural values between care givers and recipients align

- **Cultural knowledge, experience and customs are critical:**

- The importance of respecting and learning from First Nations seniors when providing care
- Initiatives should be developed and driven by Elders, community leaders and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)
- Family support is critical (and should be referred to as ‘family care’ rather than ‘informal care’)
- Cultural knowledge and experience are deemed more important than formal qualifications and the value of lived experience must be recognised by the workforce providing the care
- Community obligations are complex and need to be understood for good service provision. For example, blame may be attributed to the carer when an older person dies
- Carers’ gender plays a role in culturally safe care
- An understanding of the significant cultural load carried by individuals, families and community members is important
- The workload, actual and cultural, of emerging First Nations leaders needs to be considered, with some Roundtable participants commenting that they were ‘worn out’

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- **Hybrid models of care need to expand beyond clinical contexts:**
 - Examples of quality holistic ‘wrap around’ care meeting needs beyond clinical need, and covering different contexts, including justice, housing, primary health and hospitals (they are all providing ‘aged care’ because their clients are older First Nations people).
 - The broader sector needs to recognise that effective and culturally appropriate care reduces the demand on public health services
- **Good examples of family and service providers working well and in a holistic way need to be more visible and better supported:**
 - Families, or the primary carer, need to be involved (influential) in care decisions as they provide a significant amount of care
 - There are good people working in aged care, but mainstream organisations may not recognise the value of ‘kin-based care’
 - Enhanced resource support is needed for dementia services in Community
 - Understanding and recognising the need for palliative care on Country/Island Home is essential
- **A more strategic/methodical way of building capacity is needed:**
 - Potential for increased telehealth, including to access specialists
 - Barriers include the compartmentalising of funding and assessments, and silos in the Department of Health and Aged Care
 - Training and support should be to a culturally appropriate standard for person-centred care, and continuous, not a one-off.
 - Leveraging of the many young people who are already carers in Community, including targeting school-age children, as potential members of the workforce providing appropriate career pathways
 - Opportunities could include paid training and apprenticeships, shared service provision within communities, and philanthropic funding
 - All non-Indigenous staff need training in community and individual cultural care

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- Training should be in person, not online (to facilitate effective peer learning and lived experience approaches)
 - Barriers include geographical dispersion, different languages, lack of funding, access to technology, variable literature, access to training, and having to register for training packages (and funding sometimes runs out by the time people are well trained)
 - Duplication and/or fragmentation between different training certifications cause problems/barriers for First Nations workers.
- **Issues relating to elder abuse need to be better addressed:**
 - People may be too scared to report abuse, including the fear that the older person may be removed from the Community
 - Agencies do not listen, nor understand or apply, cultural or trauma-informed ways in engagement on very sensitive matters for the Elders.
 - There is a need for greater education and awareness of elder abuse
 - The mandated worker screen checks do not allow for cultural and community discretion regarding historical, and/or minor, convictions

Table discussions two and three: care and workforce needs

Due to time constraints and noting that there was significant overlap of intended discussion topics already, Roundtable participants agreed to proceed with a combined discussion of (community) care needs and workforce. The conversation prompts included:

- Is this care provided, the care that your communities want?
- What are the good and/or bad aspects of this care?
- What needs to change for optimal care for your communities?
- What (workforce strengthening) initiatives are needed in communities?
- What role could ARIIA play?

When the table spokespeople reported back to the whole group, the care and workforce needs themes described included:

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- Consider that in some cases the use of ‘non-qualified staff’ who are culturally safe, was more effective or more preferred than use of external staff
- Support development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care social emotional and wellbeing worker roles in home care programs for holistic service delivery
- The resourcing and the support must be flexible to meet community needs
- Providers (ACCOs) need more incentivised support to provide aged care in the home
- Additional investment is needed for rural and remote services
- Consider whether funding identified for ‘packages’ could include payment to family carers
- Harness social media to increase visibility of ‘good news stories’ that describe strong, culturally safe aged care
- **The need to strengthen the workforce:**
 - Align workforce strengthening with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) model of care
 - Celebrate, learn and exchange knowledge and best practice across the aged care sector
 - Use knowledge/approaches of other sectors in aged care: for example, aged care could learn from the natural resources sector’s Indigenous Rangers programs and how these strengthen capacity in culturally appropriate ways. i.e. accelerated training opportunities and recognition of the connection to land, history and spiritual connections of seniors, family and kin.
 - Upskill the ‘stayers’ who are dedicated to their Community and specifically aged care, supporting curation of knowledge for the future; to help them gain status as Elders
 - Acknowledge (and recognise in care and funding models) that family and kin are the first carers of Elders
 - Understanding the importance of training in governance, regulatory compliance, IT and the cultural immersion alongside care skill development
 - The need to recognise prior knowledge and lived experience, and incorporate this into training
 - The need for paid placements on Country/Island Home and the resources to backfill of positions when cultural care/cultural journeys are happening

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- Include trauma-informed cultural care and responses in training and care delivery
- **ARIIA could support ACCOs by:**
 - Building the evidence base of what works in First Nations aged care (including an examination of what First Nations services and communities do that is outside funded models of care)
 - Research, policy and advocacy, led by First Nations stakeholders but amplified and supported by ARIIA
 - Avoiding duplication of work that is already First Nations-led and being done well.

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Group discussion and reflections

The aim of this Roundtable was to share and learn from the perspectives, experiences and expertise of Community stakeholders on the needs and opportunities of the First Nations aged care workforce. Overall, the discussions carried a strong message concerning the importance of designing and delivering aged care training and services under the leadership of First Nations seniors and community members that holistically addresses the needs of the older people and their communities. In highlighting the importance of culturally appropriate care, Roundtable participants promoted flexible, hybrid models of care and funding which recognised the role of relationship- and kin-based care, and the knowledge and experiences of seniors.

From this Roundtable, it is clear that there is a lot of positive examples of work being done across the sector and there are commonalities of purpose and approach throughout the country. It is also clear that there is value in engaging with and involving a diverse but focused group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in improving First Nations Peoples' experience of aged care. ARIIA's role in this space is not to seek to replicate or duplicate the work of ACCOs and other First Nations-focused aged care providers, but to amplify the advocacy and need for appropriate funding for increased capacity and cultural safety in the ACCO sector. There is also a role for the bringing together of different stakeholders and perspectives for increased strength of purpose and collaboration, and for supporting the sharing good culturally safe practices so they can be adapted and adopted more widely to benefit other First Nations communities.

Recommendations from this Roundtable for possible ARIIA work that could support and amplify existing activities were:

- **Initial work to develop:**

- An evidence hub/portal to facilitate access and sharing of examples of best practice in First Nations aged care service provision
- Skill/experience sharing staff exchanges – supporting knowledge exchange between service providers

- **In the longer term, advocate for/contribute to:**

- Evidence-based funding models to support provider collaboration with (other) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

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- Development of initiatives to increase more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation as aged care workers (in partnership with the NATSIAACC)

Next steps

Following finalisation of this summary report, the next steps for ARIIA include:

- Reporting back to stakeholders, including those who were willing but unable to attend the Roundtable as well as attendees and ARIIA’s Board and funding partners
- Undertake further rounds of engagement with broader First Nations stakeholder groups
- Establish a governance framework for ARIIA’s First Nations-focused work
- Develop proposals (in collaboration with governance group) for initial work to be undertaken that considers the Roundtable recommendations in conjunction with findings from wider engagement to develop a program of work that amplifies and enhances the development of a First Nations workforce that is well supported to deliver care to older First Nations people.

APPENDIX ONE: Participant List

Participant	Role
Andrea Kelly	Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner
Abe Ropitini	Executive Director Population Health, VACCHO
Adriana Parella	Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity, SAHMRI
Alice McDonald	Director, Country SA and Health Engagement, DOHAC
Ben Poona	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (NT)
Bridget Caird	Assistant Director, First Nations Aged Care Branch, DOHAC
Charelle Jackson	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
Daniel Gela	Post-Acute Care and Rehabilitation and Aged Care Team, TCHHS
Dawn Bessarab	Director, Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health, UWA
Emma Tahuri	Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia
Graeme Prior	CEO, Hall & Prior (WA)

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Graham Aitken	CEO, Aboriginal Care Services (SA)
James Atkinson	CEO, Aboriginal Community Elders Services (Vic)
Jarin Baigent	CEO, Wyanga Aboriginal Aged Care (Redfern, NSW)
Jess Fortune	Assistant Director, Office of the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner
Kimara Pillay	Policy Officer, NATSIAACC
Kirsty Delguste	Executive Director, Office for Ageing Well, SA Health
Kylie O'Bryan	CEO, Booroongen Djugun (Kempsey, NSW)
Leonie Williamson	Deputy CEO, The Healing Foundation
Lyn Goldberg	Wicking Dementia Research Education Centre, UTAS
Natasha McCormack	Deputy CEO, Purple House
Rebecca Walding	RTO Coordinator, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services
Sarah Hayton	Executive Director, Policy and Programs, NACCHO
Wendy Ashwin	Aboriginal Health Coordinator, Hall & Prior (WA)
Uncle Bill Wilson	KSJ Consulting
Anita Koch	KSJ Consulting
Reuben Jacob	CEO, ARIIA
Rebecca Bilton	Research & Programs Director, ARIIA
Clare Bradley	Senior Research Fellow, ARIIA
Holly Sparrow	Manager, Strategic Projects, ARIIA
Jane Rymell	Administrative Officer, ARIIA
Jo Tan	Innovation Manager, ARIIA
Nicky Baker	Research Fellow, ARIIA
Stephanie Champion	Research Fellow, ARIIA
Sue Gordon	Emeritus Professor, ARIIA
Tara Lloyd	Workstream Coordinator, ARIIA

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APPENDIX TWO: Meeting Agenda 16/10/2024

ARIIA First Nations Aged Care
Workforce Needs and Opportunities Roundtable

Flinders University City Campus

Level 14, Festival Plaza, Tarndanya/Adelaide

12.30—17.00 Wednesday October 16, 2024

Facilitator: Uncle Bill Wilson (Ngarrindjeri, Kurna), KSJ Consulting

Flinders University acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which its campuses are located, these are the Traditional Lands of the Arrernte, Dagoman, First Nations of the South-East, First Peoples of the River Murray & Mallee region, Jawoyn, Kurna, Larrakia, Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri, Ramindjeri, Warumungu, Wardaman and Yolngu people. We extend this acknowledgement to all Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and honour Elders past and present.

Time	Activity	Lead
12.30–1.00	LUNCH	
1.00–1.05	1. Acknowledgement of Country	Uncle Bill
1.05–1.15	2. Scene-setting & housekeeping	Uncle Bill
1.15–1.30	3. Introductions and purpose of the afternoon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s working? • What’s still needed? ➤ What can ARIIA offer? ➤ What are the first steps for ARIIA? 	Reuben Jacob, ARIIA CEO
1.30–2.00	4. Comment & national insight	Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner, Andrea Kelly (Warumungu, Larakia)
2.00–2.20	5. Table discussions ONE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Who is the workforce providing care for your old people? Family? Informal care? ➤ What factors drive this? Culture/community? Geography? 	Small table groups

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2.20–2.30	6. Report back to room to group main CURRENT WORKFORCE themes	Uncle Bill
2.30–2.50	7. Table discussions TWO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is this care the care that your communities want? ➤ What are the good aspects of this care? ➤ What are the bad? • What needs to change for optimal care for your communities? 	Small table groups
2.50–3.00	8. Report back to room to group main CARE themes	Uncle Bill
3.00–3.15	AFTERNOON TEA	
3.15–3.35	9. Table discussions THREE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What (workforce strengthening) initiatives are needed in communities? ➤ What role could ARIIA play? 	Small table groups
3.35–3.45	10. Report back to room to group main WORKFORCE NEEDS themes	Uncle Bill
3.45–4.15	11. Whole-room discussion and synthesis of all three table discussions	Andrea Kelly
4.15–4.45	12. Discussion & resolutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can ARIIA do within the confines of budget and timeframe limitations, cultural limitations? ➤ What are the priorities for such work? ➤ Who else should be involved? 	Andrea Kelly & Clare Bradley
4.45–5.00	13. Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Governance group and working group membership – call for volunteers ➤ Summary report development and further communications plan ➤ <i>Who else should be involved?</i> ➤ Next engagement and follow up 	Uncle Bill & Clare Bradley
5.00	14. Meeting close, thank you!	Uncle Bill

Dinner for ARIIA's interstate guests