

# The College and Traditional Healing

## The Mark Sheldon Award



The Mark Sheldon Prize which was established in 2000 honours the memory of Dr Mark Sheldon, who died in 1998 only 6 months after becoming a Fellow with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP). Dr Mark Sheldon was a pioneer psychiatrist with a mission to provide quality psychiatric services to rural and remote Aboriginal communities. Working with the Ngangkari (Traditional Healers) Mark developed a flexible methodology of investigation, convinced that the best outcomes were often obtained when traditional methods and modern medicine were used together. Designing his own clinical strategies he was able to confront the psychological and social problems endemic in many communities.

The prize named in his honour recognises noteworthy contributions (which might include service provision or research) to Indigenous mental health has historically been awarded to Psychiatry Trainees or Fellows of the College. In 2009, nine years on from Dr Mark Sheldon's death, Two Aboriginal Ngankaris, Mr Andy Tjilari and Mr Rupert Peter were awarded the RANZCP's Mark Sheldon Award at its annual award ceremony. Both Mr Andy Tjilari and Mr Rupert Peter are recognised internationally as senior Aboriginal elders and experts in the field of traditional healing, working throughout their lives as Ngankaris. Within Australia they were the first and remain the only Ngankaris to be employed full-time to provide specialist mental health services for Aboriginal communities. They have worked extensively to educate health professionals about Aboriginal healing methods and cultural knowledge as well as provide consultation, advice and treatment for mental health problems across Aboriginal communities.

The RANZCP is one of the first medical colleges to recognise, award and honour traditional healers in this way.



Mr Andy Tjilari and Professor Ken Kirkby



Mr Rupert Peter and Professor Ken Kirkby