



Catalyst
Foundation

Dementia in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities



In recent years dementia has emerged as a significant health issue among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at comparatively young ages (under 75 years) (AIHW, 2011a). The incidence of dementia is expected to increase as life expectancy improves (Garvey et al., 2011).

The prevalence of dementia in Aboriginal communities is up to 5.2 times greater than the overall Australian population. (Alzheimer's Australia, 2007). This is supported by research conducted in the remote Kimberley area in 2006 which found it to be 12.4% of the local population. Preliminary analyses of research undertaken by the Koori Growing Old Well Study (KGOWS) in urban and rural Aboriginal communities in NSW also found similar prevalence rates.

Mark Elliott is a Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Elder who facilitated the "Strengthening Dementia Care in Indigenous Communities" project for Alzheimer's Australia SA, delivered the Dementia Learning Resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities nationally accredited training, was a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dementia advisory group for many years and is the current Chair of the Australian Association of Gerontology Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Advisory Group.

Mark will walk with you to look at the causes of the dementia rates, dispel some of the myths people may have heard and discuss ways of working with Aboriginal people in a cultural context.