

Sandra Meihubers AM

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Background

Dr Sandra Meihubers is a public health dentist highly experienced in community based dental programs, with special expertise in rural and remote Aboriginal community programs in Australia. She has skills in initiating projects and programs in response to identified needs, where it is necessary to work with a range of stakeholders and funders. She has also worked with federal and state governments and non government organisations to conduct regional and statewide reviews of issues affecting the oral health of Aboriginal people. Her education experiences range from training Aboriginal Health Workers to coordinating rural programs for dental undergraduates, as well as curriculum review and development. Since 2000 she has been involved in overseas projects on a voluntary basis, where she has established and run projects in Nepal, East Timor and Bangladesh, and on a consultancy basis with AusAID providing technical advice regarding projects in East Timor and Papua New Guinea.

The combined experiences from working in projects in Australia and overseas have given Sandra the skills to work with many partners, both at community and government levels. Above all she respects the need for accountability, again at both community and government levels, and ongoing evaluation and monitoring of projects. The involvement of local personnel in decision making and planning processes is highly valued, and Sandra has developed great skills in liaising with relevant agencies and individuals who are key to the success of any project.

Qualifications and recognition

Bachelor of Dental Surgery, University of Sydney, 1977.

Diploma in Public Health Dentistry, University of Sydney, 1981.

Alumni Award, University of Sydney, for achievement in community service, 2001.

Fellow of the International College of Dentists, 2003.

Fellow of the Pierre Fauchard Academy of Dentists, 2005.

Turnidge Shield, Rotarian Excellence Award, 2009.

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship, 2010.

Paul Harris Fellow, Sapphire Pin, Rotary International, 2014.

Rotary District Award for Vocational Excellence, 2016.

Member of the Order of Australia AM, 2017.

Primary health care

Sandra has set up rural and remote area dental services within several Aboriginal Community Controlled primary health care services, and currently acts as a Dental Consultant/Advisor to a range of these organisations. She has been instrumental in establishing programs where none previously existed, and is a strong advocate for the recognition of oral health in overall health care which has led to involvement in oral health promotion programs. Some examples:

- Staff dentist Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern, providing dental care at Redfern and outreach services in regional New South Wales (NSW) in a mobile dental van. 1980-93.
- Establishing the dental program for Nganampa Health Council, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, South Australia (SA), utilising both fixed and mobile dental facilities. The program is ongoing and has a strong preventive and primary care focus, with detailed monitoring through regular data collection and evaluation. 1984-1990.
- Supervising dentist, school dental service, central coast of NSW. 1987-1990.
- Oral health program provider as part of the Far West Well Persons Health Check, for both adults and children, including oral health data collection and analysis, and guidance on development of improved programs for access to dental care and prevention. 2000-2008.
- Rural Health Support Education and Training (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care) grant, to develop "Dentistry in remote Aboriginal Communities", a manual to assist oral health practitioners intending to work in remote Aboriginal communities. This manual has been used extensively in remote Australia by dental practitioners and has also been a teaching tool at universities. 2001.
- Development of the Bila Muuji Oral Health Program, western NSW, with the creation and employment of a Regional Oral Health Promotion Coordinator position to address the oral health needs of the Bila Muuji Aboriginal Health Service member communities ranging from Walgett, Brewarrina and Bourke in north western NSW to Dareton and Balranald in south western NSW. 2006 - 2015.
- Currently dental consultant and advisor to Nganampa Health Council (SA) since 1999, Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (NSW) since 1999, Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Corporation (NSW) since 2001, Bila Muuji Aboriginal Health Service (NSW) since 2006, and Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Enterprises (GEBIE), Northern Territory (NT) since 2010.

Program review, planning and management

Sandra has considerable experience in reviewing programs and services, and providing advice to governments both state and federal, and to service managers, to guide development of improved dental services. Some examples:

- Review of the dental care for Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki region of NSW, leading to improved dental services in the region. 2000.
- Consultant and coordinator, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Oral Health Workshop, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Canberra. The outcomes of this workshop formed the basis for the development of the Indigenous Australians section of the national oral health plan: Oral Health of Australians. National Planning for Oral Health Improvement, Australian Health Ministers Conference. 2002.

- Statewide reviews of issues affecting the oral health of Aboriginal people in NSW (2001) - leading to the development of a statewide Aboriginal Oral Health Strategy - and in Victoria. The first review in Victoria (2004) was performed on behalf of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO). The second review, with Atkinson Kerr and Associates, was conducted on behalf of the Victorian Department of Health (2010), providing recommendations on ways to improve access to public dental services for Aboriginal people in Victoria.
- Development of service agreements between state health departments and non government organisations, to work together to improve dental care such as the agreement between the NSW Health Department and Bila Muuji to support oral health promotion programs in western NSW. 2006.
- Development of a Memorandum of Understanding between Bila Muuji and Charles Sturt University (CSU) so that Aboriginal oral health has due recognition in undergraduate training, and which also includes the development of a Bila Muuji scholarship to support undergraduate study at CSU. 2008.
- Technical consultant with JTA International, on behalf of the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health on a project to review dental services to remote Indigenous communities in the NT, with recommendations for the development of service delivery models. 2009-2011.
- Formative review and evaluation of the Closing the Gap – Indigenous Dental Services in Rural and Regional Areas national mobile infrastructure program, Department of Health and Ageing, Australian Government, 2011-2013.

Research and associated development projects

Sandra has worked with various universities and institutions on a range of research projects. Some examples:

- Researcher, "Blood Borne Viruses Related Discrimination - Dental Services", School of Medical Education, University of New South Wales, Sydney. 1996.
- Editor, "Indigenous Peoples' Health: Issues and Care in Rural and Remote Areas of the World. An Annotated Bibliography with International Coverage". Monash University, Victoria. 1997.
- Researcher, "National Health Care Workers and Hepatitis C Education Needs Assessment". Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, Canberra. 1997.
- National Health and Medical Research Council, Project Officer "Self-perceived oral health needs in small rural communities in NSW", a research project in collaboration with the University of Sydney. 2003.
- Consultant and gold standard examiner in survey methodology, Centre for Oral Health Strategy, NSW Health: NSW Child Oral Health Survey 2007.
- Research officer with the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health to examine the links between periodontal disease and lifestyle factors in an urban Aboriginal population. 2007-2009.
- Research officer with the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health to examine the effectiveness of Silver Fluoride treatments to arrest caries in high risk populations, 2011 - 2016.

Education and teaching

Sandra currently is an Adjunct Senior Lecturer at the School of Dental and Oral Health Sciences, Charles Sturt University, NSW. Her wide experiences in education and teaching include some of the examples below:

- Lecturer, Aboriginal Health Worker Education Program, Aboriginal Medical Service, Sydney, including curriculum review and development. 1991-2003.
- Dental Officer/Tutor, Westmead College of Dental Therapy, Sydney. 1991-1994.
- Part time teacher Technical and Further Education (TAFE) in certificate and diploma level dental courses. Sandra was also involved in curriculum review and development, and worked with the Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) to deliver courses to country students. 1995-2003.
- Senior Lecturer and Coordinator, Rural Placement Program, Faculty of Dentistry and University Department of Rural Health Broken Hill, University of Sydney. 2003-2006.
- Development of, and course coordinator for, Oral Health Stream, Remote Health Practice postgraduate program, Centre for Remote Health Alice Springs, Flinders University. 2003-2010.

Sandra has presented at numerous conferences and workshops in Australia and internationally, and has published several reports and papers.

International experience

Sandra is highly committed to the improvement of conditions in rural, remote, and marginalised communities and has demonstrated this commitment through involvement in several overseas projects, some of which include:

- Volunteer dentist, Nepal, including coordination and implementation of the Dental Assistants Training Program, Banepa, Nepal. Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), jointly funded by AusAID and Rotary Australia World Community Services (RAWCS). Since 2000.
- Consultant, Papua New Guinea Dental Education Needs, Medical Officers, Nursing and Allied Health Project (MONAHP), funded by AusAID which involved consulting in Papua New Guinea and Fiji. 2000.
- Consultant AusAID feasibility project, East Timor-Australia National Oral Health Care Program Design Mission, East Timor. A project design for the restructuring of dental services in East Timor in the aftermath of the post-referendum devastation in 1999. 2000.
- Volunteer dentist, East Timor, including establishment of dental programs, establishing professional dental association linkages between East Timor and Australia and coordinating a Rotary International project. 2003-2011.
- Support of a village based sanitation project in remote villages in Nepal involving construction of septic and biogas toilets, and working with donated funds. She also finds resources to coordinate school based oral health prevention programs in the same villages and supports children to attend the local school. Since 2006.
- Establishment of a volunteer based dental training and outreach program for the slum areas and rural villages in Bangladesh. Since 2014.

Professional affiliations

- Member, Special Purpose Committee on Australian Volunteers in Dentistry, Australian Dental Association Inc. Since 2006.
- Member, Dental Workforce, and Public Sector Dentistry Committees, Australian Dental Association New South Wales Branch. 2010-2011.
- Board Member Filling the Gap volunteer dental program. Since 2015.