Impact Report: **August 2023**

During August, we put a sustained focus on the health implications of a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament. Of 63 articles published this month, 11 articles were about the Voice. These included pieces from Pat Turner, Karl Briscoe and June Oscar, Donna Ah Chee, Pat Anderson, and the Lowitja Institute.

A highlight was our #CroakeyLIVE webinar on #DigitalNationBuilding, held on 14 August. It provided a platform for health-focused discussions about our current digital communications environment, which is harmful, unreliable and dominated by toxic Big Tech corporations like X/Twitter and Meta’s Facebook.

One outcome was a set of **suggested principles** to guide the development of a safer digital communications environment. The first principle states:

> “Digital platforms/communications infrastructure is vital for the health and wellbeing of people, communities, Country and the planet. In an era of escalating crises and emergencies, including climate disruption, it should be regarded as essential infrastructure that must be accessible and available for all, noting its importance in emergency communications in particular.”

We also addressed related concerns in Croakey Health Media’s **submission** to a consultation on planned Federal Government legislation to empower the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to hold digital platforms to account for harmful misinformation and disinformation online. We highlighted the importance of a whole-of-government response and whole-of-community strategy for envisioning a safe, reliable and relevant news and information system. Also read about the submission by Professor Bronwyn Fredericks, ‘**When tackling misinformation and disinformation, Indigenous peoples’ perspectives and representation are vital**’.

Many of our articles in August documented the growing impacts of climate disruption, while Jennifer Doggett reported from a protest in Canberra where health and medical leaders sounded a loud alarm about the harms of gas and fracking developments in the Northern Territory. We continued **our series** reporting on submissions to the National Health and Climate Strategy consultation.

During August, we also investigated the Department of Health and Aged Care’s spending on consultants, with other prominent topics including ongoing concerns about COVID, the Pharmacy Guild’s scare campaign against over 60-day prescribing reforms, regulation of artificial intelligence in healthcare, and questions about the Medical Research Future Fund. The Croakey Conference News Service previewed the **Greening the Healthcare Sector Forum**; we encourage you to follow this **Twitter list** of participants.

We were pleased to see that 254 MPs (or their staffers) from federal, state and territory parliaments opened the Croakey News bulletin during August – including a number of health ministers.
During August we also paid our respects and shared many warm tributes to two women who are sadly missed: human rights lawyer and social justice warrior Sophie Trevitt, and epidemiologist Professor Emeritus Mary-Louise McLaws AO.

For Croakey Health Media, August marked an auspicious milestone: five years since registering as a member-based company limited by guarantee on 24 August, 2018, after evolving since 2007 as an independent journalism project.

As we celebrated our early years, and thanked everyone who has supported our growth and development and engaged with us along the way, we also shared some birthday wishes. As we reported in August, the situation for public interest journalism remains perilous. According to the Public Interest Journalism Initiative, Australia has 148 fewer news outlets than in January 2019, with 169 new outlets opening and 317 closing since then.

If you or your organisation has valued our work over the past five years - perhaps used it in teaching or advocacy or research - then here are some ideas for how you could support us going forward. Warm thanks to all those individuals and organisations who support our work; we couldn't do it without you!

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Social Media Impressions

We record our social media analytics using Buffer. The figures below are for total impressions across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. See our latest readership figures here.

**This month:** 370,558 impressions  |  **This year:** 4,152,319 impressions
‘Make every moment count’

**Week ending 3 August:** Amid escalating climate emergencies, ongoing health inequalities and the growing threat of nuclear war, we are reminded this week of the preciousness of life and the urgent need to act fast and smart to set things right.

As the moving tributes to human rights lawyer Sophie Trevitt remind us, kindness and compassion also make a world of difference in times like these.

This week’s bulletin also highlights the diminished capacity of the public service for addressing the challenges we face, as reported by Charles Maskell-Knight and Jennifer Doggett.

We also showcase communities working for change, whether for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament or in developing resources on long COVID for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Don’t miss NSW MLC Emily Suvaal’s compelling story, highlighting the value of electing politicians with lived experience of the health system.

Professor Peter Sainsbury was taken aback when visiting Cairns recently to see a billboard promoting the use of coal royalties to fund expansion of the Cairns Hospital. Read about what happened next.

Consumer groups and the Australian Healthcare & Hospitals Association have plenty to say about the National Health and Climate Strategy consultation. We are keen to hear your thoughts on Croakey’s submission too.

Meanwhile, a coalition of health, consumer and medical groups is fighting back against a Pharmacy Guild campaign to stop extended prescribing.

Stay tuned for the launch of Croakey’s Voice portal. We hope you will find it a valuable resource.

To join our discussion on #DigitalNationBuilding on 14 August, register [here](https://www.croakey.org/impact-and-readership/).

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**Charles Maskell-Knight** @CharlesAndrewMK  - Aug 2
Health groups urge Opposition and Greens to ignore scare campaign over 50-day prescribing reforms via @CroakeyNews

croakey.org
Health groups urge Opposition and Greens to ignore scare campaign ...
Jennifer Doggett writes: Health Minister Mark Butler has urged Opposition Leader Peter Dutton to reconsider the Coalition’s ...

**Megan Williams** @MegBastard  - Jul 31
National Health and Climate Strategy consultation: Key points for public health by Croakey croakey.org/for-effective-… @CroakeyNews @MelissaSweetDr #ClimateActionNow

croakey.org
For effective climate action, we need to address the unsafe news and ...
Public education campaigns to inform communities about the health impacts of climate change and the importance of mitigation and...

**Australian Pain Soc** @AustPainSoc  - Aug 1
A fully effective safety & quality regulator is essential to ensuring that the aged care sector is delivering safe, high quality care. The capability review reveals that a lot of work is needed before the regulator can be considered effective. ow.ly/d4f5Op69t1
#MgedCare

croakey.org
Chasms not gaps – the capability review of the Aged Care Quality and...
Last week, the Minister for Aged Care, Anika Wells, released the Independent Capability Review of the Aged Care Quality and

**MSF Australia and New Zealand** @MSFAustralia  - Aug 2
MSF teams worldwide have highlighted the stark realities of #COVID19’s impact on access to medical drugs and supplies, exposing glaring inequalities. @MelissaScharwey calls for fair global health regulation in the pandemic treaty. bit.ly/3Q5sICv via @CroakeyNews

croakey.org
The pandemic treaty must regulate global health fairly
The World Health Organization is currently undertaking two processes aiming at improving prevention, preparation and response to future...
"I am feeling pretty overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the climate disasters that are happening every day. Key message to remember as we consider our response: Fast action will limit this damage."

Cam Walker

Source

From the archives: November 2021

Housing affordability – is it really just about economics and supply?

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

Editor: Linda Doherty
Author: Sienna Crabbmor

https://www.croakey.org/impact-readership/
Read this interview (paywall) with Croakey Health Media member Dr Summer May Finlay.

healthservicesdaily.com.au
The third degree with Dr Summer May Finlay | Health Services Daily
Public health, the Voice to parliament and why Dr Summer May Findlay prefers a film's director's cut.
Young people leading the way

Week ending 10 August: “We are not the leaders of tomorrow. Instead we are the leaders of today.” This was a message from Indigenous teens at the recent Garma Festival, urging older generations to vote Yes.

The leadership of young people is also recognised this week with International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, which celebrates ‘Indigenous youth as agents of change for self-determination’.

In this week’s bulletin, we also celebrate National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day, held recently with the inspiring theme, ‘Little Voices, Loud Futures’.

Health professionals are fighting to protect those futures. As governments continue supporting fossil fuels, even in the era of “global boiling”, we report on a landmark protest in Canberra. “Our children need a safe climate,” said one of the signs.

Our contributors also highlight the importance of breastfeeding for the health of people and planet, share updates from prevention researchers, and investigate the latest on Rheumatic Heart Disease.

The #ICYMI column urges an end to homelessness, while Alison Barrett shares news from the Yalu Aboriginal Corporation, a Yolngu organisation that empowers families and provides holistic support to create positive change. The child is at the centre of everything they do - Yalu means nurturing.

The Health Wrap reports on the climate crisis in the USA, brings the latest on long COVID, and reveals alarming statistics on lead levels affecting children.

Charles Maskell-Knight works up a script for the political satire Utopia, based on aged care consultations.

Please visit our new portal compiling health-related reading, statements and resources on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament, and share the link.

Amid concerns about ABC closing its @ABCemergency Twitter account, join us for an online discussion about #DigitalNationBuilding, from 5pm AEST on Monday, 14 August. Register here.
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Critical communications

Week ending 17 August: So far, more than 100 deaths have been reported from the Maui wildfires in Hawaii, although hundreds more people are missing and the toll is expected to continue climbing.

When Nobel Laureate Professor Peter Doherty saw the devastating ‘before and after’ satellite images of the town of Lahaina, he was characteristically to the point.

“This grim reality, and what has happened across the northern hemisphere in 2023 should now be on the mind of every policy maker in every country. The warnings have been there for decades,” he tweeted.

Similar concerns echo through many of our stories this week. As Roland Sapsford from the Climate and Health Alliance said: “Climate change is knocking at our door, and we need to act urgently with everything we have”.

We also bring stories of communities and health services that are stepping up. Don’t miss the Croakey Conference News Service preview of the Greening the Healthcare Sector Forum - and for more news, follow this hashtag #GreenHealthForum23.

Also check out nine key recommendations for the National Health and Climate Strategy that have been put forward by the Lowitja Institute.

Meanwhile, the case for a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament is being strongly made on health grounds.

An article in the BMJ says the Voice “will enable multiple pathways to improve health and wellbeing”, while Pat Turner, CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, describes the referendum as “the most important vote of our collective lifetimes”.

Senior Aboriginal academic Professor Bronwyn Fredericks calls for the online safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be addressed much more explicitly as part of legislative efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation.

In her submission to a federal consultation on plans to give the Australian Communications and Media Authority greater powers to tackle misinformation and disinformation, Fredericks calls for active enforcement of penalties for digital platforms that spread misinformation and disinformation.

Croakey readers have until 20 August to make a submission to the consultation. Read more about related issues in Marie McInerney’s report from our #DigitalNationBuilding discussions this week.

In paying tribute to the late Professor Emeritus Mary Louise McLaws, whose passing is “a giant loss for epidemiology, public health and good public policy”, we are reminded of the importance of effective communications for the health and wellbeing of communities, as well as for policy and practice.
Climate and health

In a recent article by Croakey Health Media, ahead of the Greensboro Health Forum, to be held on November 10th in Greensboro, NC, the American Association of Health, Education, and Research (AAHE) noted that the country was facing a crisis in climate health. AAHE noted that "We are now seeing the consequences of that inaction in real time, with devastating impacts on the health and well-being of people and communities.

Read more:
- Cultural context, environment, and local solutions are vital for sustainable healthcare.
- Nine key messages for the National Health and Climate Strategy, Lowitja Institute.
- ERIK's not officially declared but a hot, dry summer is still on the cards.

Climate and Health Alliance @healthy_climate • Aug 11
"We have continued to care for Country, water & sea, & will continue to do so as the climate keeps changing" • @LowitjaInstitut to @CroakeyNews

The rich, diverse Traditional Knowledge held by First Nations peoples must guide the HealthyClimateStrategyOz

croakey.org
Nine key messages for the National Health and Climate Strategy. Lowitja Institute.
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and research sectors must be resourced appropriately to respond to climate change,...

Minister Ged Kearney's Twitter liked the tweet above...

Ged Kearney ★ and 4 others liked a Tweet you were mentioned in
On why the National Climate & Health Strategy needs to elevate and draw upon the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: from @LowitjaInstitut cc @gedkearney @NACCHOAustralia @NAATSIHW @IndigenousDataSovereignty croakey.org/nine-key-messa...

JesuitSocialServices @JesuitSocialSer • Aug 17
Replying to @JesuitSocialSer
Fundamentally, we must reorient our justice systems to focus on keeping people out of prison in the first place, writes Acting Executive Director of our Centre for Just Places, John Ryks, for Croakey:

croakey.org
In the era of global boiling, a just transition must focus on keeping people out of prison in the first place. The extreme temperatures that are being recorded around the world highlight the importance of reorienting justice systems to focus on...

croakey.org
Nine key messages for the National Health and Climate Strategy. Lowitja Institute.
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and research sectors must be resourced appropriately to respond to climate change,...

New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation

Amy Carrad @AmyCarrad • 2h
"Digital platforms/communications infrastructure should centre the public interest, rather than being driven by corporate imperatives that actively undermine public health and wellbeing."

croakey.org
Nine key messages for the National Health and Climate Strategy. Lowitja Institute.
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and research sectors must be resourced appropriately to respond to climate change,...

Digital Nation Building

croakey.org
Nine key messages for the National Health and Climate Strategy. Lowitja Institute.
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and research sectors must be resourced appropriately to respond to climate change,...

C O N N E C T

https://www.croakey.org/impact-and-readership/
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Safety concerns

Week ending 24 August: A fundamental role of government is to keep people safe and protected from danger.

As we look around the world at catastrophic fires, flood, heatwaves and other evidence of global warming, it’s clear that this will be an increasingly difficult task.

Yet governments, in Australia and the world over, continue to subsidise and support the very industries that are making life more precarious for all living creatures and ecosystems.

The health sector must take a strong, collective stand against continued support for fossil fuels industries, Dr Richard Yin argues this week.

Meanwhile, Alison Barrett investigates what climate safety might mean for the million-plus homes to be built in coming years.

Safety concerns about aged care are ongoing; this week Jennifer Doggett investigates why so many residents are not fully vaccinated against COVID.

Our environments are unsafe in many contexts, including the online worlds we inhabit, where the marketing of unhealthy products and spread of damaging and harmful communications are rife.

This week we publish draft principles to highlight the need for safe and reliable digital platforms/communications infrastructure, especially during an era of increasing emergencies. Readers are invited to consider adding your signature.

On related topics, we also share Croakey Health Media’s submission to a consultation on regulation of digital platforms to tackle misinformation and disinformation.

As we await confirmation of the date for the referendum on a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament, take time to hear from the co-chairs of the Close the Gap Campaign, Karl Briscoe and June Oscar AO.

This week’s bulletin also has a strong focus on the importance of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s knowledges into research, practice and policy.

And today Croakey celebrates five years as a not for profit public interest journalism organisation. We thank everyone who has supported us – and also have a few birthday wishes.
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Other activities

On 22 August, Dr Melissa Sweet presented about Croakey Health Media to an online public health advocacy course facilitated by Professor Michael Moore and Dr Aimee Brown at the University of Canberra. See her Twitter thread from the event.
Submission on Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

20 August 2023
**An historic opportunity**

**Week ending 31 August:** What has been a marathon of effort over many years is now a sprint. In just 44 days, Australians will have an historic opportunity to vote in a referendum to constitutionally enshrine an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

Our bulletin this week shares stories highlighting the practical benefits of the Voice for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Lowitja Institute and many other leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health are advocating strongly for a ‘yes’ vote.

Our bulletin also has a wide-ranging focus on mental health, bringing stories on redesigning mental healthcare, the importance of Pride events, transparency in research, and some of the conversations at the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Conference.

Human rights matters are also highlighted – from the violation of children’s rights in Queensland, to a new global push to respect the rights of children to a healthy environment.

Dr Lesley Russell shares the latest in a series of articles investigating the Medical Research Future Fund.

We also report on strategies for advancing health in all policies, while the capability review of the Department of Health and Aged Care shows there is much room for improvement.

Don’t miss this week’s ICYMI column, highlighting ongoing concerns about COVID-19 and an #AusPol wardrobe fail.

For health resources on the Voice to Parliament, visit our portal [here](https://www.croakey.org/impact-and-readership/).
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