



## Media Release

John Elferink  
Minister for Health

### **Aboriginal Health Practitioners shine at Awards**

9 October 2015

Minister for Health John Elferink tonight hosted the 2015 Northern Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner Excellence Awards at Parliament House.

The Excellence Awards are in their ninth year and are a time to acknowledge the outstanding performance and contribution by our much valued Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner workforce.

The awards focus on the following categories: Remote, Urban, Specialised and New Practitioners.

The 2015 winners include:

Remote Practitioner Category - Dianne Hampton

Urban Practitioner Category - Natasha Tatipata

Specialist Practitioner Category - Sarah Bukulatjpi

New Practitioner Category - Kylie (Helen) Parry

The 2015 Aboriginal Health Practitioner of the Year overall winner and 'Legend' for 2015 was Sarah Bukulatjpi.

Sarah has been dedicated to improving health outcomes in her community, introducing new systems within the Chronic Conditions program and developing an educational app, which was launched last year.

Sarah is also passionate about working with individuals dealing with mental health issues.

Mr Elferink said "Sarah's strong work ethic and commitment to her community allowed her to become a very valued Senior Aboriginal Health Practitioner and chronic disease expert."

"Her achievement of the top prize was warmly received by all nominees and guests attending the awards and was an endorsement of her contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of the Northern Territory community."

Mr Elferink congratulated all nominees on their dedication and commitment to improving health in their communities and acknowledged the challenging environment that our health professionals face.

The Excellence Awards were made possible through the commitment and ongoing support of Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT (AMSANT), United Voice, the Northern Territory Department of Health and the Australian Government Department of Health.

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Biography - Sarah Bukulatjpi

Sarah hails from Gove and is currently the Chronic Disease Team Leader, Ngalkanbuy Clinic, Galiwinku.

Sarah's mother, Basma, introduced her to a career as an Aboriginal Health Practitioner at an early age when Sarah would often visit her mother at Ngalkanbuy clinic where her mother worked as the Chronic Disease Aboriginal Health Worker from 1980 to 2001.

Sarah completed a week of work experience at the clinic when she was in Year 10 and after completing Year 12 began working as a volunteer receptionist at Ngalkanbuy clinic.

Her mother then encouraged her to enrol in the Aboriginal Health Practitioner course at Bachelor Institute when she was 19. By 2004 Sarah had completed the Certificate III Aboriginal Health Worker course.

After completion of her Certificate III Aboriginal Health Worker Certificate Sarah's desire to improve the health of community members displaying symptoms of chronic diseases encouraged her to systematically take bloods of all clients who presented to the chronic conditions program.

These samples identified a significant number of clients suffering from Hepatitis B and resulted in a liver specialist working with Sarah and visiting Galiwinku on three monthly scheduled visits.

In 2007 Menzies School of Research began working with and alongside Sarah to screen family members of clients suffering from Hepatitis B to determine a genetic link.

Sarah continued to work with Menzies to collect data and after identifying the significant need for educational resources to be created to educate clients and family members with Hepatitis B, Sarah and the Menzies team developed and created a Hepatitis B educational app.

Many clients, family members and community members were consulted regarding the design of the app and the information was then translated into Yolngu Matha so the resource can be used both by health workers educating clients in Yolngu communities and independently by Yolngu people.

This app was first launched in Galiwinku last year (2014) and then again to health professionals from around the world at a forum in Alice Springs.

After working with Menzies to screen Hepatitis B family members, Sarah then followed her passion of helping community members suffering from Mental Health issues and completed her Certificate IV in Mental Health in 2009.

Her skills in this field are very much relied upon by the mental health team and psychologist.

Sarah then focused her energy on completing the final units to attain the Certificate IV Aboriginal Health Qualification in 2010.

Sarah and a team of three Miwatj employees designed a 2-day Team Leadership workshop which they presented to the new Galiwinku Team Leaders in October 2014.

This proved to be a very engaging and successful workshop, leaving participants feeling empowered and ready to take on the challenge of leading their clinical programs in Galiwinku.

The program is about to be extended to other Yolngu employees on the Gove Peninsula in the very near future.

[ATSIHP winners and finalists with Minister Elferink](#)