



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Health

**COVID-19**

## Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC)

Wednesday 5 December 2021

### Pilot WA Public Health Officer Training Program (WAPHOTP) Communique Graduation Ceremony

As 2021 has now drawn to a close, so does the inaugural pilot WA Public Health Officer Training Program. The program's graduation ceremony was held on Tuesday, 14 December 2021 and included speeches by Dr David Russell-Weisz (Director General, WA Health), Ms Selena West (Manager Aboriginal Health, East Metropolitan Health Service), Mr Maurice Swanson (WAPHOTP Mentor and Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council on Smoking and Health), and Ms Kymbalee Lourens (WAPHOTP Trainee).



*From left to right: Professor Donna Mak, Ms Kym Lourens, Dr David Russell-Weisz, Mrs Jessica Agostinho, Mr Rourke Jackson, Ms Whitney Melville, the WAPHOTP trainees and coordination team, Ms Sam Gibbings, Ms Jenny Vo, Mr James Macatangay and Ms Nikita Pereira*

## Trainee Led Sessions

Full trainees recently were tasked with providing a training session to the program participants that focused on a topic of their choosing and relevant to public health. Trainees were tasked with selecting their topic, identifying preparatory readings, presenting the information and inviting a Health Leader to speak at the session. This exercise aimed to enhance their management and leadership competencies.

The various presentations and sessions included:

- 'Managing a Syphilis Outbreak in Metropolitan vs. Remote Areas' by Jess Agostinho and Chantelle Pears
- 'The Impact of Climate Change on Health' by Kym Lourens and James Macatangay
- 'Program Logic Models and Evaluation' by Whitney Melville and Asha Singh
- 'Creating Effective Solutions through Co-operative Problem Solving' by Nikita Pereira and Tavi Munyikwa
- 'Lost in Translation – Communicating Health in Plain Language' by Jenny Vo and Sam Gibbings

## Health Leader Series

The WAPHOTP has continued the health leader speaker series which provides trainees with the unique opportunity to hear from various leaders outlining their career journeys and roles in the healthcare system. Since the last communique, trainees have had the privilege of hearing from the following speakers

- Jan-Marie Grantham, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Pilbara Population Health
- Prof. Peter Newman, Professor of Sustainability, Curtin University
- Associate Professor Helen Jordan, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
- Rebecca Wake, Operations Manager, Pathwest Laboratory Medicine WA
- Jolyon Burford, Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health
- Ruth Lopez, Senior Policy Officer, Chronic Disease Prevention Directorate

## Coffee with a Health Leader

WAPHOTP trainees who completed a number of activities such as writing a career profile on a trainee and mentor, mapping their work achievements against the curriculum competency areas and wrote a reflection on their experience in the program were given the opportunity to have a half hour, one-on-one coffee meeting with a health leader.

Thanks to Ms Liz MacLeod, Mr Jeff Moffet and Dr David Russell-Weisz for generously donating their time to meet with our trainees. The selected trainees provided the following testimonials on their experience:

*"In my meeting with Jeff Moffet, Chief Executive WA Country Health Service, we discussed the challenges faced by the rural/remote communities in particular teenage suicide and long term funding for programs to help teenagers in rural/remote communities to improve their health outcomes. From the start Jeff made me feel very welcomed. He was easy to talk to and accepted my views on the issues we discussed. I would highly recommend future trainees to take advantage of the opportunity to meet with senior health professionals with a view to broadening their health outlook of the WA Public Health Sector."*

- Nikita Pereira

*"During the WAPHOTP I was afforded the opportunity to meet with WA Health's Director General, Dr. David Russell-Weisz as part of the "Coffee with a health leader" activity. Arranging to meet with Dr. Russell-Weisz midst pandemic proved to be challenging, however he generously made time for the meeting in November. We discussed the Sustainable Health Review, the important role of prevention and emerging areas within public health. It was a great opportunity and I am appreciative of Dr. Russell-Weisz's ongoing support and contribution to the program."*

- Whitney Melville

*“Liz MacLeod & I spoke a lot about working whilst also raising a family. It was encouraging to know she could prioritise family and still make it as high as CE, and she shared a lot about how she managed to navigate that. Her manager (at the time of maternity leave) was a big part of it, so I feel a lot more settled knowing my current manager’s support to help me succeed over the next stage of my life/career.”*

- Liana Varrone

## **Learning on Ballardong Noonga Boodja Country with the Respected Elders and the Wheatbelt Population Health team**

Following the September fieldtrip to Northam, WAPHOTP were invited to return for learning on country with local Elder Kathy Davis and an interactive workshop with the Wheatbelt Population Health team.

Trainees arrived at the Bilya Koort Boodja Centre for a yarning circle with the respected elder. Trainees were then taken to cultural heritage sites including the women’s birthing site, the old mission, the corroboree ground and the Mount Ommanney lookout. Trainees then returned to the Bilya Koort Boodja Centre where they participated in an interactive workshop with support from the Wheatbelt Population Health Team to explore the difficulties in delivering healthcare in a remote area.



*Trainees at Mount Ommanney lookout*





*Northam Corroboree Ground*



*Trainees and the Wheatbelt Population Health team at the Bilya Koort Boodja centre*

### **Thank you from the Coordination Team**

As we reflect on the past nine months and the difficulties this year has posed with the ongoing pandemic, we also would like to highlight the programs' achievements this year. To name a few...

- Aboriginal health placements in government and Aboriginal community-controlled health services in metropolitan, rural and remote WA
- Health leaders speaker series in which health leaders including Ms Wendy Casey, Director of Aboriginal Health, Western Australia and Jim McGinty, Former Attorney General and Minister for Health (2003 – 2008) shared their career journeys and advice for future public health practitioners/leaders.
- Two field trips to Northam including learning on Ballardong Noonga Boodja Country with the Respected Elders and the Wheatbelt Population Health team.
- Flipped classroom teaching and learning activities covering a broad range of public health competencies including Health Promotion and Prevention, Management and Leadership, Epidemiology, Evaluation and Evidence, and Cultural Competence and Aboriginal Health.

The WA Public Health Officer Training Program will continue with a second pilot in 2022 and the application and assessment process is currently in progress.

We look forward to seeing the positive impact of the program on public health workforce quality and sustainability in Western Australia, and hope that ongoing investment will enable the program to transition to a three year program comprising six 6-month placements in the Public and Aboriginal Health Division, Public Health Units, Health Service Providers, non-government community-controlled organisations and other government departments in metropolitan, rural and remote WA.

Lastly, we would like to sincerely thank you for your generosity, time and support in 2021. All of your contributions played a vital role in the success of the pilot program. We look forward to working in partnership with you again in 2022.

Kind regards

**Pilot WA Public Health Officer Training Program Team**  
**Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC)**  
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### Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Health acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation as the Traditional Owners of the land we work on. We extend this recognition to the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. We value the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pay respect to Aboriginal communities of today.



Let's keep  
WA safe



PHYSICAL  
DISTANCE



WASH  
HANDS



STAY HOME IF SICK  
& GET TESTED



USE THE  
SAFEWA APP



GET  
VACCINATED

