

BE THE VOICE OF CHANGE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH

RURAL HEALTH AND RESEARCH CONGRESS OCTOBER 2019
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- Statistics and influence
- **Challenging and changing the language**
- Support, leadership and accountability

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2017



"I always had a soft spot for the trouble makers, the misunderstood, the kid that everyone thought wouldn't make it."

Teachers of Queensland | #teachqld

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**TRUTH
LANGUAGE
VOICE**



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REVERSING THE LANGUAGE

- Non-Indigenous Australians are less likely to abstain from alcohol
- 5 year old non-Indigenous children are less likely to be vaccinated than 5 year old Indigenous children
- Next Prime Minister?
- In 2009, as Shadow Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Tony Abbott missed a series of key parliamentary votes because he was too drunk and had passed out on a couch. Efforts to rouse him failed.

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REVERSING THE LANGUAGE

- **Non-Indigenous Australians are less likely to abstain from alcohol**
- The 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that Indigenous Australians aged 14 and over were more likely to abstain from drinking alcohol than non-Indigenous Australians (31% compared with 23%, respectively)
- abstinence among Indigenous Australians has been increasing since 2010 when it was 25%
- **5 year old non-Indigenous children are less likely to be vaccinated than 5 year old Indigenous children**
- 2016-17 non-Indigenous 5 year old children were fully immunized at 93.5% compared to Indigenous 5 year old children at 95.7%
- North Coast, NSW 2016-17 5 year olds
 - Non-Indigenous 90.6%
 - Indigenous 96.5%

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LET'S TALK ABOUT DIABETES

Prevalence of diabetes in Indigenous Australia

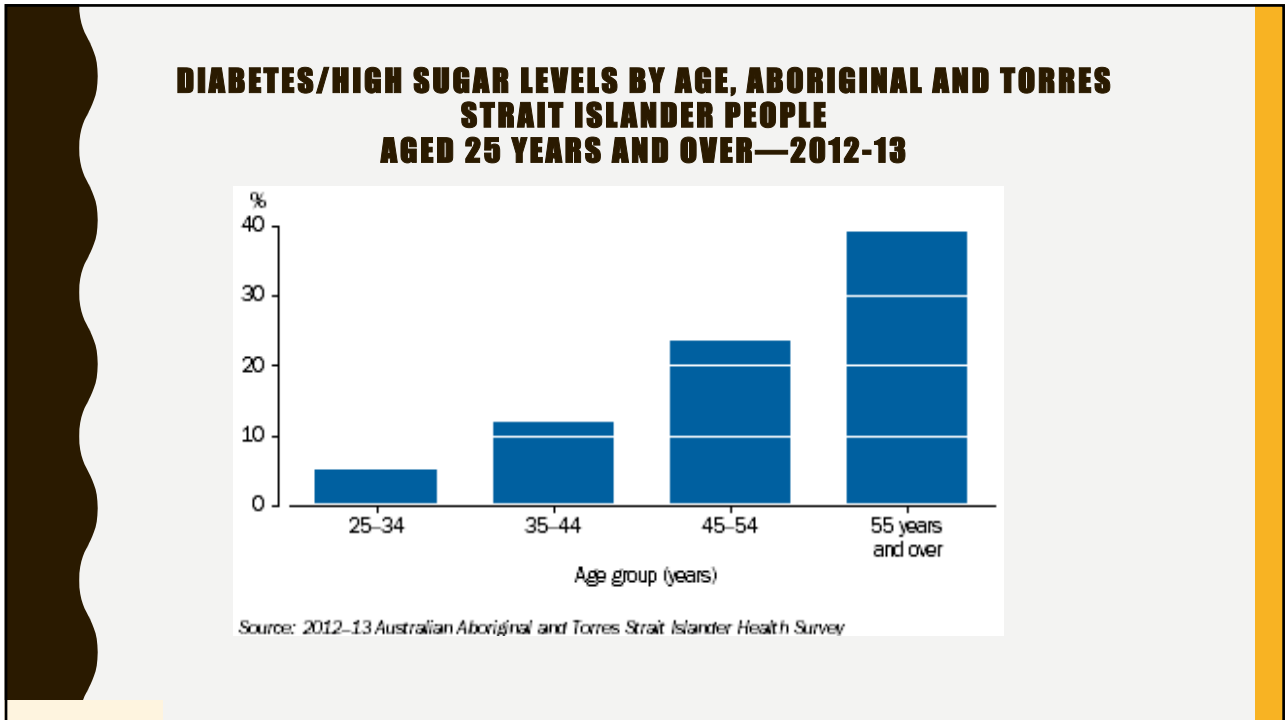
- Doctor – 45%
- Medical student – 65%
- Partner (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) – 75%
- Aboriginal final year medical student – “I really couldn’t tell you”
 - 3-5 times more likely
 - 2 times greater for smoking
- Does anyone actually know the prevalence of diabetes in Indigenous Australia?

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LET'S TALK ABOUT DIABETES

- The voluntary blood test results showed that in 2012–13, one in ten (11.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults had diabetes.
 - 9.6% with diagnosed diabetes
 - 1.5% with diabetes newly diagnosed from their test results (ABS)
- 2012-2013 AATSIHS, national estimates of the prevalence of diabetes (type 1, type 2 or high sugar levels) among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people range from 8.6% (self-reported data) to 11.1% (biomedical data). (AIHW)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were significantly more likely than males to have diabetes/high sugar levels (10% compared with 7%).

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- Statistics, media, education – tell a story**
- Myself, and many other Indigenous Australians are told we are going to fail before we even start**
- If we aren't told before we start, we are very much reminded constantly along the way**
- Dr Chris Sarra (Stronger Smarter Foundation) – reports that children as young as 5 and 6 already attribute doing well in class as being like the white kids, and being naughty as being Aboriginal**

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

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DEFINITION OF HEALTH:

‘The state of being free from illness or injury’ Oxford Dictionary


‘**Health** is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ WHO definition

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IMPACTS OF COLONISATION

- Teaching inequities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not health education
- The education system does not teach us anything about our health or wellbeing, or about our ways of knowing, being and doing health
- What this really should be called is ‘Impacts of Colonisation’ – Clinton Shultz



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TRANSFORMATION



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TRANSFORMATION - THE FUTURE

- Today we have over 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Doctors working in Australia
- Growing role models – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander as well as non-Indigenous
- Emergence of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander middle class
- Between 1990 and 2000 there were 55 Indigenous students awarded PhDs; between 2000 and 2011 there were 219

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WHITE PRIVILEGE: UNPACKING THE INVISIBLE KNAPSACK - PEGGY MCINTOSH

- “I began to count the ways in which I enjoy unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence.”
- 8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- 18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.
- 20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- 21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

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QUESTIONS?



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