Message from Associate Dean, Professor Sarah Strasser

It is wonderful to come back to the NT as the Associate Dean for Flinders in the NT after working in Canada for the last year. The Associate Dean of Flinders NT is a new role and is about more than just medicine, with the mandate to represent and engage the whole of Flinders University in the NT and vice versa. I have come back to find much progress has been made with the NT Medical Program (NTMP) and the Indigenous Entry Stream, led by Professor Michael Lowe and Dr Della Yarnold, with fantastic support from the teams at the NT Clinical School, NT Rural Clinical School and Centre for Remote Health.

Flinders in the NT has provided the spirit and functionality of a single entity in the development of the NTMP. I have spent my first few months talking to staff and stakeholders about the structure which will best sustain ongoing developments, as we strive to make a difference for the better things have continued at a fast pace, we have been following up on national HWA clinical training placement proposals; developing new Health and Hospital Fund bids with our partners the NT Government and Laynhapuy Homelands; keeping a close eye on construction of the site at CDU and the processes of building in Nhulunbuy and on the RDH campus.

In October involvement at the Muster Conference in the Barossa Valley saw some of our faculty present papers at an international level for the first time and this was followed by presentations at the Katherine Centre of Health Excellence (KCOHE) Conference. The annual Community Advisory Board (CAB) meeting in Katherine reminded us of our success over the last year since the last CAB and re-invigorated our commitment to remote medicine and Indigenous Health.

(continued next page...
Message from Associate Dean, Professor Sarah Strasser continued

Meanwhile in Darwin we held a PBL workshop, a three day teaching teams event and we have just come to the conclusion of the Preparation for Medicine Program, a four week intensive which forms part of the new Indigenous Entry Stream (IES) admission process. In Palmerston, the Super Clinic opened for business and we have been able to see in real life the opportunities for student learning and practice that the Super Clinic will provide in 2011. Meanwhile ordinary medical school business has continued as usual with the 3rd Year OSCE and written exams and visits from Prof Michael Barber, Vice Chancellor of Flinders University, Prof Michael Kidd, Executive Dean of Health Sciences, and the Medical School Dean, Professor Paul Worley.

We received a successful report from the AMC Accreditation visit acknowledging the Flinders BMBS program in the NT. However the report reminded us of the need to be transparent and to involve students in committees and decision making processes. The double degree program with CDU and the IES received special mention as innovative programs.

With all these activities it was easy for me to give a first year report against the 2010-2014 Flinders University Strategic Plan at the Katherine Centre of Health Excellence Conference. Of course, none of these activities would have happened without the fantastic efforts and energy put in by all staff in the NT, the partnership with staff from Flinders in South Australia and our external stakeholders. A big thank you to everyone for your continuing involvement and support.

I would like to give a hearty farewell to Prof Michael Lowe, Dr Anne Cawley and Sabina Knight, all of whom leave to take on higher career aspirations; and acknowledge the following successes: Prof Lowe and Prof Wakerman on receiving staff awards and Dr Lloyd Einsiedel on his receipt of NHMRC grant. Also congratulations to all our Flinders University and JCU students on exam results and I wish the best for 2011 to all of our students, staff and new graduates.

Flinders University 2010 Prizes

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<tr>
<th>Prize</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Deane O Southgate Prize</td>
<td>Meg Say and Jessica Robinson</td>
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<td>The Australian Chinese Medical Association Award</td>
<td>Tom Callahan</td>
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<td>Best Oral Presentation in a Fourth Year Elective</td>
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<td>The Australian and NZ College of Anaesthetists’ Prize</td>
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<td>in Anaesthesia</td>
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<td>The Jane Preston Memorial Prize in Obstetrics And</td>
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<td>Gynaecology</td>
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<td>The Royal Australian and NZ College of Obstetricians</td>
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<td>And Gynaecologists Women’s Health Award</td>
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<td>The John Gladstone Sweeney Prize in Orthopaedics</td>
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<td>The Prize in Paediatrics</td>
<td>Kate Brennan</td>
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<td>The Australian Medical Association (SA) Student</td>
<td>Tom Callahan and Peter Inglis</td>
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<td>Medal and Prize</td>
<td>Associate Professor Peter Morris</td>
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<td>BMBS Honours</td>
<td>Dr Marco Briceno (Gove District Hospital)</td>
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New Text Books Arrive

NTMP text books have continued to arrive at the Royal Darwin Hospital Health library. Some of the library books will also be housed at the CDU library for first year students. Many thanks to library staff for receiving and collating the library books.

Right: RDH Librarian Despina Moisidis receives new medical text books.

Left: The Flinders University books in the RDH Health library.
Nhulunbuy Project Update

Earlier this year it was announced that Flinders University, through the NTRCS, had obtained Commonwealth funding of $4m under the Rural Education Infrastructure Development (REID) Pool to construct a Medical and Allied Health Education Centre of Excellence in Nhulunbuy.

This project has three distinct components:

1. Refurbish existing student accommodation $150,000
2. Construct medical and health education centre $3,150,000
3. Construct new staff/student house $700,000.

The refurbishment of the existing student accommodation has started and should be completed by Christmas. Work will be carried out on the upstairs accommodation first, followed by the second unit downstairs. The work will include a new kitchen, internal painting, replacement of ceiling fans, re-painting steel work, cleaning and oiling upper decking and replacing vanity and shower screen in the bathroom.

Plans have been drawn up for the construction of the medical and health education centre and construction will hopefully begin this year.

The construction of the new staff/student house is due to commence in March 2011.

Below: NTRCS student house in Nhulunbuy

NHMRC Grant awarded to NTRCS Researcher

Dr Lloyd Einsiedel, Research Fellow at the NT Rural Clinical School in Alice Springs has recently been awarded an NHMRC grant to continue his HTLV-1/bronchiectasis work. The study aims to determine the association between the obstructive lung disease bronchiectasis and infection with Human T-cell Lymphotropic Virus type 1 in Indigenous people of Central Australia.

The extra funding will permit Lloyd to employ an Aboriginal Research Officer and an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to facilitate feedback of data to communities. A community physician, Dr Ciara O’Sullivan, will also be joining the team next year.

The grant will also fund the development of the HTLV-1 assay at the National Reference Laboratory in Melbourne, work that is currently being done in Paris. Having the assay available locally will substantially improve the clinical utility of this test.

Lecturer attends Indigenous Grandmother Gathering

NT Medical Program’s Indigenous Health Lecturer, Ms Bilawara Lee, recently visited the United States as part of an Indigenous Grandmothers gathering hosted by Casa de La Luna. The Casa de La Luna retreat is described as a “eco-holistic retreat and conscious community devoted to personal and global wellness and oneness”.

Workshops and seminars were held on Aboriginal spirituality and healing, and Bilawara led a healing session during the retreat. While at the retreat, Bilawara was made a faculty member of Casa de La Luna. For more information please go to: www.casadelaluna.org/

Right, Bilawara Lee at the Indigenous Grandmother Gathering in Ojai, California. She is pictured with her host Jill Townsend (right).
The Flinders Medical Educator Teaching Teams program was launched in the sweltering heat of a Darwin November under foreboding black clouds and the heady scent of ripe mangoes. The NT staff, including a few fly-ins from Alice Springs (thanks Sheela & Robyn!) welcomed over a dozen Bedford Park staff – academic, administrative, and IT – for a few days of work and play.

The themes of the workshop were Communication, Collaboration, and Commitment, which, in addition to having cute alliteration, were identified as key aspects for effectively delivering the BMBS curriculum across our distributed campus. The aim was to build relationships as teaching teams, provide an opportunity to recognise the NT context, clarify the roles and values of individual team members, and renew our enthusiasm for our common goal of equitable, student-centred, high-quality teaching. In brief, this is how it went:

Wednesday: During Communication day, we toured the teaching sites to understand the venues and facilities we will be using to teach and learn; we shared our expertise and stories; and we tackled the famous Cyclone Cafe Burger – the most gargantuan sandwich ever to be compiled outside of Texas. Who knew that among us we have met the queen, ridden a cow, shovelled manure for Gai Waterhouse, birthed enormous babies, and marched in the band in the Tokyo National Olympic Stadium!?.

Thursday: To facilitate Collaboration among the teaching teams, we started the day with an overview of how to use FLO, our common curriculum hosting tool (thanks Sue & Anthony!). We then worked as a group to identify the qualities we most valued when working as a team: Passion, Respect, Honesty, Openness, Professionalism, and a ‘tell-it-like-it-is’ approach topped the list. We agreed to keep these values in consideration as we spent the rest of the day wrestling the 2011 Yr1 timetable and Assessment mechanisms. Dinner was held in the historic Wesleyan Church (1897) in the Botanic Gardens, with Indonesian beef rendang and terong pedas for dinner. Our dinner guests were Dr Ali Nur and Dr Vanessa Johnston, from the Malaeuca Refugee Centre Torture Trauma Survivors Service of the NT, a program committed to the resettlement and healing of refugee survivors of torture and trauma in Darwin. They presented an outline of the refugee program and, with Tim Earnshaw, explained the NTMP Yr1 elective curriculum, which involves supporting a refugee family through settlement.

FRIDAY: By Day 3, we were well and truly Communicating and Collaborating, and it was time to seal the deal. The idea was to identify the next pressing BMBS teaching challenge (the Pre-Medicine Program) and commit to mechanisms to work through it as cross-campus teams. Teams quickly formed and enthusiastically embarked on planning. With a new sense of clarity about the direction and aim, we reluctantly boarded the airport bus (thanks Geoff!) or trudged through the sticky air back to our offices.

What made the workshop great was the organisation & ever-ready supply of fresh chilled mangoes (thanks Lila & Eliza!), and the willingness and positivity of individuals to engage in cooperation and problem-solving. Thanks everyone for coming along; we look forward to seeing the progress of your teams through the New Year!
White Ribbon Breakfast

Flinders NT sponsored three tables at the recent White Ribbon breakfast held on 25 November. Coinciding with International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, White Ribbon Day is a chance to change attitudes and behaviours that support or excuse violence against women in Australia.

The breakfast was hosted by the Zonta Club of Darwin and Professor Michael Kidd, AM, Executive Dean of Health Sciences at Flinders University gave the keynote address at the breakfast, addressing the theme “To sin by silence when they should protest”.

“It is estimated that one in three Australian women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. This is a disgraceful statistic for a country like Australia. However I have to say, as a General Practitioner, I think that this figure is an underestimate” he said.

“No man should ever commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against any other person”.

Professor Kidd concluded his address by quoting another great advocate for peaceful means to change the world, Ghandi, who said, “Be the change you want to see in this world”.

Assistant Police Commissioner and White Ribbon Day Ambassador Grahame Kelly, once again invited ‘All Aussie Men to Swear’ by making a pledge as part of the “My Oath” campaign, swearing:

- never to commit violence against women
- never to excuse violence against women
- never to remain silent about violence against women.
Preparation for Medicine Program

Indigenous Entry Stream applicants to the NT Medical Program are currently completing the final phase of the admission process—the Preparation for Medicine Program (PMP). This is the first year this entry method, which includes the four week PMP, has been offered by Flinders University.

Photos by Bilawara Lee: Clockwise from top: The group of PMP applicants with tutors; dissection workshop; participating in dissection workshop; stethoscope workshop and finding a pulse.
A Top End Medical Student Experience

Brent Matthews

I am a Northern Territory quota, Northern Territory Clinical School (NTCS) and Rural Clinical School (NTRCS) student. So what does this mean exactly? Does this mean that I drink beer, chase barras, boars and buffalo and drive a 4wd instead of a Golf GTI? Well yes, but it doesn’t end there...

I sat the same exam (GAMSAT), as everyone else and was admitted to Flinders under an NT quota that takes around 10 students per year. I completed the first two years at Flinders and the final two years in the Northern Territory. I have lived in the NT for almost 10 years and love the place, the more places I go the stronger my affection for the NT grows. The NTCS offers one of the most remarkable and well supported regional, rural and remote training programs in the world, I have endeavoured to take every experience possible.

I completed 3rd year in Darwin under the Community Based Medical Education Program (CBME), which involves spending half the year at RDH doing core rotations such as General Med/Surg and the other half at a local GP and various community health centres. During this year I travelled to the Tiwi islands regularly with outreach physicians and spent two weeks in the Laynhapuy homelands. It was here that I met remarkable people such as Jeff Cook and Dr Sarah Chalmers, who deliver healthcare to people in their homelands. Over years they have formed considerable relationships with the Yolngu person that allows them to bridge a gap between ‘Medical Students’ and Yolngu. This is a far cry from being ‘lectured’ in an Adelaide auditorium about ‘Closing the Gap’ and being force fed rhetoric on cultural awareness.

In 4th year there was an opportunity to spend 12 weeks in Nhulunbuy doing GP/Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation/Gove District Hospital and 12 weeks in Alice Springs as part of a NTRCS ‘rural package’. It is well supported by the University as they offer accommodation and access to a vehicle for no charge. Given my experiences of the previous year I was keen to see more so I convinced my wife it was a good idea and we loaded our two kids Mitch (3) and Liam (1) into the car and hooked the boat on. Between the kids toys and the frozen chickens I barely had enough room for my fishing rods...

The drive to Nhulunbuy took 3 days with lots of camping and stops for the kids in between. Dr Sarah Chalmers had recently been appointed as lecturer at the NTRCS and I was able to make multiple community visits during my 12 week stay.

Continued next page......

Left: Brett at Bawaka outstation with traditional owner Djawa (Timmy) Burarrawanga

Above: Brett and wife visit a billabong on the Gove Peninsula with local rangers.
A Top End Medical Student Experience continued...

Brent Matthews

I became friends with a local Yolngu family and took them fishing on their land in my boat. They taught me how to dig mangrove worms out of the trees and I taught them how to use crab pots. It is experiences such as these which are compelling me to return to this place in the future, to visit the land and the people. We did not spend one weekend at home, as the camping, fishing and beaches were all too appealing.

Then we moved to Alice Springs, an independent city surrounded by red ranges like giant castle walls. The contrast is all too clear when you move from Arnhem land to Central Australia, the Indigenous people are certainly as heterogeneous as the landscape. What remained the same was the dedication of the people providing healthcare and their willingness to teach students. Alice Springs hospital has proved to be one of the best clinical rotations in medicine and orthopaedics that I have completed, even if the fishing is a little slow.

Overall, I applaud NTCS and Flinders University in their execution of a truly rural/remote clinical training program. It is well planned, well supported, clinically relevant training in a community setting, that helps students engage with indigenous health issues. A special mention to the staff at both Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs, for helping to provide such an outstanding experience. I appreciate the complexity of delivering this kind of training program and it cannot function without a good business model and logistical support. In this regard the staff at NTCS Darwin has been instrumental in supporting students and ensuring engagement of various community members for the future.

I graduate December 3 and am looking forward to starting my new job as an intern at Royal Darwin Hospital.

Greening the Clinical School

Eliza Gill

National Ride to Work Day
Flinders NT collaborated with Menzies School of Health Research, Royal Darwin Hospital, and Department of Health & Families in organizing a breakfast for National Ride to Work Day. We had a great turnout despite the rainy start to the day. Thanks to Dingo from K9 Cycles who donated some prizes and Liz Stackhouse, General Manager of RDH who was the ambassador for Ride to Work Day.

We look forward to starting our ride to work days in the dry season 2011.

National guidelines recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most, preferably all, days for adults [i].

FACT: Riding to work immediately increases a person’s physical activity.

If 1 in 10 of Australia’s working population cast aside their cars and take to the bike for their weekly commute - a million tonnes of carbon can be saved.

Importantly, the simple act of riding your bike can burn between 750 – 1000 calories an hour, which helps both your health and fitness.

Additionally, cycling can help reduce the risks associated with physical inactivity including type 2 diabetes, breast and bowel cancer, obesity and depression.


Festive Recycling- Make This a Clean, Green Festive Season

There are lots of simple things you can do to have a fun and green festive season – and some of them will even save you time, energy or money. Follow the link to view the festive season green guide: http://festiverecycling.planetark.org/
Michael Lowe Farewell

Prof Michael Lowe has resigned from his position as Clinical Dean of the NT Clinical School. Just before his departure, Professor Michael Lowe received a staff award for outstanding contribution to Flinders University.

In his address to Flinders staff, Prof Michael Barber, Vice Chancellor of Flinders University gave the following address to University staff regarding Michael's award:

“Professor Lowe joined the University in 2002 as a Senior Lecturer in the Northern Territory Clinical School, coming from a similar position with the Fiji School of Medicine.

In 2006 he was appointed Professor and Dean of the Northern Territory Clinical School.

Over the five years he has held this position, he has provided passionate local leadership for the development of what has become the Northern Territory Medical Program. This development is of major strategic importance for the University.

Above: Prof Michael Lowe receives a Flinders University staff award.

Professor Lowe’s contribution to the conception and development of the Northern Territory Medical Program has been outstanding.

His leadership in the tender process for the Health and Hospitals Fund capital works application and in the Australian Medical Council accreditation process has been crucial to the success of this project so far. Under his guidance, a team of enthusiastic and talented academic and administrative staff has worked tirelessly to bring the concept through to fruition.

Professor Lowe’s advocacy has been a key contribution to Flinders’ reputation within government, the health sector and the community at large in the Northern Territory.

He has accomplished this whilst retaining a major clinical role, serving the public as a general physician.”

Professor Michael Lowe will be dearly missed by all staff at the NT Clinical School and NT Rural Clinical School. We thank him for his leadership over the past four years and wish him all the best for his upcoming holiday and in his new position at NT Department of Health and Families as the Community Geriatrician.

Important Dates

15 November—10 December: Preparation for Medicine Program (PMP) in Darwin and Adelaide for Indigenous Entry Stream students applying to Medicine. This is the first time Indigenous students have had the option of applying through this entry stream and the first PMP run by Flinders University.

18, 19 November: NT Rural Clinical School Community Advisory Board held in Katherine.

20 November: Flinders Year 3 students completed OSCE

22-25 November: Flinders Year 3 students completed Written Exams

15 December: Year 4 Flinders Students Graduation Ceremony

24 December—3 January: Flinders University Office Closure

4 January: Year 4 Flinders University students commence

10 January: Year 6 JCU students commence

17 January: Year 3 Flinders University, Year 5 JCU students commence

18 February: Year 1 NT Medical Program students Orientation Day

21 February: Year 1 NT Medical Program students commence
NT Clinical School and Rural Clinical School End of Year Party and Farewell to Prof Michael Lowe, Darwin Harbour, 20 November 2010
Palmerston Superclinic Update

The Palmerston GP Superclinic opened for business in October this year. The Palmerston Superclinic was a Federal and NT Government commitment, with stage one urgent after hours care opening its doors in December 2008, and stage two opening in October making it a 24 hour state of the art facility.

The clinic is managed by a new company, FCD Health (a joint venture between Flinders and Charles Darwin Universities).

Since stage two opened its doors in early October, more than 1000 people have used the health clinic facilities.

Some of the services include:
- GP Super Clinic
- Urgent Care After-Hours

Staff Updates

Associate Dean, Flinders NT
Prof Sarah Strasser has commenced in the position as Associate Dean, Flinders NT.

Program Administrator, Indigenous Health
Charisse Gallagher recently accepted this new position. Charisse was previously employed at Flinders University in the Human Resources Department and has returned home to Darwin to take on this new role.

NT Coordinator, Doctor and Patient
Dr Clare Fenwick has recently joined the NT Medical Program team of academics as Coordinator of the Doctor and Patient stream of the curriculum.

Farewell to Dr Anne Cawley
Anne is leaving Alice Springs and relocating to South Australia where she will continue to be employed by Flinders University as part of the rural clinical school there. We thank Anne for her many years of work as Senior Lecturer at the Rural Clinical School in Alice. We wish Anne all the best in her relocation south.