

Indigenous researchers blossom

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An opportunity to contribute to the national discussion on Indigenous anxiety and depression was just one of the highlights for the latest group of Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) graduates.

Helen Kassman-Reid, Sian Graham and Joe Fitz recently travelled from Darwin to Adelaide for their graduation ceremony in recognition of the successful completion of the Certificate IV in Indigenous Research and Capacity Building.

Conducted through the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, the research training course has been specifically designed to bolster the future generation of budding Indigenous researchers.

Research Assistant with the preterm kidney study, Sian said the course, a pilot investigation into Aboriginal people's understandings of anxiety and depression, had offered her a newfound appreciation of the research process.

"The Cert IV attracts people who are really passionate about working to improve the health and wellbeing of their communities and it unlocks the secrets of research and how it can facilitate those improvements," she said.

"We were required to collect information, analyse data sets, conform to ethics requirements and make recommendations which will contribute to BeyondBlue's upcoming campaign to address anxiety and depression in Indigenous populations."

Administration Officer with the Talking About the Smokes Project, Helen said beyond the professional advantages, the course also yielded personal benefits for graduates by developing increased confidence, motivation and a greater sense of research competency.

"This course and the qualification makes me feel empowered and is a great foundation to build upon by putting the theory into practice in the workplace," she said.

"Everyone in the Indigenous Capacity Building and People Development team have been nothing but supportive through this journey and I thoroughly recommended every Indigenous staff member to do a course like this to get an appreciation of the research process."

Both Helen and Sian said the clear highlight was attending the Congress Lowitja 2012 together with end-users of health research, researchers and policy makers to observe first hand what is being done on the national level to close the gap.

"It was an inspiration to be a part of it," the ladies finish with.

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Background

Menzies School of Health Research is a national leader in Indigenous and tropical health research. It is the only medical research institute in the Northern Territory, with more than 300 staff working in over 60 communities across central and northern Australia, as well as developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Menzies is also a significant contributor to health education and research training.