



the
Lowitja
INSTITUTE
Australia's National Institute
for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Health Research

*Incorporating the Cooperative Research Centre
for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health*

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 24th March 2010

First “Congress Lowitja” hailed a success

The inaugural two-day Congress for Australia's National Research Institute for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health, the Lowitja Institute, concluded in Sydney today, being hailed by all participants as a great success.

The Institute, named in honour of respected champion of Aboriginal rights and former Australian of the Year, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, is Australia's only Aboriginal-run health research body and is also the host organisation for the recently launched Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (CRCATSIH). Ms O'Donoghue officially opened the Congress.

Congress Lowitja brought together professionals from the Indigenous and non-Indigenous health sector, policymakers from both State and Federal Governments, health and social researchers, and representatives from community groups and philanthropic bodies.

Chairperson of the Lowitja Institute, Ms Pat Anderson, said at the Congress's closing that the quality of the participants was the major factor in its success.

“One of the most gratifying aspects has been the depth of experience and expertise of the participants who have come from across the country. Their insights and generosity have made this inaugural Congress a great success and this bodes well for the future of Aboriginal health research,” Ms Anderson said.

These sentiments were echoed by the Institute's Director of Research, Professor Ian Anderson of the University of Melbourne.

“We often talk about the emerging Aboriginal leadership in health research. What we have seen over the past two days is that this leadership has well and truly arrived,” Professor Anderson said.

“I am excited by the vision and energy that participants brought to the Congress deliberations. I look forward to continuing to work with the community of people who are committed to the Lowitja vision,” Dr Anderson said.

The work of the Lowitja Institute will be a vital component of national efforts to address the huge gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Without thorough, community-based research which provides achievable processes and policies to tackle the fundamental causes of these huge health differences, the objective of ‘Closing the Gap’ within a generation cannot be achieved. Thursday 25th March 2010 is “Close The Gap” Day.

As well as hearing presentations showcasing the successes and legacy of the former CRC for Aboriginal Health, the participants also discussed the CRCATSIH's research agenda and provided feedback on research projects within the three new program areas, being:

- Healthy Start, Healthy Life.
- Healthy Communities and Settings.
- Enabling Policy and Systems.



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One of the key issues discussed in Workshops on these three Program areas was the importance of understanding both the similarities of issues but also the differences in various communities' experiences of these health issues and how that impacts on delivery of services to Indigenous communities across the country. There is no simple, standard outcome that fits all.

Further, participants discussed the linkages between physical and mental health and the importance of addressing both areas simultaneously.

Outcomes from **Congress Lowitja** will help guide the CRCATSIH's research agenda to priority areas identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, community organisations and other stakeholders. Congress Lowitja will be held every two years to ensure the research agenda remains responsive to new priorities as they emerge.

ENDS

For more information about the Lowitja Institute and the CRCATSIH, please visit www.lowitja.org.au.

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