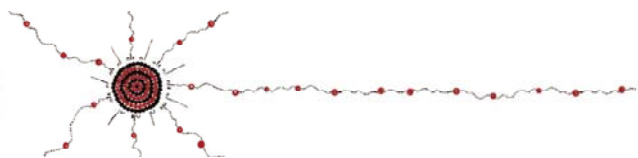


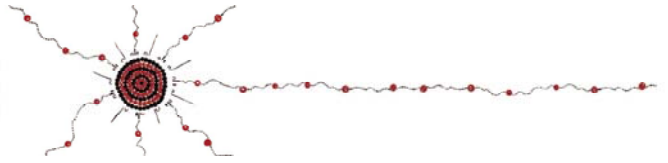
The Unmet Needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability

**Presented by Damian Griffis, Executive Officer
First Peoples Disability Network (Australia)**



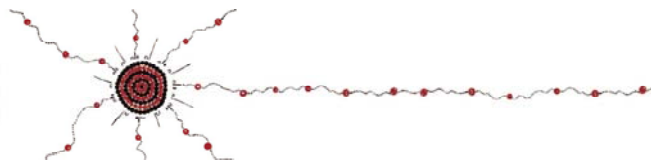
Some Facts about disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities

- Anecdotally it was believed that the prevalence of disability was twice that of the non-Aboriginal population.
- Recently quantified as 37% of the Aboriginal population reporting a disability or long-term health condition. (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage; Key Indicators 2009*)
- Conservative result given the lack of data on prevalence of psychological disability (mental illness).
- Very little reference material on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people with disability.
- Many Aboriginal people do not recognise they have a disability.



Some Facts about disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities

- Aboriginal people with disability are far more likely to:
 - acquire a disability due to a preventable health condition such as diabetes
 - experience multiple barriers to their meaningful participation in community life. Multiple layers of discrimination.
 - to be unemployed
 - to have withdrawn or not accessed an education at all
 - to have not accessed a service
- In Pitjantjatjara language there is no word for disability; acceptance as part of the human experience. (Arriotti Louis, *Social Construction of Anangu Disability*, The Australian Journal for Rural Health, Vol 7, Number 4, November 1999).
- Aboriginal people with disability are often supported within the family and community. When the family lives in a economically depressed state this can create added burden.
- The medical model of disability has had a profoundly negative impact on the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people with disability.



Disability in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Communities; Social factors

There are a number of social factors that contribute to the higher prevalence such as:

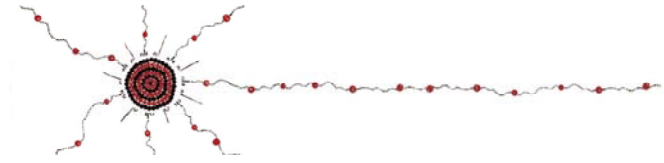
Lack of access to good quality healthcare (including health promotion and health prevention programs).

Lack of access to appropriate housing and urban infrastructure (including clean water and sanitation)

Greater exposure to violence and abuse.

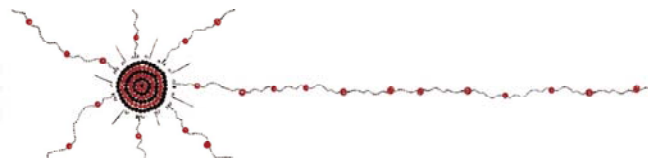
The psycho-social impact of colonisation, dispossession from land.

Substance dependence.



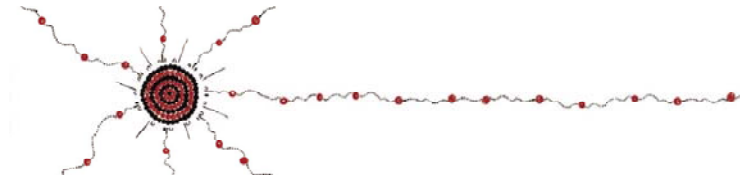
The Lived Experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people with disability

- The prevalence of disability in Aboriginal communities. And the prevalence of particular types of disability.
- Undiagnosed disability
 - hearing impairment
 - mental illness
- The problem with identifying as having a disability
- Multiple layers of discrimination. Double and triple disadvantage.



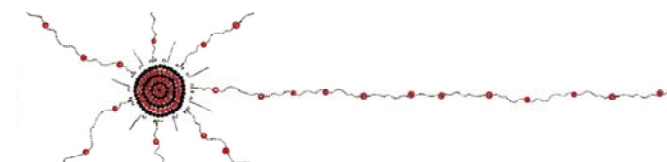
The Lived Experience of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island people with disability

- The denial of the most fundamental of human rights i.e, access to shelter, access to education, employment
- Aboriginal people with disability have different experiences depending on where they live and the availability of services.
- The failure of government and non-government service providers to meet the needs of Aboriginal people with disability.
- Very poor access to information. Concerted outreach approach required.
- Lack of awareness of special assistance and other beneficial social programs.
- Diversity of experiences; different jurisdictions at different levels of development with regard the development of the social movement of Indigenous people with disability.



The Lived Experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people with disability

- Racial discrimination and its implications for Aboriginal people with disability.
- Competing priorities in the Aboriginal rights movement.
- Aboriginal people with disability live in extreme poverty.
- Very low rates of access to Individual Advocacy services.
- Indigenous disability is medicalised.



National Leadership Program for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island People with disability

- Urgent need for upskilled leaders to emerge.
- Some people are working in isolation.
- Not enough knowledge on how to work the system.
- Urgent need for practical skills to be developed i.e. management & governance
- Doing this collaboratively enables learning from each other
- Annual program