



Dr Sanchia Shibasaki: An emerging health leader

The awarding of a Doctorate to Sanchia Shibasaki has been welcomed by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) as further evidence of an emerging highly-educated and skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander health workforce.

CRAH CEO Mick Gooda said Dr Shibasaki represented a new generation of Indigenous health professionals whose work is playing a critical role in closing the health

gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples, and other Australians.

“There is a substantial body of research evidence indicating that the development of a skilled and professional Indigenous health workforce is an essential prerequisite for improvements in Indigenous health,” said Mick Gooda. “Sanchia is the latest young Indigenous person to join this group and I congratulate her on her outstanding achievements.

“She is living proof that our people are both ready and capable of developing and managing effective health programs,” he said.

Mr Gooda said that Dr Shibasaki, who received a CRAH scholarship, was one of a small group of Torres Strait Islander women to be awarded a Doctorate.

Dr Shibasaki was presented with her Doctor of Philosophy in *Epidemiology, Population Health and Health Services* by Torres Shire Mayor Pedro Stephen at a ceremony at the PKA Hall.

Dr Shibasaki, who was born and raised on Thursday Island, started her tertiary studies with a Bachelor of Applied Health Sciences (Physiotherapy), going on to work at the Ingham Hospital and then for five years as a resident physiotherapist at the Thursday Island Hospital before she successfully completed a Masters degree in Epidemiology and Population Health.

She then moved to the Northern Territory, working in Darwin before commencing work as a CRAH Research Fellow at the Aboriginal-controlled Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Primary Health Care Service in Alice Springs.

She was granted a National Health and Medical Research Council scholarship to undertake her Doctorate of Philosophy

in Epidemiology, Population Health and Health Services at the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute, Australian National University.

Dr Shibasaki said her PhD, the Information Atlas Project, identifies information management practices needed by primary healthcare services to provide chronic disease management, with a particular emphasis on diabetes patient management. Information and health data management is an increasing challenge for services delivering primary health care.

“A key component of effective primary health care of patients with chronic diseases is the management of data and of information and the appropriate use of information technology,” said Dr Shibasaki. “The challenge for the sector is its capacity and capability to strategically use these information resources to effectively care for patients with chronic diseases.

“I am very proud that my studies are contributing to improved capacity and efficiency of health services to properly manage patients suffering from chronic diseases particularly diabetes which is in epidemic proportions here in the Torres Straits and throughout Indigenous Australia.”

To compliment her health expertise Dr Shibasaki is currently studying a Graduate Diploma in Professional Management at Australian Institute of Management (AIM) and in July was awarded an NHMRC Training Fellowship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research.

She is particularly pleased to be graduating on her island home so her family, including father Bill Shibasaki, mother Sariba Shibasaki, her siblings and her wider family and friends could attend the celebration.

