

Ngar-wu Wanyarra Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Conference

Presentation Title: Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancer outcomes, a collaborative programmatic approach through the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre Alliance

Presenter Bios:

Melissa Sheldon: Melissa Sheldon, is a Wamba Wamba woman recently relocated from Melbourne to Echuca (Yorta Yorta Country). She has lived with melanoma for over a decade, fortunate to ride the wave of new treatments including targeted cell therapy and immunotherapy. She has been in palliative care and learnt to walk and talk again, witnessing the disparities in health equity.

A consumer representative for the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC) Alliances strategic program plan, her involvement includes Health Equity, Personalised Care and Skilled Internship Program.

Kalinda is a Yawuru woman of Broome, born and living in Darwin, Australia. Kalinda has completed a Certificate III in Laboratory Techniques (Group Training NT), Bachelor of Biomedical Science (CDU), Master of Public Health (CDU) and a PhD in Cancer Epidemiology (Uni Syd). She is an early career researcher (ECR) and Scientia Lecturer at the Centre for Big Data Research in Health at UNSW and Research and Education Lead for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre Alliance. Dr Griffiths also holds honorary positions at the University of Melbourne and Menzies School of Health Research and is Deputy Editor for the Health Promotion Journal of Australia.

Abstract (300 words maximum)

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face challenges when accessing and engaging with cancer care services across the spectrum of illness, from early-stage disease to advanced disease. These challenges can often lead to less-than-optimal cancer care, and highlight the need for culturally sensitive, responsive and safe care services for Aboriginal people with cancer.

The VCCC Alliance is an alliance of 10 leading research, academic and clinical institutions, working collaboratively to effect transformative, system-level change and substantially improve outcomes for patients with cancer. The vision of the VCCC Alliance is to

- To save lives through the integration of cancer research, education and patient care.
- Through innovation and collaboration, the VCCC Alliance will drive the next generation of improvements in prevention, detection and cancer treatment.

The health equity program was introduced as part of the VCCC Alliance's current strategic plan 2021-2024. A key plank of the health equity program of the VCCC Alliance is improving cancer outcomes with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The program does this by supporting and integrating Aboriginal-led decision processes into all aspects of the VCCC Alliance's work. Using a framework of allyship, facilitation, and education, the

health equity program encourages the VCCC Alliance to seek new and collaborative ways of working with Aboriginal health researchers and community-controlled organisations working to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cancer.

This presentation will outline the collaborative and programmatic approach taken by the health equity program including:

- Advocacy and facilitation to promote Aboriginal-led decision making in cancer control
- Support of targeted projects to fill information and knowledge gaps,
- Benchmarking and consistency in health worker cultural safety training
- Advocacy against deficit language in health research
- Advocacy and support of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation-led work
- Research on the discrepancies between awarded funding and areas of need