

**51<sup>st</sup> AAG CONFERENCE**  
21 – 23 NOVEMBER 2018  
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

**2018 GARY ANDREWS INTERNATIONAL FELLOW**  
**SIR MICHAEL MARMOT**  
GLOBAL LEADER IN SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF AGEING

Director, Institute of Health Equity  
Dept of Epidemiology and Public Health  
University College London  
Immediate Past President of the World Medical Association

**ADVANCING NOT RETIRING:  
ACTIVE PLAYERS,  
A FAIR FUTURE**

**AAG**  
Australian Association of Gerontology

**Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) 51<sup>st</sup> National Conference, November 2018**

## ***Advancing not retiring: Active players, a fair future***

### **Conference communique:**

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ageing issues**

AAG's 51<sup>st</sup> national conference, held in Melbourne from 20-23 November 2018, once again included a strong focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ageing issues.

This area of focus was led by AAG's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Advisory Group (ATSIAAG). This group, chaired by Mr Graham Aitken from South Australia and Ms Roslyn Malay from the Kimberley, is made up entirely of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of AAG. The ATSIAAG guides all of AAG's work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, and reports directly to the AAG Board of Directors. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members make up more than 3.6% of AAG's growing membership of over 1300.

The ATSIAAG hosted a pre-conference workshop, with the primary topic: *Exploring appropriate aged care needs assessment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. The workshop was attended by over 50 participants, who discussed how access to aged care could be improved through appropriate assessment processes. Due to poorer health and premature ageing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need access to aged care services at a younger age. Yet despite this higher need, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are under-represented in aged care programs.

One barrier that has been identified is the current aged care assessment process, and workshop participants considered questions including: how could we work towards more trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care assessors across all parts of Australia? How could we work towards cultural competence in aged care assessment for non-Indigenous aged care assessors? Do we need more culturally appropriate assessment tools, or better uptake of the tools we already have – or both?

The workshop also provided a forum for the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Institute for Dementia Research to canvas work that is underway to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dementia Research Roadmap. Dementia is experienced at much higher rates, and with earlier onset in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities than amongst other Australians, yet there has been insufficient research focus in this area and there is limited guidance for practitioners. ATSIAAG workshop delegates considered the outcomes to date of the consultation process to develop the Dementia Research Roadmap, and provided valuable insights to guide the finalisation of the Roadmap.

A report from the ATSIAG workshop will be published in 2019.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ageing issues were also very much on the agenda in the main part of the AAG conference program. This commenced with the opening plenary session where the ATSIAG Executive presented on the work of the ATSIAG in 2018, including the outcomes of the ATSIAG workshop. The broader conference program included a myriad of presentations focusing on the wellbeing of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ranging from social connectedness, depression and connectedness issues, to dementia detection and care, the importance of stories and artwork for older people, and how to form partnerships and “walk together gently” in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ageing research.

Professor Sir Michael Marmot, a global lead in the social determinants of health, was the 2018 AAG Gary Andrews International Fellow, and presented at the conference on the social determinants of ageing. Professor Marmot has a strong interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and ageing, and during his visit to Australia visited the Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation and The Shed in Mt Drutt, NSW. The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) hosted a dinner in Melbourne for Professor Marmot and the ATSIAG Executive. Professor Marmot also attended and spoke at the ATSIAG Workshop.

“The joint dinner with Professor Marmot was a great event and we really thank VACCHO for hosting us,” said ATSIAG Co-Chair Graham Aitken. “Professor Marmot started the dialogue by discussing how early life trauma, including separation of children from family and community, has a huge impact on the life course including healthy ageing. The VACCHO delegates briefed us about very positive initiatives they have underway to keep children living safely with family and community, and Professor Marmot was really impressed with the work being done and with the calibre of the discussion.”

The ATSIAG held its annual Yarn Up at the conference, and Friends of ATSIAG – a new group made up of non-Indigenous AAG members who wish to support the ATSIAG’s work – also attended by invitation. The agenda was broad ranging and included discussion of the development of AAG’s first ever Reconciliation Action Plan, currently a work in progress.

“It’s always great to have a yarn towards the end of the conference, to find out from our colleagues how AAG can better address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ageing issues, and better meet the needs of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members,” said ATSIAG Executive Mark Elliott. “We always get good feedback, and this was no exception. There was a call for the ATSIAG to get out more and meet with Communities, and we’ll be seeing how we can respond to that.”

AAG’s next national conference will be held in Sydney from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019, and it is planned that a strong focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ageing issues will be a continuing theme.

“We really hope to see even more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates at our next AAG Conference,” said ATSIAG Co-Chair Roslyn Malay. “Our issues are really important, and these conferences give us opportunities to build momentum and get real action to improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience of ageing.”

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Date: 23 November 2018

More information about the conference and the Association, visit [www.aag.asn.au](http://www.aag.asn.au)