

Summary Report

Review of the NSW Health Aboriginal Environmental Health Officer Training Program



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SECTION 1

Overview

This report provides an overview of the outcomes and recommendations of the external Review of the Aboriginal Environmental Health Officer Training Program, undertaken by RPR Consulting in March 2009.

It brings together the consultant's:

- Description of the program
- The review findings
- Options and recommendations for future program delivery.

SECTION 2

Background

Aboriginal people are disproportionately under represented in the environmental health workforce across NSW and Australia, and even more so at a professional level. Prior to 1997, there were no Aboriginal people employed in the NSW Health environmental health sector.

In response to this, the NSW Department of Health established the Aboriginal Environmental Health Officer (AEHO) Training Program in 1997. Since then NSW Health, through the Aboriginal Environmental Health Unit (AEHU) has run the AEHO Training Program to provide university study and workplace support for Aboriginal people to become Environmental Health Officers (EHOs). At the time of the review, eight trainees had graduated from the program with a degree in environmental health.

NSW Health (with some assistance from the Australian Government in the early years of the program) has funded both the workplace and university elements of the program. The Area Health Services (Area Health Services) receive funding to employ and support the trainees over a six-year period, and are then committed to provide two years employment as an EHO once the trainee has graduated.

The training program is the only one of its type operating across Australia. It contributes to NSW Health's commitment to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the workforce and assists in increasing the numbers of EHOs in a field where there are significant staff shortages nationally, and particularly in rural NSW.

The program is included as a strategy in the NSW Aboriginal Health Strategic Plan (1999), and is consistent with the NSW Health Aboriginal Employment Strategy. It is also directly linked to the National Environmental Health Strategy (2007–2012) priority to address the lack of effective environmental health infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In the 10 years since the program began, the university environment has changed significantly, affecting the time required to complete the degree and the resources available to support the program.

Whilst there have been ongoing quality improvements in the program, there had not been a formal review. In November 2008, RPR Consulting was contracted to undertake an independent review of the program.

A Reference Group was set up to assist the AEHU with the review. It comprised the Manager, Aboriginal Workforce Development (NSW Health); a graduate of the program currently employed as an EHO by NSW Health; a representative of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC); as well as the Manager of the AEHU and the AEHO Training Program; the Director, Environmental Health Branch; the Director, Centre for Aboriginal Health; and the Manager, Centre for Population Health Sydney West Area Health Service.

The purpose of this review was to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the AEHO Training Program
- Identify processes and strategies to maximise the benefits of the program and ensure its long term sustainability.

The review was intended to examine:

- Workplace issues
- Program management and implementation
- Tertiary education elements of the program.

SECTION 3

Project scope

NSW Health, through a tendering process in October 2008, sought submissions to undertake an external Review of the Aboriginal Environmental Health Officer Training Program. It specified the Review was to assess and make recommendations on the following:

3.1 Current issues

- The process of assessing and allocating placements to the Area Health Services
- The selection and recruitment of AEHO Training Program candidates by Area Health Services
- The contractual and financial arrangements between Area Health Services and NSW Health
- The employment conditions and working arrangements between Area Health Services and Trainees
- The working relationship between the tertiary institutions, Area Health Services and the Department
- Factors that could improve recruitment, retention and success of trainees
- Any demographic trends of trainees and graduates including:
 - Number of trainees appointed per year
 - The distribution of trainees across NSW (rural/urban)
 - Percentage of all trainees that graduate
 - Percentage of all trainees to graduate within six years
- The development and monitoring of workplace competencies
- Work supervision structures and annual work planning
- The support mechanisms made available to trainees and graduates by the Area Health Service, NSW Health and the tertiary institutions
- The structures for program planning, policy development and implementation
- How the Program has contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the NSW Health Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES)
- Identify the impacts/outcomes of employing Aboriginal EHOs.

3.2 Future issues

- Assess the costs and benefits of continuing and expanding the program
- Explore other funding opportunities including cadetships and possible funding models including partnerships with Area Health Services and other potential partners such as local government and the Australian Government
- Consider options for creating a more flexible environmental health workforce (including career and training pathways).

SECTION 4

Methodology

The Reference group agreed with the Consultants to divide the review process into two stages in order to accommodate the time frames set for the review, which spanned the December/January holiday period.

4.1 Stage 1

Stage one focused on research and consultation with key stakeholders and examined how well the program had operated and what could be improved. This involved:

- A briefing meeting with the Director of Aboriginal Health, and the Manager and part-time Project Officer of the AEHU
- A meeting with the Reference Group for the review
- Site visits to all Area Health Services where there are current trainees or graduates – interviews included trainees, graduates, supervisors, and Public Health Unit (PHU) Directors
- Phone interviews with graduates who had left NSW Health and trainees who did not complete the program (where they could be contacted)
- Review of documentation including: financial information, policy and program documentation, minutes, contractual agreements, University course outlines
- A face-to-face interview with the Manager and staff of the AEHU
- A face-to-face interview with the staff from the University of Western Sydney (UWS) involved with the program, including the Head of the Environmental Health Program (and Course Coordinator), the Student Liaison Officer, and the Indigenous Academic Coordinator.

4.2 Stage 2

Stage two mostly focused on exploring long-term sustainability of the program, particularly in looking at other training models and potential funding and partnerships. It involved:

- Interviews with other parts of NSW Health, local government stakeholders and other training institutions
- An internet search of other relevant program models and funding sources.

SECTION 5

Description of the program

At the time of the Review, the program had a cohort of five students who were employed on a full-time basis in Public Health Units (PHUs), within Area Health Services.

Trainee positions are allocated through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process, which canvasses the current commitment to Aboriginal health and capacity to provide adequate supervision and a well-rounded exposure to environmental health practice. Recruitment is done at an Area Health Service level, using standardised information about the program provided by the AEHU.

Trainees undertake a six year Bachelor of Applied Science (Environmental Health) degree by distance learning through the University of Western Sydney (UWS), Richmond campus. They are entitled to study leave and leave to participate in compulsory residential schools as required. Graduates of the degree course are guaranteed full-time employment as a qualified EHO in the Area Health Service for an additional two years, post-completion.

An experienced EHO in each PHU supervises and guides the workplace training and professional development of the trainees. While at the PHUs, trainees have the opportunity to actively participate in a wide range of environmental health issues, and to take a leading role in driving some public health projects.

New trainees are only recruited into the program when a current trainee exits the program, either as a graduate, because of course failure, or voluntarily.

5.1 Program management and administration

The AEHO Training Program is managed by the Aboriginal Environmental Health Unit (AEHU) in the Environmental Health Branch of NSW Health.

While individual trainees in the AEHO Training Program are managed, supervised and supported within their local PHU, the AEHU is responsible for:

- Developing policies, guidelines, and resources to support the program
- Allocation of traineeships to Area Health Services and assisting in selection processes
- Monitoring and reviewing academic performance of trainees and ensuring that work placements are working as intended
- Internal review of the program and development of quality improvement processes
- Administering program funding to the Area Health Services and University
- Convening the Aboriginal Environmental Health Network.

A Course Review Panel has been established to develop a policy framework for the program. Its role includes assessment of EOIs, and monitoring of trainees' progress, so that any difficulties that arise can be managed early and positively.

5.2 Current program funding

The AEHU is fully funded by NSW Health, although Commonwealth funding was also provided up until 2001.

The AEHU is responsible for costs related to the trainees' employment and study up until the time the trainee graduates, including their salary plus on-costs, course fees, textbooks, travel and accommodation. The Area Health Service is responsible for the administration and supervision costs associated with the traineeship and employment of the graduate for a minimum period of two years post graduation as an EHO under appropriate award conditions.

Review findings – program outcomes

Aboriginality in the NSW Health environmental health workforce has increased from 0 to 17%. All Aboriginal EHOs currently working for NSW Health received their training through this program.

This is the first independent review of the program. It assesses the program's strengths, identifies areas for improvement and explores options for ensuring the program's future sustainability.

A total of 24 trainees (seven women and 17 men) have participated in the program. Eight trainees have graduated to become fully qualified EHOs.

At the time of this review, four of the eight program graduates were employed within NSW Health as EHOs, including one in a Senior EHO position. However, only two are in permanent positions. Also, there are presently five trainees employed in the program. This represents over 17% (nine out of 51) of the environmental health workforce of NSW Health. This is particularly significant because at the commencement of the program, there were no Aboriginal people working in environmental health and the overall percentage of Aboriginal people in the health workforce in NSW is only 1.6%.

In addition, one graduate has been accepted into a Graduate Health Management Trainee Program and one went on to complete a Master of Applied Epidemiology.

Three graduates are employed in local government, of which two are working as EHOs.

The completion rate of 42% (eight of 19 trainees) over the life of the AEHO Training Program is comparable to the overall completion rate for all Indigenous students undertaking tertiary education. It is important to note that the completion rate has improved considerably in recent years, and only one trainee has exited the program prematurely since 2004.

6.1 Addressing Aboriginal Environmental Health issues

All Area Health Services reported that having a trainee has contributed to a greater focus on work around Aboriginal environmental health issues. This has resulted in important projects such as annual environmental health audits in all discrete communities in one Area Health Service and greater engagement of local government as a partner in this work.

The trainee program is reported to have also strengthened the linkages between the Public Health Unit and Aboriginal Health in the Area Health Service.

6.2 Barriers to completion of the program

Coping with the academic requirements of the traineeship has been one of the most challenging aspects of the program for many trainees, particularly those without a strong science and/or maths background. Family commitments and pressures, and poor or inadequate supervision arrangements within the Area Health Service have also impacted completion rates.

6.3 Quality improvement initiatives

Since its introduction, the Course Review Panel has given greater scrutiny to supervision arrangements in EOLs. The AEHU has also developed an Environmental Health Officer Training Program Manual, a Competency Guide and work planning template linked with it, in order to better clarify expectations and make the on the job component more supportive of trainees.

Interventions around family support have been more difficult to implement. The AEHU, UWS, and the PHU were all cognisant of these pressures and had made efforts to support trainees and provide maximum flexibility for their circumstances. Trainees have often been reluctant to admit they need support and few have sought assistance such as counselling.

6.4 Mentoring and peer support

All trainees and graduates cited the peer support they have received from others in the program as one of its greatest strengths. Some graduates have been designated as “mentors” to trainees, and other trainees have been assigned mentors such as staff in Aboriginal Health within the PHU. However, most mentoring relationships have been “informal and ad hoc”, with neither party being clear about what was expected.

6.5 Program management and administration

Both trainees (including graduates) and Area Health Service staff spoke highly of the support provided by the current staff of the AEHU. The Manager of the AEHU takes a very hands-on role in the program, is well known and has positive relationships with key stakeholders.

There were a few criticisms from some early program participants, but it appears that the AEHU team has learned from these early experiences and improved the program to address most issues. Most PHU Directors were satisfied with the arrangements with the AEHU for financial management and administration, although delays on occasion were reported.

6.6 Program costs

Since the inception of the program, costs per trainee have increased as wages and university fees have gone up. The total program expenditure by the AEHU for the 2007–2008 financial year was approximately \$385,000 plus approximately \$21,800 in course fees. This represented an average cost of approximately \$68,000 per trainee per year. This means that, according to the most recent figures, the cost of putting a trainee through the six-year program was about \$434,000 (excluding employment costs to Area Health Services for the two years post-completion of the degree).

6.7 University component of the program

UWS is the only university in NSW which provides a degree course accredited by the national peak professional body, Environmental Health Australia (EHA). It is also the only university course in Australia which is available to students externally. Bachelor Institute in the NT, while not a university, can also provide an accredited degree course externally to Indigenous students.

Originally, the course was offered over four years with two-week workshops each semester, which were attended by all program participants. There was also a dedicated Research Unit at UWS, with a full-time Research Officer responsible for coordinating delivery of the Indigenous course. These additional supports ceased when Commonwealth funding ceased.

Trainees who had experienced the program before and after this point noted a marked change in the academic support available. From 2004 until 2007, the Head of the Environmental Health Program at UWS attempted to provide academic support, but this was limited by workload. In 2007, the University employed an academic advisor for the program one day a week.

Due to higher education cuts, the course was restructured in 2001/02 resulting in part-time students requiring six years to complete. In particular, there is now little flexibility for trainees around when subjects are available externally. It is possible to enrol in subjects delivered internally, but this is only an option for those students living in or near Sydney.

The six-year duration of the current program was reported as problematic by most trainees/graduates. Issues cited were: difficulty in maintaining enthusiasm, pressure on families and personal relationships, difficulty of living on a trainee wage, and the temptation to take better paying jobs being offered. While completing the course more quickly will lead to a higher wage rate, the lack of guaranteed employment beyond two more years may be a disincentive to early completion.¹

According to UWS, up to 50% of the current degree can be done at other Universities. However, only two graduate/trainees interviewed had undertaken subjects at another university and received credit for it within the UWS degree.

6.8 Clarification about the intent of the program

A key matter for consideration was that the Program documentation is not explicit about what other outcomes are intended beyond employing Aboriginal people as professional environmental health officers.

¹ Since the Review was completed, UWS has clarified that the degree can be completed in a shorter period of time, if so desired.

6.9 Improving Aboriginal health

In some Area Health Services, there has been tension about the extent that the trainee should focus on work directed at improving Aboriginal health. The AEHU is clear that the program is intended to train Aboriginal people as EHOs, who may or may not choose to focus their career on Indigenous environmental health. However, considering the high cost of the program, there is a strong rationale for linking the investment to better Aboriginal health outcomes, as well as the success of individual Aboriginal people.

6.10 Creating an environmental health workforce

Another area of tension has been around how success of trainees is measured, in relation to exit points. Some stakeholders viewed continuing to work in Health, even if it is in a role external to environmental health, is a significant indicator of success as it means the individual is meaningfully employed and the health system benefits. Others advocated for encouraging post-graduate study, particularly to move into management positions. Another view was that the focus should be on ensuring graduates remain in environmental health, even if in local government, as it will contribute to improved environmental health outcomes.

6.11 Maximising the investment

Lack of permanency of employment in the program was the most pressing area for improvement cited by the great majority of stakeholders. Much of this concern centres on the needs of individual trainees and acknowledgement of their contributions. While completely valid, this view should be balanced with the generosity of the program in the financial and other support provided (compared to others), and the fact that trainees are advised of the limitation from the outset.

Nonetheless, it is the view of the Consultants that failing to retain highly skilled and successful staff is poor and extremely costly organisational management. The fact that these staff are also Aboriginal, and NSW Health has not been able to meet the *minimum* targets set for Aboriginal employment, makes this finding even more concerning. Naturally some graduates will choose to leave NSW Health, but far greater priority within the Department needs to be given to retaining them.

As the largest employer of EHOs, local government is the main competitor with Health for skilled staff. Even where this occurs, there is scope to better capitalise on the investment that Health has made. This could occur through promotion of graduates to local government and deliberate planning of pathways. For example, Health might offer local government the opportunity to take on the graduate for a year post-completion. This could be a top-up to the two years funded by the Area Health Service, funded by local government; or alternatively could be funded by Health with a proviso that an Aboriginal environmental health project be undertaken during this time. With either option, the graduate EHO benefits from longer employment and greater exposure to future employment prospects.

6.12 Articulating a program logic

It will be critical for NSW Health to be absolutely clear about why this program exists, before decisions can be made about the options proposed for the future. Development of a logic model for the program could assist this process. Articulation of the program logic will help to ensure that everyone involved in the program has the same understanding and expectations of what they are working towards, and where priority of effort should go. It can also help to guard against program drift, which often occurs when key personnel change and programs are not well documented.

The future: program delivery

The focus on developing options for the future has considered how the length of the program could be shortened and the costs might be reduced or shared. This has been done in the context of the three possible providers of environmental health qualifications to Indigenous students located anywhere in NSW: UWS, Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, and Registered Training Organisations (TAFE or private). This has resulted in four options for consideration:

1. Give trainees the option to complete the course between three and six years part-time – benefits are that it is flexible and able to accommodate those trainees who cannot carry a heavy academic load as well as trainees who can and want to finish quicker; could include an incentive of additional year(s) of paid employment to early graduates; would reduce costs overall to the AEHU.
2. Convert the program into a cadetship program under the Commonwealth funded National Indigenous Cadetship Project (NICP), but with the additional program support infrastructure that currently exists. The successful NSW Health Aboriginal Nursing Cadetship Program uses this model.
3. Pursue the cadetship option, but NSW Health could opt to provide supplementary financial assistance to cadets during the study period to cover additional costs such as travel, HECS, and a top-up of income support during the study period.

This would overcome the risk of the previous option of difficulty in engaging mature aged cadets with families to support.

4. Continue the program as it is now – not ideal due to duration and high cost.

Any of these options could potentially be done through UWS, through the Bachelor Institute, and/or through a VET pathway, articulating to a degree.

7.1 Bachelor Institute

The main difference between the UWS course and the Bachelor course is that Bachelor runs a block release program where Indigenous students studying the same course are on campus at the same time. Also, as an Indigenous Institute, Bachelor is likely to provide a more culturally supportive learning environment and greater opportunities for peer support.

While students' travel and accommodation costs would be higher, there is potential for additional assistance from the Commonwealth to cover these costs under the cadetship program (NICP).

7.2 An articulated Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathway

The review has canvassed the possibility of introducing an articulated VET qualification to university degree pathway to the program. The common view was that the role of an EHO in NSW Health requires a Bachelor degree and this is further enshrined in the current Award. The lower graded Indigenous Environmental Health Workers that are funded in some other states do not exist within NSW Health. Local government positions are available, however, and may be linked to further education and training.

The Consultants have concluded that at this stage, the VET pathways do not fit well within the immediate AEHO Training Program objectives. It would merely create a longer and more circuitous pathway to employment in NSW as no positions currently exist which require the Certificate or Diploma level skills alone. However, this is an area which the AEHU in collaboration with Aboriginal Health Branch should give further consideration to, within the bigger

picture of planning to achieve better health outcomes in Aboriginal communities, particularly in rural and remote communities.

7.3 Potential for partnerships and/or co-funding

The review has considered the potential for the AEHU to attract other funding partners to the program. The Commonwealth government offers the most promising opportunity, via the NICP. There could also be opportunities flowing out of the latest Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreement focusing on closing the gap in health status of Indigenous Australians, and the redevelopment of the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP).

Local government, which has traditionally offered traineeship opportunities in environmental health, appears to provide untapped opportunities for the program to partner to support development of Aboriginal Environmental Health Officers. It may be possible to gain some additional funding to help develop such partnerships from the Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program², administered through the NSW Department of Education and Training. This is likely to need to be done at a local level between Area Health Services and their local councils, but could be promoted centrally through the Local Government and Shires Associations (LGSA).

In order to engage other parts of Health, work will need to be done at a strategic level to promote the value of this program. The most likely opportunities exist in relation to Aboriginal Health, and the NSW Health Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy. While it may not be possible to get much further buy-in around Environmental Health Officers, there is certainly scope for using the model to target employment of Aboriginal people in other sectors of health. There is also scope for encouraging AEHO Training Program graduates to undertake post-graduate studies and potentially moving into more senior management positions in health or other government departments. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Housing Office might support such initiatives.

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council's \$30 million Education Endowment Fund can also provide one-off scholarships of up to \$10,000 to learning institutions such as UWS for individual trainees in the program to fund fees, textbooks, etc.

7.4 Overall conclusion

The AEHO Training Program has been found to be a successful strategy for increasing the number of Aboriginal people in the environmental health workforce. Graduates are highly skilled and sought after professionals. A critical issue for NSW Health is better consideration of ways to retain these graduates, or at least to assist them in developing career pathways which will enhance Aboriginal health outcomes.

The program has also increased the focus of the work of Area Health Services on environmental health in Aboriginal communities. Stakeholders have been almost universally positive about the value of the program and the need for it to continue and expand to include more trainees.

The AEHO Training Program is however, relatively expensive compared to programs such as the Nursing Cadetship Program, and has had almost the same rate of success in relation to trainees/cadets completing the programs. Like the Nursing Cadetship Program, being embedded within the sector appears to have given the AEHO Training Program credibility and provided trainees with a well-grounded understanding of their career choice. There is scope for minor refinements of the AEHO Training Program to better resource and support trainees, such as providing potential applicants at the outset with more in-depth information about what a career in environmental health means, as well as the level of personal commitment that will be required to successfully complete the traineeship.

There are also a range of possibilities for maximising the potential of the program by attracting other funding sources and restructuring how it is delivered to open up more positions for trainees in the future. It provides a good model for other parts of Health and other NSW government departments to increase Aboriginal workforce participation.

² Program guidelines are provided at https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/eas/acomm/elsa/elsagde09_10.pdf

Recommendations

8.1 Recommendation 1

That the AEHO Training Program be continued, and refined to maximise training opportunities for Aboriginal people.

8.2 Recommendation 2

That a logic model for the AEHO Training Program be developed to provide clarity to all stakeholders about the intended outcomes of the program, and so that appropriate strategies to meet these outcomes can be adopted. (Attachment A: Proposed program logic map, prepared by the Consultant).

The process of development would benefit from involvement of key stakeholders from across Health as well as potential partner agencies (DECC, DAA, AHO, LGA).

8.3 Recommendation 3

That every effort be made to retain AEHO Training Program graduates within NSW Health. This may include strategies such as:

- Giving priority to Area Health Services where there is greater likelihood of ongoing employment
- Ensuring that all trainees have a career pathways plan that includes rotations within other parts of the Public Health Unit, Aboriginal Health, health promotion etc.

8.4 Recommendation 4

That opportunities to place graduates in local government, in a partnership arrangement be explored.

8.5 Recommendation 5

That opportunities for increased cost sharing between the AEHU and Area Health Services be explored.

8.6 Recommendation 6

That the AEHU develop a more comprehensive information package/process for potential trainee applicants, explaining the program as well as what a career in environmental health might mean. This could include a DVD featuring some of the graduates relating their own stories to highlight key issues.

8.7 Recommendation 7

That orientation of new trainees is extended to include:

- A session for partners and children of trainees, outlining the personal support available during the traineeship and workshopping coping strategies
- Cultural awareness/competency training which involves both trainees and their immediate supervisors
- An overview of the Competency Guide and how to use it for both trainees and their immediate supervisors, in order to ensure that achievement of competencies is integrated into work plans, work experience placements, final year projects, and any additional training provided.

8.8 Recommendation 8

That the AEHU develop a more formal approach to mentoring within the program, to include joint training of mentors and mentees. The program being run for the DPC should be considered as an option.

8.9 Recommendation 9

That a training program for supervisors be developed, tailored to the AEHO Training Program. All supervisors should be offered access to this training, particularly those who are new to the program.

8.10 Recommendation 10

That program guidelines set benchmarks for the amount and types of work experience placements that trainees should have with agencies with related responsibilities for environmental health. This should be formalised in the work plan and linked to achievement of competencies.

8.11 Recommendation 11

That the Course Review Panel be re-named and reconvened, to consider future directions recommended in this report and assist in providing advice in implementation. Terms of reference should include a strategic focus and membership should be reviewed to ensure that there is appropriate representation to take the program into its next stage of development.

8.12 Recommendation 12

That a part-time (.5 EFT) project officer be employed within the AEHU to assist in the next stage of development of the AEHO Training Program. This will require someone with experience and skills in working across agencies and developing partnerships.

8.13 Recommendation 13

That the program be offered flexibly – involving between three and six years academic study.

- Those recruits who are capable of undertaking full-time study should be offered a cadetship.
- Recruits who do not have the capacity or academic background to undertake full-time study should be offered a longer traineeship period.
- Trainees who complete the degree course in four years or less, should be guaranteed additional full-time employment at the Area Health Service (commensurate with the time saved in the course) as an incentive.
- Provision of additional financial support beyond the minimum should be considered for cadets.
- The AEHU should continue to provide the same degree of infrastructure support and coordination as currently exists within the program.

8.14 Recommendation 14

That trainees be offered the option of enrolling in either the UWS or the Bachelor Institute Course. This new arrangement should be carefully monitored to ensure that it runs smoothly and also to assess whether one option is really more desirable than the other for the program participants.

8.15 Recommendation 15

That the AEHU and UWS work together to find ways to improve access to the Academic Advisory support available to trainees.

8.16 Recommendation 16

That the AEHU, in collaboration with Aboriginal Health Branch, consider the potential to train Aboriginal people to work at a local level to focus on promoting improved environmental health.

8.17 Recommendation 17

That the AEHU keep abreast of proposed structural changes to the parameters of environmental health workforce nationally, and consider opportunities to support Aboriginal trainees in technician roles if this pathway develops as an option for real employment in the sector in NSW. This could be pursued in partnership with Aboriginal Land Councils as part of building environmental health capacity at a regional or local level.

Attachment A: Proposed program logic map

The diagram on the following page is essentially a flow chart that shows in very broad detail the resources that go into a program; the activity (processes) involved in, and outputs (services and/or products) produced by the program; and the short-term and long-term outcomes that are expected as a result of the program activity. It demonstrates the intended cause-and-effect relationships between these elements.

9.1 Theory of change

A key part of adopting a logic model for program planning and evaluation involves identifying the theory of change that the program is designed around. This means asking the question, what are the risk and protective factors that are impacting on the target group's ability to achieve the desired outcomes? The next step is asking the question – what do we know makes a difference in addressing these types of factors?

The theory of change that underpins the AEHO Training Program logic can be described as follows:

- a) Addressing environmental health factors in Aboriginal communities will lead to overall improvements in Aboriginal health and life expectancy (ultimate outcome)
- b) Improving environmental health requires engagement by environmental health professionals (intermediate outcome)
- c) Aboriginal environmental health officers are needed to help drive and mediate this process (immediate outcome from the activities of this program)
- d) Having Aboriginal EHOs within the sector increases the likelihood that agencies will engage with Aboriginal communities to address environmental health issues (immediate outcome from the activities of this program)

- e) In order to achieve c and d, a range of supports will be required to foster the development of qualified Aboriginal EHOs (outputs – or services/products)
- f) These outcomes can be further maximised by Health engaging other partners with a responsibility for environmental health in the program (additional outputs or services/products)
- g) There are then a range of activities (processes) that are required to deliver these outputs
- h) And finally, there are all of the resources – funding, staffing, infrastructure and policy (inputs) which are required to be able to undertake these activities – which ultimately lead to the outcomes.

Program Logic: Aboriginal Trainee Environment Health Officer Program

Situation statement: Aboriginal people have the poorest health outcomes and shortest life expectancy of any group in Australia. Environmental health determinants have been strongly identified in the research as a key factor in the equation.

Reach: Aboriginal communities in New South Wales.



