menzies SCHOOL OF HEALTH RESEARCH

THE COMMUNICATE STUDY PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

November 2025

Dear colleagues, collaborators and friends,

It is a pleasure to share the next newsletter from the Communicate Study Partnership and the final for 2025, highlighting how collaboration continues to drive meaningful progress in culturally safe communication.

A big thank you to everyone who helped make the First Nations Health Communication Symposium in August such a success. With over 240 participants and a rich mix of voices from across health, research, education and community sectors, the Symposium generated overwhelmingly positive feedback and a strong sense of collective momentum towards culturally safe communication in healthcare.



Communicate Study staff and collaborators at the First Nations Health Communication Symposium in August 2025

Other highlights in this edition include the Culturally Safe Workplaces workshop for First Nations staff, NAATI interpreter certification, ongoing training for health practitioners and recognition of work at Gove District Hospital.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on making this work sustainable and embedded in health system processes. The upcoming integration of training bookings with MyLearning, through partnership with NT Health, is an exciting step toward embedding Communicate Study activities into everyday practice.

Warm regards,
Professor Anna Ralph
Program lead, Communicate Study Partnership

NHMRC GNT2008544 and MRFF RARUR000143
HREC 22-4297

First Nations Health Communication Symposium – that's a wrap!





Attendees of the First Nations Health Communication Symposium in Alice Springs (left) and in Darwin (right)

On 21 August 2025, the Communicate Study Partnership hosted its bi-annual First Nations Health Communication Symposium, held in Darwin, Alice Springs, and online.

With over 240 participants across sites, the symposium brought together First Nations and non-Indigenous presenters and attendees from healthcare, research, education, government, and community organisations, creating a rich cross-section of voices committed to building culturally safe communication in health.

The program featured 14 presentations, 2 panels, and 10 stalls, covering discussions and themes such as:

- Communicating stories and hard truths
- Collecting hospital patient experiences via stories in First Nations languages
- Community lead approaches to communicating disease, numbers, and risk
- Interpreter experiences and NAATI pathways
- Intercultural communication training
- Co-designed education and bidirectional learning

Keynote speaker Carol Christophersen delivered a powerful address on truth-telling and "returning the gaze," sharing her work on the repatriation of ancestral remains from the UK to West Arnhem Land and the importance of communicating hard truths with integrity and courage.

Thank you to all presenters, panel members, stallholders, and participants for making the day a success – and for helping to build momentum towards health services where cultural safety and communication are prioritised to drive equitable care.



Culturally safe conversations in practice panel (L-R): Mario Faggion, Mandy Ahmat, Tiana Alley, Anna Ralph



Communicating for Safety team members presenting at the Symposium (L-R): Patricia Paterson; Shaunelle Lalara, Justine Rogers, Serena Munyarryun, Gisela Malimara

Culturally Safe Workplaces Workshop

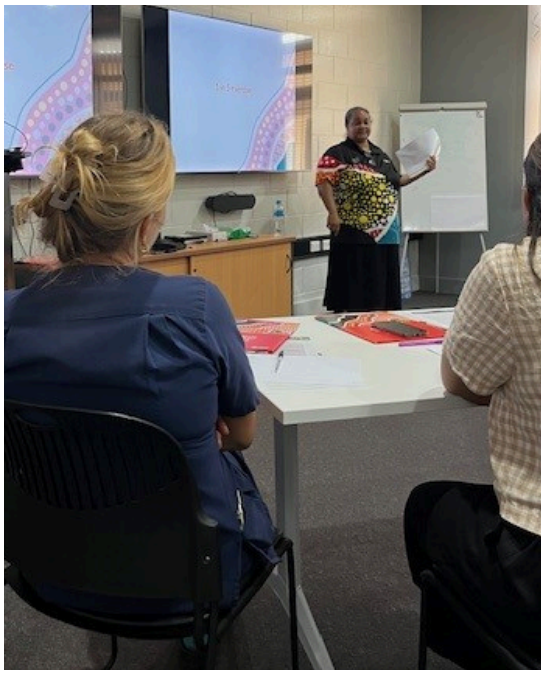
In August 2025, the Communicate Study Partnership held a Culturally Safe Workplaces workshop for First Nations interpreters, Aboriginal Liaison Officers, and health professionals. Facilitated by Uncle Daniel Fejo, with support from Aunty Mandy Ahmat and Patricia Patterson, the workshop provided a culturally grounded space for attendees to reflect on challenges they face when working within mainstream institutions. Participants shared their experiences and reflected on topics such as identity and wellbeing in the workplace, and the continual work of reclaiming authority and setting professional and cultural boundaries. A dedicated narrative therapy session provided an opportunity for attendees to access tailored support in the afternoon.

Informed by ongoing collaboration between NT Health, NT Aboriginal Interpreter Service and the Communicate Study Partnership, the workshop strengthened understanding of issues affecting First Nations staff. Data gathered from this workshop and a similar workshop to be held in Alice Springs will be critical to supporting safer, more supportive workplaces for First Nations people.



Workshop facilitators and Communicate staff (L-R): Tiana Alley, Patricia Patterson, Daniel Fejo Beatriz Cardona, Mandy Ahmat, Vicki Kerrigan, Mario Faggion (at front)

Gove District Hospital – Training Updates



Interpreter Nadyezhda Pozzana facilitating 'Working with Interpreters' training at Gove District Hospital

Since the last newsletter, Nicole Nobbs in collaboration with Djalkiri Foundation and Aboriginal Interpreter Service have delivered three of the six Intercultural Communication modules for GDH staff –

- Practising Patient Centred Care on 1 September
- Working with Interpreters on 15 September
- Informed Consent on 22 September.

Participants responded positively, noting the practical relevance of training for both new and experienced staff. The final module in this series 'How to be an anti-racist practitioner' will be delivered this year, continuing our commitment to building culturally safe practice at Gove District Hospital.

Intercultural Communication Training Update – RDH



Ready to deliver training to RDH staff (L-R): Shaunelle Lalara, Gisela Malimara, Mario Faggion.

Our new Educator and Training Facilitator, Mario has settled in and is continuing the delivery of intercultural communication training to RDH staff.

At the start of October, Mario along with Shaunelle and Gisela, who are interpreters for the RDH communicating for safety team, delivered training to groups of Interns and RMOs. Both groups were really engaged and contributed to lots of meaningful discussion. Participants were very appreciative of the invaluable experience and knowledge Shaunelle and Gisela brought to the session.

Through our partnership with CLEaRS at NT Health, we are now in the final stages of setting up the booking portal in MyLearning for future sessions of our intercultural communication training. We look forward to the platform becoming available for bookings by the end of 2025.

NAATI Certification in Darwin

In June, Hannah Bryant and Lauren Campbell from NAATI visited Darwin to deliver an interpreter certification testing workshop for Anindilyakwa and Yolngu Matha interpreters who had travelled from across the Northern Territory, in partnership with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service.

The week-long program combined training and testing, with four interpreters sitting the exam—two successfully gaining certification during the workshop and the others now preparing for supplementary assessments. It was a pleasure to host our NAATI colleagues on site and to reflect together on the broader partnership.

PULiiMA Conference

Our team attended the PULiiMA Indigenous Language and Technology Conference in Darwin at the end of August, alongside delegates representing more than 196 Australian First Nations languages and 20 international Indigenous languages. We learnt that all First Nations languages in Australia are classified as critically endangered, with the fastest attrition rate in the world. Yet the depth of knowledge, innovation and commitment among language activists and advocates gathered is remarkable.

Tiana and Maddison were grateful for the opportunity to share some the Communicate Study's work, which highlights the critical importance of delivering healthcare in patients' preferred languages. Recognising language as a core determinant of health and embedding systems changes to support this is fundamental to culturally and clinically safe care. It felt meaningful to situate our work within the broader movement to strengthen and revitalise First Nations languages, led by so many dedicated communities and advocates.

We also ran into some of our study partners!



Tiana Alley and Maddison Sims (L-R) present at PULiiMA



Maddison Sims and Lauren Campbell at PULiiMA

Recognition in NT Health Quality Improvement Awards

Initiatives of the Communicate Study and NT Health at Gove District Hospital were recently celebrated through the NT Health Quality Improvement Awards. The Intercultural Communication Training designed and delivered at GDH in collaboration with Djalkiri Foundation, was awarded Runner-Up. Meanwhile the Local Language Staff Survey and Poster Implementation Project received Highly Commended.

These achievements reflect the hard work, collaboration, and commitment of everyone involved – past and present – in improving communication and cultural safety for patients and staff at GDH.

Staff News



Welcome Gisela!

We are very excited to welcome Gisela to the Communicate team. She has recently been busy co-facilitating training and gathering patient stories at Royal Darwin Hospital.

Gisela is from Maningrida and speaks Burarra. She works as a part-time interpreter at Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) and as a casual Research Assistant at the Menzies School of Health Research. She is passionate about helping her community understand and navigate the healthcare system. She is committed to creating meaningful change for her community and for all First Nations people, aiming to improve their healthcare experience at Royal Darwin Hospital.

Her skills include speaking in her first language to help patients better understanding what health workers are communicating. She uses her first language to ensure patients clearly understand the information provided by doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.

You may have noticed email bounce-backs from Tiana and Maddison recently.

We're sad to say that after 3 years with the team, **Maddison Sims**, Communicate Study Partnership Project Manager, has taken a role at Danila Dilba Health Service as their Population Health Team Leader. We're so grateful to Maddie for her dedication to the project and her contributions to Menzies and wish her all the very best in her new role.

Tiana Alley is currently on extended leave and will return in November next year.

We look forward to welcoming new team members soon!

Ask the Specialist Podcast Episodes in Development

We have recently started work on new episodes of the multi-award winning podcast Ask the Specialist. Responding to strong interest from healthcare professionals, these episodes will focus on Central Australia and feature First Nations leaders from the region sharing their insights and experiences.

Thank you to everyone who shared and completed the recent survey gathering 'burning questions' from health workers in the Centre. These questions will directly guide development of new episodes, with recording set to being soon after Christmas.

We're excited to work together with Purple House and 8CCC Community Radio to create these new episodes and bring voices and stories from the Centre to the existing Ask the Specialist podcast series.



Publications

"If They Help Us, We Can Help Them": First Nations Peoples Identify Intercultural Health Communication Problems and Solutions in Hospital in Northern Australia | Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities

Defining narrative change: a case study of the decolonising podcast Ask the Specialist: Larrakia, Tiwi and Yolŋu stories to inspire better healthcare (tandfonline.com)

Evaluating the impact of 'Ask the Specialist Plus': a training program for improving cultural safety and communication in hospital-based healthcare | BMC Health Services Research | Full Text (biomedcentral.com)

Improving outcomes for hospitalised First Nations peoples though greater cultural safety and better communication: the Communicate Study Partnership study protocol | Implementation Science | Full Text (biomedcentral.com)

Does improved interpreter uptake reduce self-discharge rates in hospitalized patients? A successful hospital intervention explained - PubMed (nih.gov)

"The talking bit of medicine, that's the most important bit": doctors and Aboriginal interpreters collaborate to transform culturally competent hospital care - PubMed (nih.gov)

From "stuck" to satisfied: Aboriginal people's experience of culturally safe care with interpreters in a Northern Territory hospital - PubMed (nih.gov)

Aboriginal patient and interpreter perspectives on the delivery of culturally safe hospital-based care - PubMed (nih.gov)

Improving communication with Aboriginal hospital inpatients: a quasi-experimental interventional study - PubMed (nih.gov)

"How can I do more?" Cultural awareness training for hospital-based healthcare providers working with high Aboriginal caseload - PubMed (nih.gov)

Low uptake of Aboriginal interpreters in healthcare: exploration of current use in Australia's Northern Territory - PubMed (nih.gov)

For more information about the Communicate Study Partnership, please contact:

communicatestudypartnership@menzies.edu.au

Anna Ralph - Program Lead
Anna.ralph@menzies.edu.au

Anna Lucas - Project Coordinator
Anna.lucas@menzies.edu.au

menzies SCHOOL OF HEALTH RESEARCH