

Anti-alcohol campaigners honoured with Menzies Medallion

Wednesday, 12 November 2014

Two of the most influential identities in the fight against alcohol-related issues affecting the lives of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory have been recognised with a prestigious award for their unwavering efforts.

CEO of Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in the Fitzroy Crossing, June Oscar AO and chief public health medical officer at the Central Australian Aboriginal Health Congress in Alice Springs, Dr John Boffa, were named as dual recipients of the Menzies Medallion during the recent Menzies Oration.

A proud Bunuba woman, Ms Oscar is a champion for Indigenous Australian languages, social justice, women's issues, and improving child health and development, with a focus on Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

In 2008, she fought successfully for alcohol restrictions in Fitzroy Crossing. Her focus on Aboriginal children, and her determination that communities should not compromise regarding the health of children and families, made her a role model for all Australians. In 2013, she was awarded an Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours.

In his various roles in Indigenous health, Dr John Boffa has played a highly significant role in Aboriginal health policy developments, the development of the CARPA Standard Treatment Guidelines, core indicators for primary health care and addressing the broader social determinants of Aboriginal health.

He has worked on alcohol policy, especially alcohol supply reduction measures as well as the development of early childhood programs and services. In 2012, his remarkable contribution was recognised in him being announced as the NT Australian of the Year.

Menzies Director, Professor Alan Cass said he was delighted to present the dual Medallions to two Indigenous health advocates who had left an indelible mark through their work.

"Both June Oscar and Dr John Boffa continue to display unwavering bravery and determination to save lives and change communities for the better," Prof Cass said.

"June Oscar's steadfast commitment to address the complex problems affecting the lives of Aboriginal Australians has made her an internationally respected figure in Indigenous affairs. Her work in the Fitzroy Crossing has provided a blueprint for other Indigenous communities to write their own futures.

"Over the years, Dr John Boffa has played an inspirational role in changing attitudes toward alcohol in Northern Territory communities, early learning, mental health programs and strengthening the provision of health services to Indigenous Australians."

The Menzies Medallion is the highest award offered by the Menzies School of Health Research.

ENDS

Media contact: Richmond Hodgson; 0408 128 099; communications@menzies.edu.au

Menzies Background

Menzies School of Health Research is Australia's leading Medical Research Institute dedicated to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. We have a 29-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, partnering with over 60 Indigenous communities across Northern and Central Australia. We collaborate to create resources, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.