

## NSW Health 2009 Aboriginal Health Awards Entry Template

### ENTRY FOR NOMINATED INDIVIDUALS

#### Name of nominated individual

Colleen Cawood

#### Relevance to entry category

Colleen Cawood is a life-long member of the La Perouse Aboriginal community. Over the past 16 years within the Prince of Wales Community Health Service, Colleen has been an outstanding generic health worker, teacher and role model to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues. In her primary role, as Aboriginal Health Education Officer (AHEO) responsible for the Healthy Older Persons Program within the La Perouse-Randwick-Botany Aboriginal Community Health Service, she has been a model and an inspiration to her Aboriginal clients, colleagues and community members.

Again, in her primary role, she is a tireless, efficient and prodigious worker responsible for one of the longest running and most successful health promotion programs within Community Health Service enrolling around 120 clients annually in weekly walking, physical exercise and swimming activities.

As the most senior AHEO in the La Perouse Aboriginal Community Health Service she has been an effective guide and mentor to the development of effective health promotion skills in younger and/or emerging AHEOs in developing Programs of Chronic and Complex Care in Heart Disease, Lung Disease and Cancer, in Diabetes and in Vascular Health over the past decade.

#### Personal development, including academic and/or formal recognised education

Colleen has attained and maintained her Fitness Australia registration as a Group Fitness Instructor and this year was awarded a Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Community Care) by the Aboriginal Health College.

#### Professional development (across the role in the workplace)

Colleen has been a role model and mentor for other Aboriginal Health Workers. She supports and encourages innovation and learning. Her years of experience in the health system, her intimate knowledge of the local community and her great rapport with people enable those who work beside her to develop their talents.

She has displayed a willingness to adapt to a rapidly changing work environment, most recently converting her clinical records to a full electronic record in CHIME. She participates in problem solving, and is active in meetings. This means that her valuable inputs, and her sophisticated insights, are put to good use.

Colleen also undertakes direct work-related activities in her own time – she generates ideas and plans, she prepares projects and programs.

In order that she maintains her fitness registration, she must develop and implement a range of innovative activities for her participants. These have from time to time been benchmarked.

### Engagement with the community (negotiation, time, commitment)

Colleen's engagement with the community is most manifest in her availability "around the clock" to provide support, information and guidance to her community members, as they experience sickness, grief and the challenges of the system. She also maintains a clear and honest voice for her community, providing feedback, negative and positive, about health matters.

Colleen is clearly well-known and she is also a respected elder. Her views are sought, her presence is always requested and it is often Colleen's information that is quoted by the community.

Colleen is a regular longstanding member of the Healthlink Advisory Committee, Home Care & HACC working parties and committees, and works collaboratively on projects with local Councils.

One of Colleen's key roles is to work beside various clinicians and therapists from Community Health, providing support to individuals and their families. She also provides immense support and information to members of her community who must enter Prince of Wales Hospital, visiting and supporting the planning for their discharge.

### Engagement with the community 'beyond the role' (negotiation, time, commitment)

It seems clear that Colleen does not differentiate between being on the job and not. She participates in the school and sports life of her grandchildren, and makes contributions to these components of the community's development.

She supports opportunities for young people seeking work in Health, as well as elsewhere. She attends weekend events for the research project (see below) and is active in local community planning.

Colleen makes herself available after hours for transport and also to make sure people can collect medications or necessary equipment. She plays a significant part in monitoring & supporting the activities and whereabouts of many of the young people in her neighbourhood, providing gentle guidance for their safety and well-being.

### Involvement in other programs (programs for which the individual is not responsible)

During 2008 to 2009 Colleen has made a major commitment to the La Perouse component of the Koori Growing Old Well Study (KGOWS) as part of her dedication to the overall health and welfare of the extended La Perouse Community. This is a NHMRC study addressing key questions about Aboriginal health and ageing with funding from 2008 through 2010. The study aims to learn about things that happen to people and affect the way they age across the life cycle by collecting information from around 450 Aboriginal people aged 45 years and over from La Perouse-Randwick-Botany, which will include all community members aged 60 years (>220 people) and over who consent to participate, as well as a random sample of mid-life participants 45 to 59 years.

Colleen has provided extensive help to the KGOWS research group with the first stage of the project, which is to identify a potential sample of representative Aboriginal people within the study community, aged 45 and over, who may consent to participate in the research. Colleen has liaised with the research team and community organisations to identify and

collate local lists and contact details of Aboriginal people in the specified age cohort who reside in the Randwick and Botany Local Government Areas (LGA). Colleen has also assisted in identifying Aboriginal people living in the same LGAs, 40-44 years of age, who will be asked to take part in our pilot study.

Also in this role Colleen has raised awareness and promoted the Koori Growing Old Well Study in the La Perouse community, and helped gain people's interest in wanting to participate in the study. In addition, Colleen has assisted in the recruitment process of Aboriginal research assistants to work on the study. She has notified potential people within the Aboriginal La Perouse community that a research position is available, provided information about the study and the job position, and has put people interested in the position in contact with the research team.