



Onemda is a word in the Woiwurrung language, meaning love or spirit. It expresses the way we think about wellbeing, which is central to our work.

Onemda: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing is an Indigenous group specialising in public health with a focus on research and teaching aimed at improving health and wellbeing outcomes in Australia and elsewhere through partnerships and collaborations and strong ethical foundations.

This document celebrates our early history and highlights a sample of important projects, among many.

Our Beginnings

The VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit, known from 2005 as the Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit, was established in 1998 with core funding from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and the Australian Government Department Health and Ageing.

Based at the University of Melbourne's Centre for Health and Society, the Unit's purpose was to foster an academic environment that values Aboriginal knowledges and methodologies, supports ethical practice and Aboriginal determination. Its vision included the development of a national and international profile for research and teaching in Aboriginal health underpinned and informed by the principles of Aboriginal community development.

Our Patrons

In 2005, we were honoured to have Koori Elders Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin AO, Aunty Joan Vickery AO, and Uncle Kevin Coombs OAM, agree to act as Patrons of Onemda, guiding the early development of the Unit.

Aunty Joy is an Elder of the Wurrundjeri people with decades of executive experience across many sectors of government, academia, ethics governance, equal opportunity and the arts.

Aunty Joan was a Gunditjamarra woman who provided more than 50 years' experience working with the Koori Community, particularly in health, including diabetes, as well as drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Uncle Kev had a distinguished national and international sports career representing Australia at the Commonwealth and Paralympics Games, and had a long involvement in Koori health, particularly in drug and alcohol programs.



Ian Anderson (Director, 1999 - 2011 and current Patron), Aunty Joan Vickery, Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin and Uncle Kevin R. Coombs.

Onemda History Timeline

1998

The VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit (VCHRCU) was established under the direction of Professor Ian Anderson and housed at the Centre for Health and Society (209 Grattan St, Parkville).



First workshop into Koori health research was held in Shepparton (Nov 1999) in partnership with the



University's Department of Rural Health and the Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative. The project initiated an Aboriginal community dialogue on the value of research for the Koori community, and strategies for improving research practice. A community report 'We Don't Like Research But in Koori Hands it could Make a Difference', was published.

2004

Onemda became an integral part of the newly formed School of Population Health, within the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences.

The Indigenous Health Curriculum Development Project, hosted by Onemda and undertaken with the Committee of Deans of Australasian Medical Schools (CDAMS), continued to develop a nationally agreed curriculum for the inclusion of Indigenous health in medical courses. On the basis of the national curriculum framework the Australian Medical Council agreed to the new standards when it reviewed Medical Curricula.

2005

Local Aboriginal Community was consulted in renaming the unit. At the suggestion of Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy AO, the unit became Onemda: VicHealth Koori Health Unit.

The CEITC Galnga Angin (Good Air) community newsletter launched.



The Leaders in Medical Education (LIME) network, hosted by Onemda, was formalised at its inaugural conference. LIME Connection. LIME is a dynamic network dedicated to the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in Indigenous health in medical education, as well as best practice in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous medical students and trainees.



2000

VCHRCU published Dr Lisa Rasmussen's evaluation on medical teaching at the University of Melbourne, which was to inform Onemda's subsequent work in medical education.

Talkin' Strong Community Newsletter launched.

2002

A community consultation was held to address concerns about the ethical conduct of research in Aboriginal communities, resulting in the creation of a VACCHO Ethics Panel and the Research: Understanding Ethics report.

Victorian Aboriginal Ethics Project commenced in collaboration with VACCHO.

2003

The PHILE Network was established at the National Indigenous Public Health Curriculum Workshop, one of several initiatives supported by Onemda. The work of the PHILE Network would focus on establishing core competencies in Aboriginal health in public health education, and on supporting Aboriginal leadership in public health.



Onemda was funded for a further five years based on successes to date. New strategic and research plans were developed, consolidating the existing program and introducing innovative teaching and learning initiatives.

Onemda, and the University of Melbourne, were early partners of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH). This relationship with the CRAH, and the Lowitja Institute, has been an enduring and nationally influential partnership.



Hosted by Onemda, the Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Tobacco Control (CEITC), was established with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. CEITC was a national program seeing to reduce ill health and mortality associated with tobacco consumption by building capacity for effective Indigenous tobacco control programs.

2006

Many important projects are commenced in 2006 such as the Billabong Project, Improving the Culture of hospitals project and Capacity-building in Indigenous Policy-relevant health Research project.

Onemda History Timeline

2007



CEITC's Tobacco Control Resource Kit launched, with training programs for Aboriginal Health Workers rolled out across Australia.

The LIME project re-funded for a period of three years and the LIME Connection II conference.

2008

All Deans of Medicine formally endorse the Health Curriculum Framework.

We can like research – in Koori Hands report published following consultation, indicating a shift in Community's thinking about research.



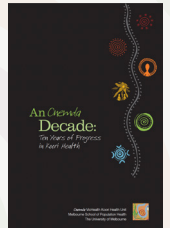
2009

Onemda supported Indigenous presenters from urban and remote Communities to share their good health and wellbeing stories at the From Margins to Mainstream: 5th World Conference on the Promotion of Mental Health, held in Melbourne. Their pre-conference training program was recorded in a report and DVD titled, Sharing our Stories and Building on Our Strengths.

Partnership with Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative commences. Resulting in many health screening and promotion projects, as well as the yearly Dungala Kaiela oration featuring national leaders addressing issues that define Yorta Yorta futures.

2010

An Onemda Decade, celebrating ten years of progress in Koori health, was published. This document lists many contributions by Onemda staff and Community, including projects addressing critical issues such as heart health, healthy pregnancies, health promotion, chronic disease, improving the culture of hospitals, child mortality, racism, family violence, diabetes care, among others.



2012

Professor Sean Ewen appointed Director.

Curriculum Mapping Project, Educating4 Equity, established to equip health professionals to deliver better care for Indigenous people.

From Colonisation to Conciliation: An exploration of social work practice with Aboriginal Populations was published.

2011

Wadja Aboriginal Family Place Evaluation published, New model of care for Aboriginal Children, designed to assist children and families to access the Royal Children's Hospital.

The Goulburn-Murray Health Promotion Alliance was established between Rumbalara Football Netball Club, Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, Viney Morgan Aboriginal Medical Service and UoM to better coordinate and evaluate health promotion.

2013

Professor Kerry Arabena appointed as Chair for Indigenous Health and Director of Onemda.

First Onemda Writers Retreat for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and academics.

2014

Renamed the VicHealth Koori Health Group, and re-located in the Centre for Health Equity within the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health.

First 1000 Days Program Launched.



2015

Onemda becomes part of the Centre for Health Equity.

Onemda partnership established with Yowinna Wumalung Healing Service in East Gippsland.

The contract funding the Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit ends, after 17 years of support.

2023

In February 2023, Onemda: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing is formally launched under the direction of Prof Cath Chamberlain.

With a clear focus on community at the centre of the three year Strategic Plan, the revitalised Onemda will work to deliver integrated teaching, research, policy advisory, and program implementation to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing outcomes.

Onemda Logo History

Koori Community health research has its foundations on the traditions of Aboriginal Communities in Victoria and traditional healing knowledge.



Original logo designed by Michelle Smith

This knowledge is represented by the Old Man Weed plant that evolves into a river that sustains life in the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities on either side of the river. Onemda relies on the partnership between communities.

The designs along the course of the river testify that Koori Communities maintain culture today. The river is a timeline bringing together the past, present and future - the future that is shown by the river evolving into the creator spirit forging new paths.



Updated logo, introduced in 2010



Onemda artwork designed by Reanna Bono, 2022



Current Onemda Logo

The storylines at the centre, like the grain of a tree, represent both the history of Onemda and new growth, bound in a strong trunk of culture and connected to our roots and Ancestors. People sit together, representing collaboration within, supported, and working in partnership with communities, as we listen, reflect, honour, and learn, to pass on knowledge to the outer flowing rivers.

Two strong strands of knowledge, Indigenous and Western, intertwine and emerge reaching towards the sky, sprouting a new Kangaroo Grass bud that will represent emerging resilient scholars who will sway and soar like the wind and bring their strengths, gifts to this learning space, to the nation and eventually the world.



Onemda logo adapted from original artwork by Reanna Bono, 2024

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