

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Remote Aged Care staff achieve best practice through life story learning**

In the strictly-regulated environment of Aged Care, taking the time to discover the lives clients led before requiring assistance often takes a back seat to ensuring the support provided complies with legislative requirements.

But putting a focus on learning about and recording the stories of clients in its remote Aged Care facilities is providing Roper Gulf Regional Council with best-practice results that are being recognised at a national level.

The Council delivers Aged Care services in seven remote Indigenous communities scattered across its 186,000 square kilometre Local Government Area, meaning the tyranny of distance is often assumed to be the biggest challenge for both staff and clients.

While isolation can play a part in the success or failure of service delivery, Community Services Regional Manager Annalisa Bowden explained that the simple act of getting to know clients was allowing the Council to overcome the hurdle of remoteness.

“The biggest challenge we face is not distance or isolation, it’s about failing to recognise the lives our clients lived in their younger years,” she said.

“Aged Care is not just providing a service, it’s about listening to their story – it goes beyond quality care.”

As part of the unique approach, staff are documenting every client’s story to provide key information about what they did in their working life, their family, and the cultural role they played and continue to play in their community.

After the Council passed a triennial Department of Health quality review following changes to service delivery requirements in the sector, Mrs Bowden and her team were invited to talk about their success at the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency’s Better Practice 2017 conference in Darwin in May.

On the back of this, Mrs Bowden then travelled to Canberra in June as part of a group that met with Federal Minister for Aged Care Ken Wyatt to discuss the changes and how the Council had tailored its service delivery model.

Mrs Bowden said the model facilitated a closer connection with clients, in addition to creating training and employment opportunities for local Indigenous staff.

“Our dedicated staff are building relationships, inspiring social change, empowering people and ultimately challenging the status quo when it comes to Aged Care,” she said.

“The client’s story is the most important thing you can provide your staff, and I think the positive outcomes Council has recorded recently prove this.”

Ngukurr-based Acting Aged Care Coordinator Kaylene Wurramarrba, who oversees the delivery of the program in the remote community, agreed with Mrs Bowden’s assessment.

“We have to get to know these old people to care for them well,” she said.

“To me and to staff, it is good to get these histories so they can still be somebody.

“It’s about respect and letting them know we won’t forget about them just because they are old now.”

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