

Leaders in the field acknowledged for exemplary engagement and evaluation

A prestigious award has been announced by the Australasian Evaluation Society (AES) for leadership and excellence in evaluation practice and evaluation capacity building.

Menzies School of Health Research, in collaboration with The University of Melbourne and the Department of Health (as the commissioners), have won the award for Excellence in Indigenous Evaluation for the Sentinel Sites Evaluation.

Project leader Professor Ross Bailie said he is delighted to have the work of the evaluation team recognised as being rigorous, respectful and contributing to strengthening the evaluation capacity of Indigenous peoples.

The Sentinel Sites Evaluation was an evaluation of the unprecedented \$805m Indigenous Chronic Disease Package (ICDP) or 'Closing the Gap' in health; an initiative designed to improve the capacity of primary health care services to effectively prevent and manage chronic disease among Indigenous populations.

"In 2010, the Australian Government engaged Menzies to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package.

"The evaluation was undertaken to inform ongoing refinements in design and implementation of the program," Prof Bailie said.

The evaluation team conducted 72 community focus groups with a total of 670 participants, and over 700 interviews with key informants from community controlled, government services and GP sectors. Findings were reported back to local health services and to government in six-monthly cycles between 2010-2013.

Prof Bailie emphasised that the evaluation had been informed by frontline evidence from a variety of healthcare providers and community members, some of whom had gone on to recommend the evaluation team for the award.

One nomination wrote: "In my work roles I found it to be both practical and empowering. I believe it provided an exceptionally clear and useful evaluation of a complex area...which I believe is useful for clinicians and policy makers and will promote culturally competent, respectful and effective management of chronic disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," GP 1, community-controlled sector.

Another wrote: "I strongly commend the team... (for their) commitment to strengthen health service capacity and their passion and enthusiasm for improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," GP 2, community-controlled sector.

Prof Bailie said the effective completion of the Sentinel Sites Evaluation shows Menzies' capacity to inform and impact national policy with the view to maximise the potential benefit to Indigenous communities across the country.

"There has been strong interest in the methods used to implement the evaluation nationally and internationally. It is clear that the evaluation has influenced program refinement and policy discussions within government.

"This is vital to enhancing efforts to improve prevention and management of chronic illness care for those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," said Prof Bailie.

The findings of the evaluation were publically released by the Department and are available at:

http://www.menzies.edu.au/icms_docs/189996_Sentinel_Sites_Evaluation_Final_Report.pdf

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Media note:

Professor Ross Bailie is the scientific director of the National Centre for Quality Improvement in Indigenous Primary Health Care and leads the National Health Research and Medical Council funded ABCD National Research Partnership on quality improvement in Indigenous primary health care. He is also involved in research on food supply and environmental health and housing in Indigenous communities.

http://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Our_People/Researchers/Ross_Bailie/

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Menzies Background

Menzies School of Health Research is Australia's leading medical research institute dedicated to improving Indigenous, global and tropical health. We have a 30 year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, joining with partners across the Asia-Pacific as well as Indigenous communities across northern and central Australia. We collaborate to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.