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Making a real difference in closing the gap

General Practitioner from Victoria wins Indigenous health award.

The Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) has named Dr Margaret Niemann, a General Practitioner from Bairnsdale, Victoria, as the recipient of its annual Annette Walker Award for 2016.

The award recognises health professionals who exceed the requirements of their role, demonstrate resilience, inspire their team and display a 'can do' attitude that has realised a positive outcome for remote health in the Northern Territory (NT).

A GP truly passionate about Indigenous health, Dr Niemann has been on placements with RAHC since 2011 and completed her 56th placement at the beginning of March 2017. She has undertaken placements in both the Top End and in the Central communities of Maningrida, Mount Allen, Ali Curung, Finke and Ti Tree, and Lake Nash.

Tanya Brunt, National Manager of RAHC said Dr Niemann 'has had a remarkable journey with RAHC. She has been consistent and committed to the project at hand and

her experience and superior clinical skills and knowledge have been very helpful in the challenging environments of a remote setting.

'Her true dedication and passion has been displayed through her ongoing monthly placements to Lake Nash since 2014. We would like to thank her for being part of the effort and making a real difference in closing the gap in Indigenous health.'

Dr Niemann worked for 25 years in the Victorian town of Bairnsdale. She still lives there with her husband, also a GP, and their three children. She delivered babies for 12 years, obtained a Masters in Psychological Medicine from the University of New South Wales and has worked in most aspects of General Practice.

In the late 1990s, the family lived in the Aboriginal community of Maningrida, Arnhem Land, for nearly two years. Both Margaret's children were schooled there. Dr Niemann then worked in the local Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS), as well as the mainstream clinic in Bairnsdale before deciding to return

to remote work in 2011 with RAHC, mainly in Central Australia communities. Since mid-2014, she has been regularly visiting the community of Alpururulam.

Speaking of her experience, Dr Niemann said, 'I find it challenging, exciting and fascinating to be part of one community, sharing its ups and downs and watching as it grows and develops. Working in remote communities, you do get to see different aspects of Australia. Exposure to different cultures, even within our country, always expands your self-awareness and challenges your world views'. 

The Annette Walker Award was launched in 2013 and is named after a valued member of the RAHC team, who passed away on 30 December 2012.

Since 2008, RAHC has completed over 4,500 placements into remote communities in the Northern Territory.



Dr Margaret Niemann with Aboriginal Community Worker, Clifford Billy.

2016 Annette Walker Award.



The Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) was established in 2008.

It is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health under the Indigenous Australians Health Program *Stronger Futures Northern Territory*.

The aim of the program is to 'address persistent challenges to accessing primary healthcare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people in the Northern Territory'.

RAHC recruits, culturally orientates and deploys health professionals to enable the provision of increased primary healthcare services to assist in addressing the shortfall in health service delivery in remote Indigenous NT communities.

RAHC's focus is on recruiting urban-based health professionals.