



**MCaFHNA 2017
THE PENINSULA
DOCKLANDS MELBOURNE
1-3 June, 2017**

On the 1st to the 3rd of June, the Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses Australia held the 2017 Conference entitled “The Journey”. The Venue was “The Peninsula Centre”, a historical site of its own as it was previously a warehouse situated in the Docklands, surrounded by water, boats and modern day life where there were over 850-900 Conference attendees at any given time, over the three days of the Conference.

The Themes for the Conference were: *Reflecting on the Past, Celebrating the Present and Embracing the Future.*

Carolyn Briggs, an Aboriginal Elder representing the Kulin Nation, performed a Welcome to Country ceremony where she very spiritually and powerfully stated that visitors were welcome, but that in visiting, the land must not be harmed nor the children of the land, be harmed. Mahalia Barnes entertained us with her exquisite voice immediately following the Welcome to Country with her rendition of “Heroes”.

The International Guest Speaker was Viv Bennett. Viv was appointed as Director of Public Health in England in 2013 and was very engaging with her workshop on Thursday of the Conference entitled, “Getting it Right in the Early Years” and also with her presentation on the Friday entitled “Start of the Healthy life Journey: The First 1001 days”. At the conclusion of the Conference, Viv reflected on the Journey undertaken by the Maternal & Child Health Nurses in the past three days, and drew together the themes arising from the presentations.

The Guest presenters from across Australia were varied in their topics as outlined below:

Professor Dorothy Scott presenting on the importance of the early Years.

Professor Margaret Morris presenting on the impact of maternal obesity on offspring.

Emeritus Professor Colin Binns presenting on the Infant Feeding Guidelines and also the DOHAD hypothesis.

Dr. Jennifer Koplin provided a focus on areas for Food Allergy Prevention

Associate/Professor Kirsty Foster presenting on Communication Issues in Maternal Child and Family Health

Professor Kerry Arabena presented on Protecting Australia’s Children

Emeritus Professor John Boulton presented on Aboriginal Children, History and Health

Associate Professor Bruce Foster presented on Dysplasia of the Hip

Dr. Alicia Spittle presented on Early Neurohabilitation for Infants (born preterm and/or at high risk of Cerebral Palsy).

MS Felicity Morrow and MS Antoinette Marshall (presented on the National free App-“MUSH” which is aimed at connecting mother’s locally across Australia.

Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses Australia were very *pleased and proud* to be able to present for the first time National Standards of Practice for Maternal, Child & Family Health Nurses in Australia. The Project was under the leadership of Associate Professor Julian Grant, commencing in 2011 and completed in 2017. The National Standards of Practice “recognised the unique qualities of practice in each Jurisdiction and the historical work undertaken by the jurisdictions in maintaining quality and safety in practice”. (National Standards of Practice for Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses in Australia P.1) Sponsorship and assistance was provided by State groups, Flinders University, and Gymparoo. The Standards can be viewed online at www.mcafhna.org.au

The Thursday Workshop presenters were also varied in their topics and included:

Dr. Donna Geddes, discussing the latest research in relation to breast feeding

Beverley Allen from Tweedle Victoria, chaired a panel of experts in relation to three specific sleep scenarios. Participating groups were *Sleep Safe Space, Karitane, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, Pedipod and NGALA*.

The Motherhood Journey-Bitter Sweet Embrace conducted by *Dr. Sophia Xeros-Constantinides and the Enhanced Maternal & Child Health Team (Yarra Ranges Council)*. *Presentation of the research based, “Art Therapy Connect Group”* involved workshop participants to try their own hand at painting with rather marvellous unexpected results and great therapeutic conversation.

On the Friday morning, viewed in film, a wonderful trip back in time to 1917 to look at what prompted “The Journey” here in Victoria and Tasmania. This left Nurses feeling emotionally proud and tearful as well in thinking about the times in which those Nurses who have gone before us walked with families on their journey to lead us with leadership and vision to where we are today. We heard from Kath Kehoe, Fran Morris, Patricia Glynn and Kelly Burns on film who gave advice to the Nurses of the future and then met together to cut the 100 year birthday Cake. Retired Nurses were sponsored by The City of Melbourne to attend the event which added to the historical past and leadership significance of the event.

On the Friday Night was the fantastic Gala Dinner at the most beautiful and historical Plaza Ballroom in Collins St. Melbourne. The Function was attended by 400 Conference Participants and what a wonderful night this was! Entertainment was provided by the Band “Popcorn” and dancers in a really beautiful venue. It was simply spectacular and words cannot describe the event!

The Conference Event of the Century was pulled together by the very beautiful and expert work of our Master of Ceremonies, Aurora Mackrill. Aurora sang, danced, fascinated us with her great dazzling costumes and made her way into all of our hearts over the three days of the Conference. MCAFHNA wishes to thank all the Maternal Child Family Health Nurses who attended the Conference and made it such a really spectacular event and Invite you to join us for our next conference in Sydney in 2019!

Bernice Boland, Victorian State Representative to MCAFHNA & Chair of the MCAFHNA Conference 2017 “The Journey.