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A workforce for Aboriginal comprehensive primary health care: successes, challenges and solutions

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Better Health Futures –
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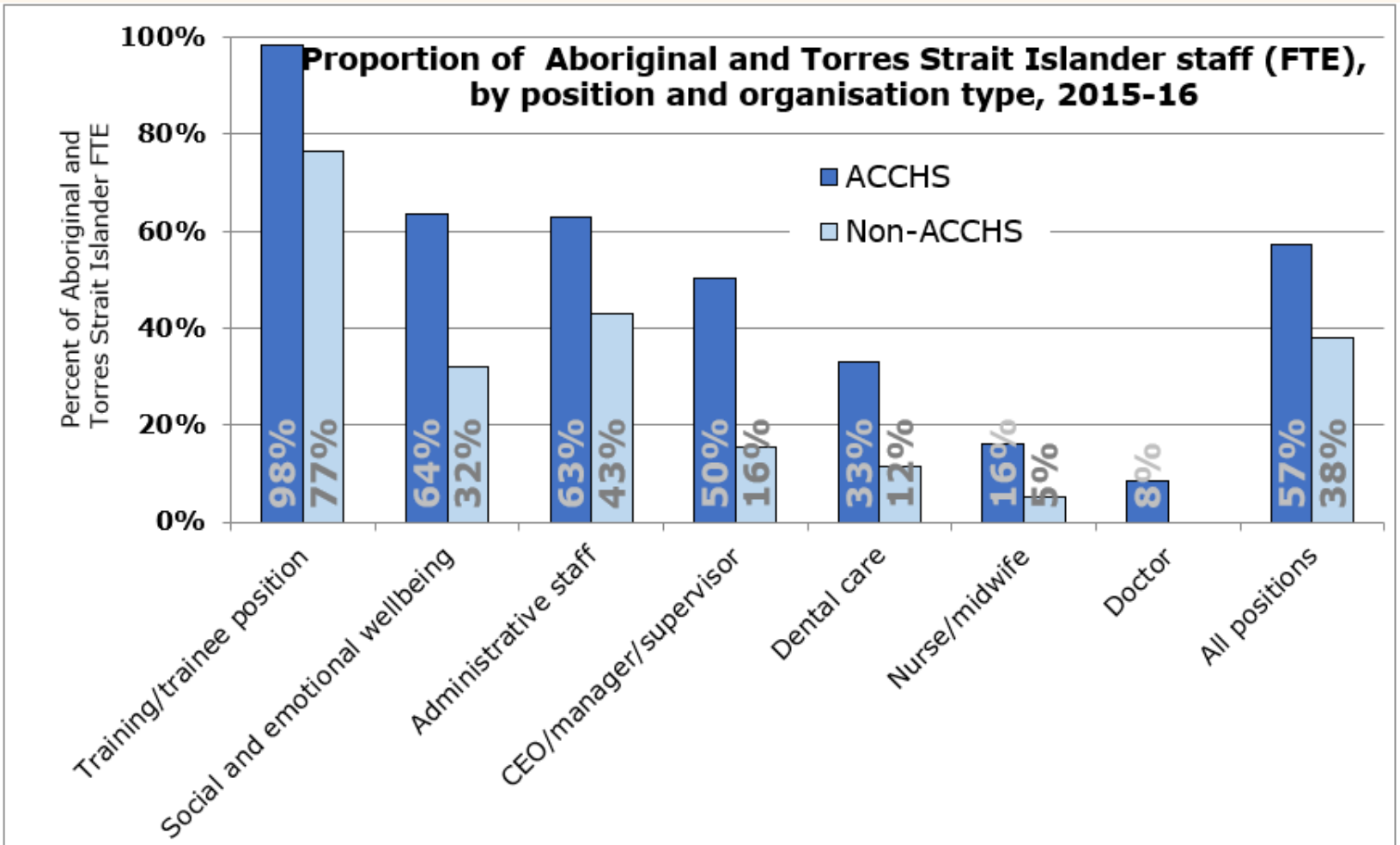
Two key workforce challenges for PHC

1. the employment of Aboriginal people at all levels of primary health care services

2. the critical shortage of nurses to work in primary health care

Success of ACCHSs in employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (national figures)

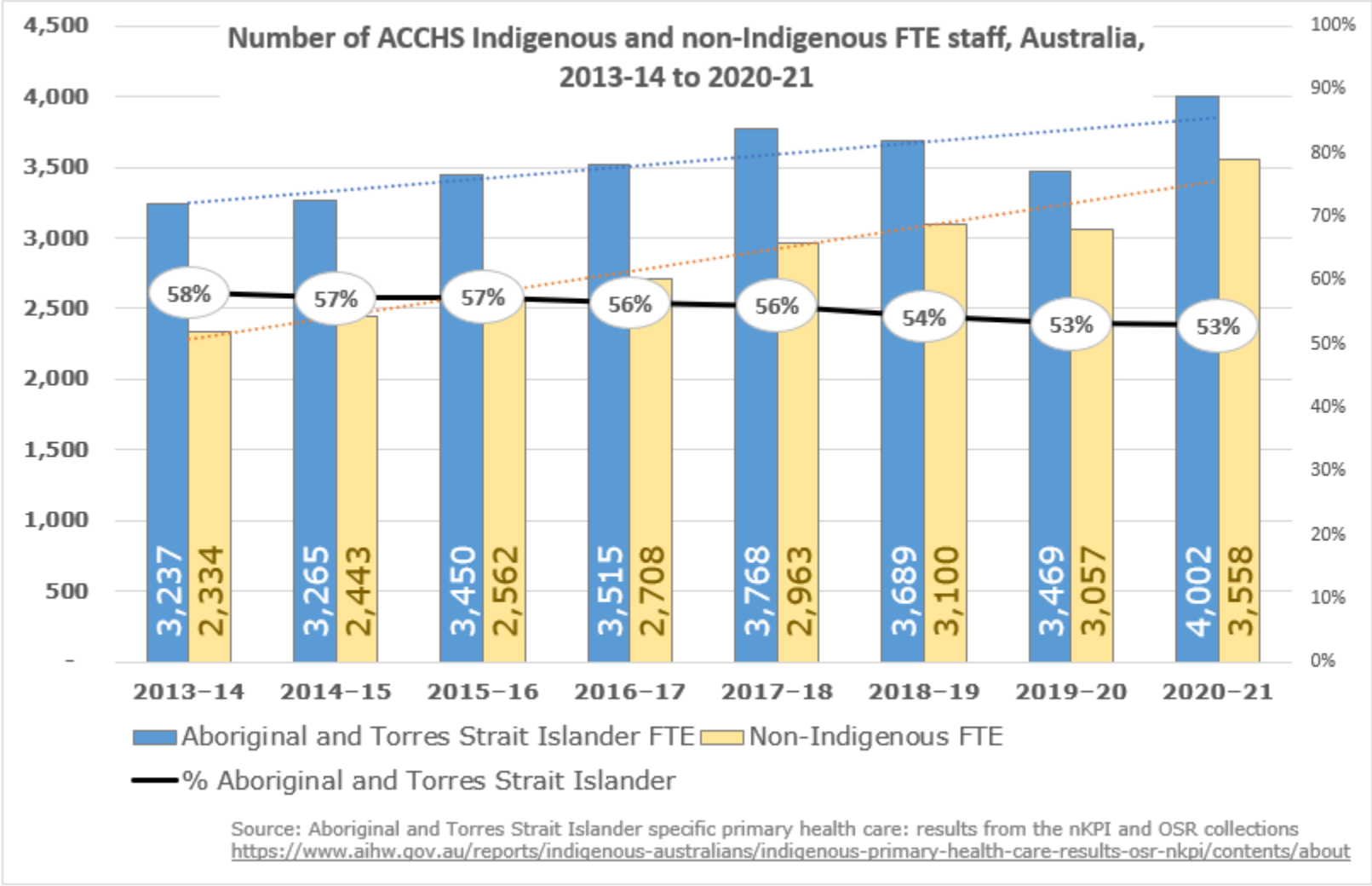


Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander health organisations: Online Services Report — key results 2015–16. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-health-welfare-services/health-organisations-osr-key-results-2015/contents/table-of-contents

Congress strategies to increase employment of Aboriginal staff

- streamlined recruitment processes to encourage applications from Aboriginal people
- ensuring that Aboriginal people are on every selection panel
- actively encouraging Aboriginal staff to apply for internal transfers and promotion opportunities
- providing a dedicated Aboriginal Health Practitioner (AHP) training coordinator
- partnering with AMSANT to deliver leadership workshops
- a traineeship program
- study support to commence or continue formal studies

A national challenge …



Source: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific primary health care: results from the nKPI and OSR collections
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/indigenous-primary-health-care-results-osr-nkpi/contents/about

Addressing the upstream factors

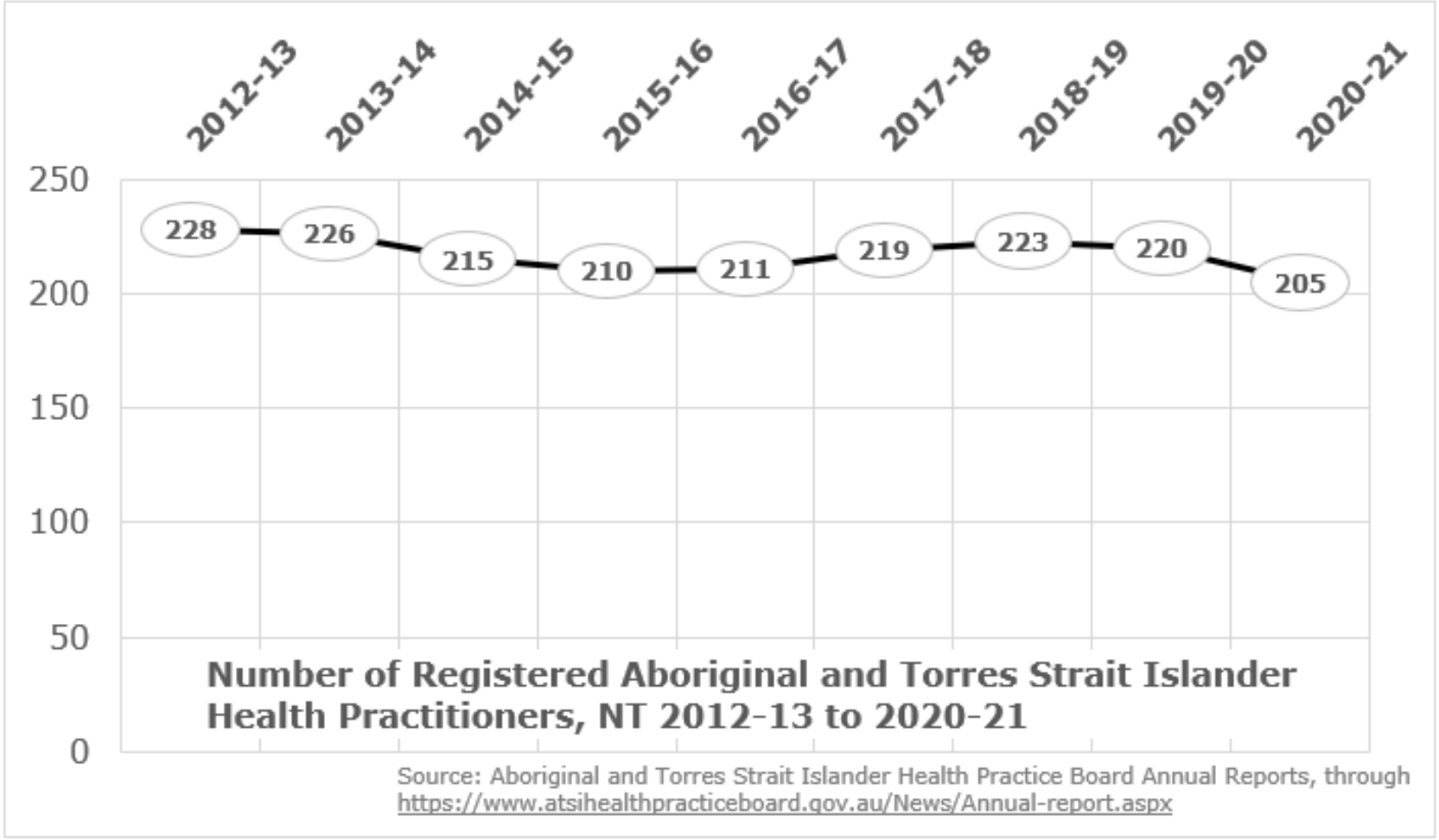
The social determinants of employment:

- Tackling poverty and inequality
- Evidence-based early childhood development programs
- Substantially increased investment in public school education
- Mass-campaign adult literacy programs
- Improved housing

Specific actions to increase Aboriginal employment in primary health care

- Dedicated Australian Government funding for ACCHSs to provide Aboriginal cadetships, scholarships and traineeships
- Addressing system barriers to Aboriginal employment in remote areas
  - Ochre Card
  - Centrelink
  - Aboriginal staff housing
- Better pathway for AHWs and AHPs

Aboriginal health practitioner registrations



Graduate Nursing Program in Remote Indigenous Primary Health Care

- Established in collaboration with the Australian College of Nursing, Alice Springs Hospital, Flinders University and the NTPHN
- Two-year program of 6-month hospital rotations and supported remote placements
- Graduated pathway and dedicated nurse educator leading to remote practice over 2-3 years
- 140 graduate applicants for 4 placements (2021)
- Currently 8 graduate nurses in Congress clinics in town / near town, one remote, two in ASH

A national approach to addressing the remote nurse workforce shortage

- **a new category of nursing registration** conditional on working in Aboriginal primary health care and targeted at university-qualified nurses with lapsed registration
- a **Graduate NT Nurse PHC Program**, similar to that established at Congress but with 50 places funded across the Northern Territory
- **A new financial recruitment incentive payment of** $30,000 to nurses in a remote Aboriginal community on completion of 12 months of service

Thank you!