

MEDIA RELEASE
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INDIGENOUS LEADERS TO ATTEND PEOPLES' HEALTH ASSEMBLY IN ECUADOR

Dr Cathy Mead, President of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), today announced the sponsorship of two Indigenous health leaders to attend the Peoples' Health Assembly to be held in Cuenca Ecuador. The People's Health Assembly is an international congress of people concerned about the growing inequities in health globally, nationally, regionally and locally.

"The PHAA is delighted to be able to help finance two of our Indigenous health leaders to attend the Ecuador Peoples' Health Assembly. They are Pat Anderson from the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance in the Northern Territory and Stephanie Bell, CEO of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress," said Dr Mead.

"The opportunity provided by our sponsorship is two way. Firstly, Pat and Stephanie will be able to provide the Assembly with a voice from Indigenous Australians, articulating the need for better health, justice and equity, and reaffirming the rights of Indigenous people to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives and health. By doing so they will also reaffirm that health is a broad crosscutting issue and develop communications with other Indigenous groups from around the world," said Cathy Mead

"Secondly, by participating in such a world assembly, they will gain significant knowledge about the efforts of individuals and communities facing similar problems to Australian Indigenous communities. Mutual learning under such circumstances will enlarge the debate and lead to shared knowledge and practices of alternative models for the promotion and provision of community health," said Dr Mead.

Pat Anderson, Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT, said "The opportunity to attend the Peoples' Health Assembly and to participate as an Indigenous Australia is very significant. It is rare that Indigenous people from around the world are afforded the opportunity to meet to debate issues that have such a significant effect on them as does health. It is only by participating in such assemblies that we are able to discuss local, national and global systems, through which the determinants of health, especially Indigenous community health, is affected."

Stephanie Bell is the CEO of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, which has been a member of PHAA for many years. She said " PHAA has been a useful national forum for us to meet and then work with a wide range of public health workers to improve Aboriginal health, and now they have given me this terrific opportunity to meet with a wider international group of workers. The People's Health Assembly is a unique social mobilisation exercise that has involved a wide variety of countries, at local regional and national levels. The sponsorship provided by the Public Health Association of Australia will allow a debate strengthened by the inclusion of Indigenous Australians. I believe that it will provide us with the opportunity to share our knowledge and practices and to evaluate alternative models for the promotion and provision of Indigenous community health."

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The Public Health Association is a non-party-political organisation with a membership drawn from more than 40 health-related professions. The Association makes a major contribution to health policy in Australia and has branches in every State and Territory.