

**Report to the
Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation**



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Building Indigenous Research Workforce Capacity

Final Report

1 March 2005 to 30 September 2008

Professor Dennis Gray

Project objectives

The Building Indigenous Research Workforce Capacity Project was a joint project between the National Drug Research Institute and Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service. The original objectives of the project were to:

- create a three-year research internship for an Indigenous graduate;
- provide the person with 'on-the-job' research training in both a national research institution and an Indigenous community-controlled substance misuse agency;
- enable the intern to manage an intermediate size research project and to undertake two or three other projects in his/her own right; and,
- to equip him or her to embark upon a career in the alcohol and other drugs field.

Organisational Context

The National Drug Research Institute is one of three research centres of excellence established under the National Drug Strategy and which receives core funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The Institute's key result areas are: the conduct of high quality, research, capacity building, and dissemination of research findings. For the past 15 years it has been one of the leading centres of Indigenous substance use research.

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS) was incorporated in 1989 as Noongar Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service (NASAS) - changing its name in July 2005. It is one of only three Indigenous community-controlled organizations providing substance misuse services in the Perth metropolitan area. AADS provides a number of treatment and support services including a safe house, a detoxification facility, and (with an non-Indigenous partner organisation) a residential treatment service.

Prior to jointly developing the Indigenous Workforce Capacity Project, there had been informal contacts NDRI and NASAS over many years and the two organisations had collaborated on two research projects. The first of these was a Western Australia-wide study of the needs of Indigenous people who inject drugs and the second was an assessment of the need for Indigenous substance misuse services in the Perth Metropolitan area.^{1,2}

Background

The project was a response to previous calls for greater involvement of Indigenous people in health and substance use research and, in the local Perth context, an attempt to overcome barriers to such involvement.^{3,4,5,6}

The project proposal specified that: in the first year the intern would spend 75 per cent of his or her time at NDRI and 25 per cent at NASAS; in the second, the intern would spend 50 per cent of his or her time at each organisation; and, in the third, he or she would spend 25 per cent of the time at NDRI and 75 per cent at NASAS. This schedule was agreed upon to reflect the intensity of supervision to be provided by NDRI at different stages of the project and to facilitate the assumption by the intern of an increasingly greater role within NASAS.

The original project commenced in 2003. The internship was advertised and Mr Tuguy Esgin - an Indigenous graduate - was appointed to the position within NDRI in June 2003. In accord with the schedule outlined above, Mr Esgin spent 75 per cent of his time at NDRI where he participated in a range of activities within NDRI's Indigenous Research Team, familiarised himself with the literature on Indigenous substance use and related issues, and received one-to-one tutoring in academic writing. At NASAS, he participated in the organisation's program activities and sought to identify organisational research needs.

In April 2004, Mr Esgin resigned from the internship to take up a position as a Lecturer in the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University. While the training Mr Esgin received in his tenure of the internship was an important factor in his appointment to the position and was an advancement of his own career, it was a setback in our efforts to build research capacity within NASAS.

Following Mr Esgin's resignation, there was a hiatus in the project while we attempted to recruit a suitable replacement. In 2005, we advertised, or called for expressions of interest in, the internship on four occasions. On each, we made an offer of appointment, but each was declined for various reasons - including more lucrative job offers or changed personal circumstances.

Finally, in 2006 AADS (as NASAS had then become) identified a suitable candidate for the position - Ms Robyn Davis. At that time, we approached the AERF, which agreed to a variation of the original contract. A new memorandum of understanding regarding their respective roles in, and contributions to, the project was signed between NDRI and AADS and the project recommenced (for a two year period) in October 2006.

Project Outcomes

1. Supporting a research internship for an Indigenous graduate

This objective was achieved.

In October 2006, Ms Robyn Davis was appointed to the position for a period of two years until 30th September 2008. Ms Davis was a mature age appointee with a BA in Anthropology/Sociology and an MA in Indigenous Social Policy. She had previous work experience in (and a commitment to) working with Indigenous community-controlled organisations, and in academia.

Based on previous experience (in the original version of the project) - and given her qualifications and background which made it feasible - it was decided that Ms Davis should be employed directly by AADS in order that the sense of commitment to AADS, rather than to NDRI, should be strengthened.

Under a memorandum of understanding between AADS and NDRI, each organisation specified the how and for what purpose the funds from AERF were to be disbursed. The agreement between AADS and NDRI also specified the additional resources each organisation committed to supporting the internship - including infrastructure, supervision, and provision of research opportunities.

2. Providing the Intern with 'on-the-job' research training in both a national research institution and an Indigenous community-controlled substance misuse agency

This objective was achieved.

The training provided to Ms Davis included both informal and formal aspects. Ms Davis participated in and learnt from the various research activities summarised under Objective 3 (below) and received mentoring in these activities from both NDRI and AADS staff. A particularly active role in the mentoring process was provided by NDRI's Indigenous support officer, Mr Ed Garrison - a position funded initially by AERF and subsequently by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. An important aspect of Mr Garrison's support included regular one-to-one tutoring on academic writing.

Formal training - to complement and enhance the development of skills developed as part of the informal training process - included the following:

- NVivo qualitative software training;
- ongoing Endnote software training at AADS;
- NDRI Research Seminar participation (Journal Club);
- participation in Professional Development Workshops;
- TAFE Certificate Four 'Training and Assessment' completed at AADS;
- Cultural Histories Workshop (presented by AADS for staff of Cyrenian House); and,
- 'Occupational Health and Safety in the Workplace' course.

Ms Davis, herself, specifically acknowledges the value of this training in the development of both her qualitative and quantitative research skills and has used the in the research activities described below. She also acknowledges the that participation in NDRI's Research Seminars has enhanced her capacity for critical analysis and her confidence in working in group settings with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants from difference academic and professional backgrounds.

Within AADS Ms Robyn Davies, operated as a Research Officer within its Education, Research and Development Unit. The Unit reports to the Executive Director, and works closely with the Education Officer and staff of the clinical team, as well as providing research assistance to the Education Officer. Ms Davies involvement included reviewing the Parenting Programme, adding research and curriculum input to a new Parenting Programme and developing both a Policy Resource Paper and a Social Research Paper for organisational use.

3. Enabling the Intern to participate in research projects and undertake research projects in her own right

This objective was partly achieved.

Originally, it was intended that the intern would occupy the position for a period of three years. However, as the original occupant resigned after 12months the project had to be re-scheduled and the contract with AERF varied. This meant that the position was open to Ms Davis for only two years and this curtailed the opportunity for her to undertake a larger scale research project in her own right. Nevertheless, she did participate in a various research projects of small and intermediate scale. These projects, some of which are on-going, include the following.

AADS Natural Therapies Program

The clinical team at AADS developed a Natural Therapies Treatment Programme for Indigenous Clients. In the first phase of this project, Ms Davis prepared a literature review of alcohol and other drug treatment models and the needs of Indigenous clients, particularly in urban settings. She also researched and wrote a two-part resource paper for AADS internal use titled 'The Case for Holistic Health Services in Indigenous Health Care'. In the second phase of the project, Ms Davis developed an evaluative framework and data collection instruments. She also conducted extensive structured interviews with AADS clients and staff. Unfortunately, however, the project was terminated because of the small number participants that could be recruited.

Evaluating the management of alcohol-related problems among urban Aboriginal People in Western Australia: using an action research approach to enhance service delivery and collaboration for client care

Ms Davis is a co-investigator in this on-going collaborative project between AADS and staff from the Centre for International Health at Curtin University of Technology. The project is part of a larger research program involving five teams conducting action research projects aimed at *Enhancing the Management of Alcohol-Related Problems among Indigenous Australians*. Ms Davis contributed to the development of the AADS research

proposal and is co-author of a literature review entitled '*Residential rehabilitation for Indigenous Australians: service challenges and inter-agency opportunities to enhance outcomes*' which has been submitted to the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health.⁷

Narrative Therapy for Indigenous Alcohol and Other Drug Clients

Towards the end of the Internship period - in conjunction with AADS clinical staff Ms Davis embarked on the initial phases of a project to implement and evaluate a narrative therapy treatment program for AADS clients. In this on-going project she is being supported by NDRI staff and by Ms Vi Bacon an Indigenous Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Western Australia, who is an Adjunct Research Fellow at NDRI and a former member of AADS' Board of Directors.

4. *Equipping the Intern to embark upon a career in the alcohol and other drugs field*

This objective was achieved.

The creation of the internship, the provision formal and informal training, and provision of practical research experience, achieved as key outcomes 1 to 3 of the project have equipped Ms Davis to embark on a career in the alcohol and other drugs field. In recognition of this success, AADS has appointed Ms Davis to a position within the organisation in which - among other things - she is responsible working on the ongoing research projects described under Project Outcome 3.

5. *Other outcomes*

Although not specified in the project outcomes listed in the revised project proposal submitted to the AERF, one of the desired outcomes was to provide an Indigenous community organisation with its own research capacity. This outcome was also achieved in the employment of Ms Davis at the end of the internship. In addition to this, the project provided an example for AADS staff and Board members of the practical utility of research, gave it a profile within AADS, and contributed to the 'normalisation' of research activity within the organisation. It also linked AADS, as well as Ms Davis herself, into a wider network of research expertise and support and has enhanced AADS capacity to provide evidence-based interventions.

The training and research activities undertaken under Outcomes 2 and 3 have also linked Ms Davis into a wider research support network which is essential to a career in the field. As well as the links with NDRI, this includes those with the Centre for International Health at Curtin University and with the Discipline of Social Work at the University of Western Australia.

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Progress Report - 1

Building Indigenous Research Workforce Capacity

**Associate Professor Dennis Gray
National Drug Research Institute
Curtin University of Technology**

Overview

The position of research intern, created under the grant proposal, was advertised on 5th April 2003 and applications closed on 23rd April. The position was advertised in The West Australian newspaper and was posted on the Aboriginal Health Infonet. Staff from WA's four public universities' Aboriginal program units were informed of the vacancy as were various contacts in universities, government and non-government agencies in each state.

Despite this advertising coverage, there were only three applicants for the position and a decision was made to interview each of them. However, one of them did not attend the scheduled interview. The other two applicants were interviewed by a panel consisting of Associate Professor Dennis Gray from the NDRI, Associate Professor Sherry Sagers from Edith Cowan University, and Ms Nancy Hampton from Noongar Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service. In summarising their assessment the panel wrote:

On three of the selection criteria - Aboriginality, possession of a police clearance, and knowledge of intervention programs for Indigenous people - there was little difference between the applicants. However, Mr Esgin (the successful applicant)'s educational background is more directly relevant to the position than ... (the other applicant's), he has had direct work experience in Indigenous community organisations which ... (the other applicant) has not had, and he demonstrated a much better understanding of both quantitative and qualitative research methods than ... (the other applicant). In addition, Mr Esgin's written expression is of a higher standard than ... (the other applicant's).

Mr Tuguy Esgin commenced work in the position on the 23rd June 2003 and a work plan for him was agreed between NDRI and NASAS. As Mr Esgin's specific knowledge of Indigenous substance misuse issues was limited, under the plan, his initial workload was structured as follows.

- One day per week at NASAS to familiarise himself with the organisation and to develop his awareness of the needs of the NASAS with regard to review of services and data collections.
- One day per week assisting in the maintenance of NDRI'S Indigenous Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Bibliographic Database and Indigenous Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Project Database to familiarise him with the literature on substance misuse issues and the range of interventions being conducted by Indigenous organisations.
- One day per week to attend project meetings and to familiarise himself with current NDRI projects and project development - including the Indigenous National Alcohol

Indicators Project, the Elements of Best Practice in Indigenous Substance Interventions, and the Policing Implications of Petrol Sniffing and Other Inhalant Misuse Projects.

- One day per week to work up a research proposal – on behalf of NDRI and NASAS – to conduct a small study of the needs of chronic inhalant users. This included participation in internal NDRI workshops on proposal development and referencing and issues relating to intellectual property.
- One day per week on external study towards a Master of Health Science (Indigenous Community Health) at Yooroang Garang at the University of Sydney, where he enrolled in two units - 'Introduction to Community Development' and 'Introduction to Micro-Economics (Health).

As Mr Esgin's work progressed, it became evident that his skills in critical reading and writing were under-developed and that he was struggling with the units in which he was enrolled. Professor Gray and Mr Walley discussed the situation and agreed that it was in the interests of both NDRI and NASAS, and Mr Esgin himself, that all efforts be made to develop his basic skills and that his work program be modified to this end. To facilitate this, in October 2003, NDRI employed Mr Ed Garrison (former teacher, Indigenous Health Worker trainer, and public servant) for one day per week as a Research Fellow with the responsibility for tutoring and mentoring Mr Esgin and another Indigenous employee.

Under his amended work plan, Mr Esgin continued to work one day per week at NASAS but, under the guidance of Mr Garrison, devoted most of his time to his academic studies and to critically reading research papers and writing summaries of them. He also continued to participate in NDRI Indigenous Research Team meetings and NDRI seminars, but his work on the development of a research project was put on hold.

Mr Esgin required extensions to complete the two units in which he was enrolled in semester two, 2003. He received a 'pass' grade for the unit 'Introduction to Community Development' but on the advice of the course coordinator withdrew from the unit 'Introduction to Micro-economics (Health). To lighten his academic load and enhance his chances of achieving a better result, in semester one, 2004, he enrolled in a unit on 'Project Development'.

Mr Esgin continued working on this basis until 9th April when he resigned to take up a lectureship in the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University of Technology. Despite his departure, from its own resources, NDRI has given an undertaking to provide Mr Esgin with some on-going tutoring and mentoring support to assist with his academic development.

Due to travel and leave commitments, Professor Gray and Mr Walley have not had the opportunity to discuss recruitment of a replacement for Mr Esgin. However, a meeting is scheduled for mid-May 2004. At this meeting, various alternative recruitment strategies will be explored (for example recruiting one or perhaps two people who are already employed by NASAS) in order to maximise the return to both NASAS and NDRI on the investment to Indigenous capacity building made by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation. (Of course, approval will be sought from the AERF for any modifications to the original grant application.)

Performance appraisal of the research intern

- As indicated above, Mr Esgin was appraised as needing to develop basic critical reading and research skills and a tutor was employed to assist him in this regard.
- Mr Esgin enrolled in three units through Yooroang Garang at the University of Sydney:
 - 'Introduction to Community Development';
 - 'Introduction to Micro-Economics (Health)'; and,
 - 'Project Development'.
- He obtained a pass in the first, withdrew from the second, and had not completed the third when he resigned.
- Mr Esgin participated in internal NDRI workshops on research proposal development and intellectual property and referencing and attended various NDRI seminars on alcohol and other drug misuse prevention issues.
- Mr Esgin gained an enhanced understanding of the conduct of research and there was an observable improvement in his basic research skills.

Research projects involving the research intern

- Mr Esgin worked on NDRI's:
 - 'Indigenous Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Bibliographic Database Project'; and
 - Indigenous Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Project Database Project'.
- He was involved in the development of research proposals on:
 - 'The policing implications of petrol sniffing and other inhalant misuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities'; and,
 - 'A longitudinal study of the distribution of alcohol and other drug intervention projects for Indigenous Australians'.
- Mr Esgin began work on development of a proposal to study 'The needs of chronic inhalant users' but this was put on hold until he had further developed his basic research skills.

Use of the knowledge gained in a workplace environment

- With his resignation, neither NDRI nor NASAS will derive direct benefit from the knowledge and skills gained by Mr Esgin in his nine month occupancy of the research intern position.
- Nevertheless, his participation has contributed to Indigenous Australian capacity building in a wider context. The knowledge and skills he has developed with regard to alcohol and other drug issues and the conduct of research will enhance to his ability to work as a lecturer in Indigenous health at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies where he will contribute to the development of the Indigenous workforce.

Progress Report - 2

Building Indigenous Research Workforce Capacity

**Associate Professor Dennis Gray
National Drug Research Institute
Curtin University of Technology**

Overview

In the last report on this project, we advised the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation that Mr Tuguy Esgin, the person originally appointed to the research intern position, had resigned in April 2004. Following Mr Esgin's resignation, Mr Tony Walley (Director, Noongar Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service) and I were concerned that: one year's funding has been expended and – although it had made a contribution to Indigenous capacity building in general – the benefit of this had been lost to NASAS ; and, that there was a potential for the same to happen again.

To address this concern, we decided to explore the possibility of splitting the position and employing two people from within NASAS – people who already had made a firm commitment to the organisation. To fit in with NASAS' plans to introduce a major new intervention initiative for young people, it was decided that it would be best to hold off selection of appropriate candidates until the new program was put in place. In the meantime, we advised the AER Foundation of our intention and indicated that we would seek a variation to our contract with the Foundation. AER replied on the 23rd September asking for answers to a number of specific questions before the contract could be varied.

Before we were able to respond to those questions, a decision was made within NASAS that there were not two people within the organisation who could be appointed and that it would be best to re-advertise the position as originally envisaged – with appropriate adjustment being made to the amounts of time spent within each organisation, given the shortened period for which a new appointee would be employed under the remaining time-span of the contract with the AER Foundation. At the same time - given the limited number of applicants when the intern position was first advertised – we decided that it would be best to wait until early in 2005 before re-advertising so that we might be able to tap into a wider range of candidates from the pool of 2004 graduates.

The position was re-advertised in February 2005 and attracted three applicants. All three were interviewed in April 2005 by a panel consisting of Associate Professor Dennis Gray (NDRI), Mr Tony Walley (NASAS), Ms Anna Stearne (NDRI), and Professor Sherry Sagers (Edith Cowan University). However, the interview panel members were unanimously of the view that none of the applicants was appointable.

We are currently preparing to conduct a more targeted approach to identifying a suitable person. As part of this we are proposing, in early July, to widely circulate (to various university centres of Indigenous studies and Indigenous community organisations) a call

for 'expressions of interest' in the position. We are planning to do this rather than again seeking applications, as we are of the view that the formality of the application process might discourage some potential candidates from applying.

Given that the position has now been vacant for a year, we are also seeking a 12 month extension of the grant period.

Progress Report - 3

Building Indigenous Research Workforce Capacity

**Associate Professor Dennis Gray
National Drug Research Institute
Curtin University of Technology**

Overview

In the last report on this project (28th June 2005), we advised that the original occupant of the research intern position had resigned to take up a position with the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University and of steps that the National Drug Research Institute and Noongar Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service (now Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service [AADS]) were taking to find a replacement. On the 25th January 2006 (by e-mail) I provided the Foundation with an up-date on this. In essence, during 2005 we advertised, or called for expressions of interest in, the position on four occasions. We offered an appointment to someone on each occasion but on each they declined for various reasons (other job offers, changed family circumstances).

Early this year, I raised the issue of how we should proceed with Mr Tony Walley, the Executive Director of Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Services. Mr Walley had then tendered his resignation and asked that I take the matter up with his successor Mr Phil Bartlett who was due to take over in early March. After taking some time to settle in, Mr Bartlett advised that AADS remains keen to find a replacement. He and Ms Kath Gadigan are currently trying to identify a suitable person and we are scheduled to meet on this within the next two or three weeks. If at that time we have an appropriate candidate for the internship, we will contact the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation to negotiate a further amendment to the contract.

We regret the delays that have occurred with respect to this project but trust that the Foundation appreciates some of the difficulties AADS and NDRI face in the development of genuine capacity building within a community-controlled organization .

Progress Report - 4

Building Indigenous Research Workforce Capacity

**Associate Professor Dennis Gray
National Drug Research Institute
Curtin University of Technology**

Overview

The Research Internship recommenced at the Aboriginal Alcohol Drug Service (AADS) in October 2006 and the position has been based at AADS. This report will provide a brief overview of the progress of the position and research initiatives at AADS.

This position has been placed within the Education, Research and development unit of AADS. The unit reports to the Executive Director, Phil Bartlett and also works in closely with the Education officer and staff of the clinical team at AADS. To date, the position has also provided research assistance to the Education officer. This has included reviewing the previous parenting programme and providing research and curriculum input into the new programme.

Performance Appraisal:

Having the Research Position based at AADS has worked well, particularly as the contract runs for just over a year and half. This was important to maximise the potential for capacity building for the organisation and the research position.

The partnership between NDRI and AADS has set a benchmark for what a good partnership should look like, and this includes the following:

- allowing and supporting AADS to set their own research agenda from the start of the contract;
- good support from NDRI staff in making the time available to run workshops and attend meetings with AADS staff as required by AADS;
- good reception from AADS staff and board for research to be undertaken within the organisation;
- good support, mentoring, and advice from NDRI staff for the research position; and,
- good support and mentoring from AADS staff on alcohol and drug issues and its impact on the Indigenous community.

Synopsis of Research Projects:

Robyn has been involved in a number of research projects over the past twelve months and this includes the following:

AADS Natural Therapies Programme:

This is a pilot treatment programme developed by the clinical team at AADS for Indigenous clients. Robyn has been involved in a literature review to research and discuss the alcohol and drug treatment models and the needs of Indigenous clients, particularly in an urban setting.

NDRI Research Grant:

AADS submitted an expression of interest in partnership with Derbarl Yercigan Health Service for an NDRI Research Grant in May 2007. Robyn worked within the team of AADS staff and contract staff to help prepare the proposal and the literature review for the application. This process was on strict deadlines between May and August 2007. AADS were successful in their application.

Capacity Building:

Dennis Gray from NDRI has facilitated several workshops with AADS clinical team. This allowed staff the opportunity to "own" the research process from the beginning. The workshops also provided AADS staff and Robyn with good training and insight into how to define research objectives.

The involvement of AADS staff in the process of the NDRI Research grant was another great example of capacity building for both AADS and Robyn. This included defining research objectives that met the criteria for the grant, and could be undertaken in a 12- 18 month time frame. Robyn also worked with the contract staff employed to complete the literature review and proposal for this project.

The one area of the internship that could receive greater emphasis is a more in-depth orientation on research within the first three months, particularly with Ed Garrison, Research Fellow, from NDRI. This could involve identifying any training needs such as Endnote.

Overview of Workplace Environment:

The training undertaken in this position directly applicable in the workplace has included both formal and informal training which has complimented the development of skills:

- End Note training at Curtin University
- Journal Club at NDRI (ongoing seminars)
- Professional Workshops with Dennis Gray held with AADS staff
- A two-day workshop on NDRI proposals (NDRI)
- Working within a team towards the NDRI proposal and literature review from May to August
- TAPE Training and Assessment Certificate Four completed at AADS in February

- Attended Cultural histories two-day workshop presented by AADS for Cyrenian House
- Occupational Health and Safety Course (AADS) - a one day workshop regarding occupational health and safety in the workplace.

New Skills learnt:

The Journal Club at NDRI has increased Robyn's critical analysis skills in the structure of research. These sessions were invaluable as it provided opportunity to fast track learning in a small group setting with senior researchers both Aboriginal and nonnAboriginal with different research backgrounds and expertise.

In addition, Robyn has undertaken Endnote training and application, instruction in the defining of research objectives, research proposals and literature reviews.

Objectives and Outcomes Achieved:

This position has allowed for significant capacity building both for the research intern and AADS. The opportunity to spend time being mentored and supervised by senior researchers from NDRI has fast tracked the development of some research skills and increased understanding of research methodology and process in what can be considered a relatively short time frame.

AADS in partnership with Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service were recently successful in its tender application with NDRI for a 12 month research project. This may have an impact in terms of workload in the remainder of the contract. The other work to be completed is a literature review and evaluation of the AADS pilot withdrawal program.