



MEDIA RELEASE

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Yvonne Buza Appointed Chair of SA Aboriginal Peak Body

The Aboriginal Health Council of SA Inc. (AHCSA) is pleased to announce the appointment of a new Chairperson, Yvonne Buza who was elected at its Annual General Meeting on 2 December in Ceduna. Ms Buza assumes the role from John Singer who has been Chairperson for three years.

On behalf of AHCSA and its members, Chief Executive Officer Mary Buckskin congratulates Ms Buza and thanks Mr Singer for his guidance and support whilst Chairperson. Mr Singer has an in-depth understanding of governance, community control and government structures, and is very committed to improving the health and well being of Aboriginal people. "His contribution has been integral to AHCSA's growth over the past few years," Mary said.

The newly elected AHCSA Board Executive comprises:

- Yvonne Buza, Chairperson
- Leslie Kropinyeri, Vice Chairperson
- Eunice Aston, Secretary
- Mabel Lochowiak, Treasurer
- Wilhelmine Lieberwirth, Executive Member
- Gwenda Owen, Executive Member

Incoming Chairperson Yvonne Buza has extensive experience in community involvement as a member of the Outback Health Forum and Kalaya Roxby & Districts Aboriginal Community Action Group. She also works closely with the SA Aboriginal Health Partnership, is Chairperson of the Northern Aboriginal Health Advisory Committee, and member of the Country Health SA Forum and Centre for Excellence, Statewide Aboriginal Women's Group, Drug Diversion Working Party (SA Police), Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Centre of Clinical Research Excellence and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Over recent years, Yvonne has made it her business to become familiar with and responsive to the health needs of isolated Aboriginal communities within the Port Augusta Sub Region as well as other Aboriginal health groups and centres in the broader communities of the northern boundaries including Whyalla, Coober Pedy, Hawker, Quorn, Leigh Creek, Roxby Downs, Woomera, Andamooka, Marree, Oodnadatta and all pastoral homelands. Earlier this year, she was part of Nunyara Wellbeing Centre's registration and membership with AHCSA and their planning day to become community controlled.

Yvonne previously served on the AHCSA Board as Secretary and for the last two years was Vice Chair where she gained valuable experience in community engagement and governance.

In looking to the immediate and long term future, Yvonne says "I believe AHCSA's priorities should be focused on our role of watchdog, leadership, advocacy and sector support to member organisations and our strategic development should always be built around this. We will continue to lobby government to adequately resource our efforts to address the escalating responsibilities as we continue to promote ourselves as the peak body for Aboriginal health in South Australia. We also need a consistent coordinated effort to manage our service and information management. We must take a

leading role, with a cultural perspective, in our accreditation systems so that our people experience quality services that will not only improve their general health and well being but provide them with the promise of prosperity like all other Australians.

“We must consolidate our partnerships with external partners so that we can achieve all of our goals. Our position on all matters must be clear and reinforced at every opportunity. We deserve to demand the respect of outside groups whose work is focused on Aboriginal health.

“Our expertise in workforce planning needs further professional development that is consistent with and supportive of our short and long term succession plans.

“Owning and conducting our own research has never been more achievable since the completion of the Centre of Clinical Research Excellence achievements and milestones document. We must now keep research firmly on the Aboriginal Community Control Health agenda and make the most of newly presented opportunities such as the Country Health SA Centre for Excellence. We have the knowledge and expertise to drive the direction of best practise when dealing with chronic disease and long term illness and in particular mental health and substance misuse conditions that continue to afflict our people. An approach which combines culturally appropriate and adequately resourced self-management programs with Aboriginal input is not just preferred but expected.

“Collectively, we (AHCSA) have a strong and dedicated board and I have been privileged to be a part of positive developments over the last few years including visits to all member organisations. AHCSA ensures that all members and their respective communities’ views are heard and, when necessary, followed up and represented at the local, state and national levels. This broad representation has been the catalyst in establishing and maintaining our recognised role as the peak Aboriginal health body. We need to continue with relentless fervour until such time as we see an acceptable plan that truly Closes the Gap in health inequity. There is always strength in numbers and we as Aboriginal people work well in large numbers,” said Yvonne.

In closing, Yvonne said I believe there is much more to learn and achieve with the support of a dedicated and productive board.

Outgoing Chairperson Mr John Singer is from the Ngaangtjara, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunyatjara lands, which crosses the borders of Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. His expansive career began in the 1980s at the Ceduna/Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service where he commenced health worker training and later completed at the Nganampa Health Council.

From 1989 to 1996, Mr Singer worked in Community Administration at Iwantja, Fregon, Pukatja and Papunya. In 1997, he became Manager of the Iwantja Clinic and in 2000 was appointed Director of the Nganampa Health Council, a position he still holds today. Nganampa Health Council is the largest Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service in remote Australia, covering the APY Lands in the far north west of South Australia.

Over the years, Mr Singer has participated on several Boards and Committees including:

- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Aboriginal Health Council of SA Inc. (since 1998; Chairperson: 2005-2008)
- Country Health SA Board (to June 2008)
- Anangu Remote Health Alliance (influential in establishment, 2005; Chairperson: 2005-2006)
- Centre of Clinical Research Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (partnership between the Aboriginal Health Council of SA Inc. and Flinders University)
- SA Health Performance Council

ENDS. For further information contact: Mrs Mary Buckskin, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Inc., 08 8132 6700.