



AARNet Helps to Advance Indigenous Health

First event to focus on occupational therapy for Indigenous communities; includes regional and rural participants
via [video linkup](#)

SYDNEY, Australia 2 December, 2008 Australias Academic and Research Network (AARNet) today announced it is working with senior health professionals and Victorian universities to help educate occupational therapists around the state on working with Indigenous clients and communities. This event is a new initiative by AARNet where it has opened its high-definition National Video Conferencing Service (NVCS) to health educators and practitioners.

Hosted by AARNet, the full-day videoconference on December 3 is the first of its kind for allied health professionals. Occupational therapists across Victoria and leaders in Indigenous health and education will converge to discuss Indigenous concepts of health; factors contributing to Indigenous ill-health; bridging occupational therapy principles and Indigenous health; the role of Aboriginal health workers; and forming better partnerships with Aboriginal health services.

Chris Hancock, CEO of AARNet, said, Traditionally, health educators and practitioners have had to rely on videoconferencing facilities which can be quite expensive and difficult to arrange. This means regional and rural practitioners often miss out because most videoconferencing technology requires all locations to have the same equipment, which cant always be the case.

AARNet enables innovation and education through its high-speed network and we have alleviated logistical and time constraints associated with learning through video conferencing. Our National Video Conferencing Service is designed to tie together various types of equipment and technologies. This means health educators and practitioners in rural and regional areas can participate even though the universities from which they will be connecting have different equipment.

This weeks conference is aimed at providing Indigenous clients and communities with greater access to occupational therapists. It will also build the skill-sets of non-indigenous practitioners who currently work with or have an interest in working with Indigenous clients and communities.

Lin Oke, Occupational Therapist and Project Officer in charge of establishing a National Indigenous Allied Health Network said, The Occupational Therapy profession acknowledges it needs to have a greater understanding of Indigenous health and culturally appropriate ways of working with Indigenous clients and communities. A significant number of these clients and communities are in regional or rural areas, so access to AARNets National Video Conferencing Service means occupational therapists in those areas gain the same educational opportunities as those in the city. Without it, our rural and regional practitioners would miss out because of the time, cost and logistical issues of travelling to the city for a conference.

Ultimately, we are working to form better partnerships so we can bridge the gap between the health of Aboriginals and the rest of the population. Conferences such as this one help us towards that goal.

The videoconference will be held at the following universities:

Melbourne University Royal Childrens Hospital
Deakin University - Warnambool Campus
University of Ballarat SMB Campus
Monash University Rural Health Network LaTrobe Regional Hospital, Traralgon
La Trobe University - Albury Wodonga Campus
La Trobe University - Bendigo Campus

AARNets National Video Conferencing Service offers standard and high definition video conferencing with AARNet members having access to a pool of Codian Multipoint Conferencing Units (MCU) for audio and video conference calls over both IP and ISDN networks. The dedicated AARNet MCUs support up to 60 available ports (video conferencing endpoints) and a customised web booking engine works with other member resources to provide even further capacity when it is most needed. Other features include:

Live streaming video for participants who wish to view the conference from a web browser
Real time transcoding and rate matching of video conferences from standard to high definition
ISDN Video conferencing multipoint bridging for mixed ISDN/IP environments
Content inclusion using H239 standards for PowerPoint or VNC screen sharing sessions
Recording and archival of video conferences allowing playback of content at a later date

AARNet has also recently released a quality assurance scheme under the NVCS umbrella of services. Participation in the Quality Assurance Program will allow automatic, assured and stress free call setup for conferences booked through NVCS, as well as opening up a support channel for greater assistance from AARNet in working to make video conferencing more widely available and reliable. The aim of the Quality Assurance Program is to improve user experience and promote confidence in video conferencing. Irrespective of the brand of equipment and platform used, CAVEs will be able to work through the test regime, as the testing is not based on any hardware or platform.

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About AARNet

AARNet Pty Ltd (APL) is the company that operates Australia's Academic and Research Network (AARNet). It is a not-for-profit company limited by shares. The shareholders are 37 Australian universities and the CSIRO. AARNet provides high-capacity leading edge Internet services for the tertiary education and research sector communities and their research partners. AARNet serves more than one million end users who access the network through local area networks at member institutions. For further information, please visit: www.aarnet.edu.au.

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