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Big guns inspire child health researchers to shoot for the stars

The Centre for Child Development and Education (CCDE) at the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin is delighted to announce two internationally regarded leaders in their fields as co-patrons of the organisation.

CCDE’s Director Professor Sven Silburn said today that he is pleased to have this opportunity to honour the stellar achievements of Dr Mandawuy Yunupingu and Professor Sir Michael Marmot.

“Dr Yunupingu, an educator and community leader of the highest calibre, will bring deep knowledge and keen insight to the challenge of improving the provision of health and education services for Indigenous Australians,” said Professor Silburn.

Launched last year, CCDE is a ground-breaking organisation dedicated to improving the development, wellbeing, education, and life opportunities of children across Australia, especially Indigenous children.

Dr Yunupingu, the 1992 Australian of the Year is a distinguished performer and teacher. As a songwriter and musician he brought contemporary Aboriginal culture to the world with the Yothu Yindi band. Mandawuy was also the first Indigenous principal of Yirrkala Community School, and a pioneer of ‘both-ways’ learning.

“It is humbling that two men of this quality have agreed to lend their names to the work of the Centre for Child Development and Education,” said Professor Silburn.

Professor Marmot, president of the British Medical Association and chair of the World Health Organisation’s European Review of action to address health inequities, was knighted in 2000 for his pioneering work in epidemiology and in understanding health inequalities.

“It is a privilege to welcome a leading scientist like Professor Marmot, who will help the Centre link with some of the world’s best minds to develop solutions for the challenges the Northern Territory faces in health and education,” said Professor Silburn.

“We look forward to working together towards breaking the cycle of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians, and improving the quality of life for children across the country.”

CCDE is a partnership between Menzies, Charles Darwin University and the Northern Territory Government. Recent CCDE research initiatives include work on youth suicide, mobile pre-schools, and the NT’s Early Childhood Development Plan.

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ATTACHMENT – Biographical detail of co-patrons, and background on the Centre for Child Development and Education (CCDE)
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Professor Sir Michael Marmot – Biographical notes
Professor Sir Michael Marmot is the president of the British Medical Association and chair of the World Health Organisation’s European Review of Action to Address Health Inequalities. He chaired the Commission on Social Determinants of Health set up by the World Health Organization in 2005. He is the Director of the International Institute for Society and Health and MRC Research Professor in Epidemiology at University College London (UCL) and has led a research group on health inequalities for the past 30 years. At the request of the British Government, he conducted a review of health inequalities, which published its report ‘Fair Society, Healthy Lives’ in February 2010. He leads the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) and is engaged in several international research efforts on the social determinants of health including the Department of Health Scientific Reference Group on tackling health inequalities in the UK.

Mandawuy Yunupingu – Biographical notes
Mandawuy Yunupingu was born near Yirrkala, Northern Territory. In 1977 he began teaching at the Yirrkala Community School. In 1985 Mandawuy wrote his first song, Djapana (Sunset Dreaming) and later that year he formed the band Yothu Yindi with his nephew Witiyana Marika. In 1987, Mandawuy became the first Aboriginal person from Arnhem Land to gain a university degree, taking a Bachelor of Arts (Education) from Deakin University. In 1989 he became assistant principal of the Yirrkala Community School and set about introducing a ‘both-ways’ curriculum that offered students the best aspects of both Yolngu (Aboriginal) and Balanda (European) education processes. In 1990, Mandawuy took over as principal of the Yirrkala Community School, a position he held until late 1991 when he took leave to concentrate on his career as the principal songwriter for Yothu Yindi. Mandawuy has toured extensively, performing in Australia, North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Mandawuy Yunupingu was named Australian of the Year for 1992. He was formerly the deputy chairman / secretary of the Yothu Yindi Foundation, an Aboriginal foundation set up to support and further the maintenance, development, teaching and enterprise potential of Yolngu cultural life. In April 1998 Mandawuy was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of the University (DUniv) by the Queensland University of Technology “in recognition of his significant contribution to the education of Aboriginal children, and to greater understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.”

The Centre for Child Development and Education
The Centre for Child Development and Education at the Menzies School of Health Research is a leader in applied research to break the inter-generational cycle of poor health, education and disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. We have found that assisting children’s early development and fostering their success at school is one of the most effective ways of breaking the inter-generational cycle of poor health and disadvantage. We work to change the way we deliver services so that we can provide more support to families who are raising children and ensure that children get a good start in life.