



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*

February 24 2010

Closing the gap – Lowitja research institute launched

National efforts to improve Aboriginal health and close the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and other Australians will receive a major boost with today's Canberra launch of the Lowitja Institute – Australia's Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

Named in honour of senior Yankuntjatjara Elder and national Aboriginal leader, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, the new Institute will host the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health and provide a more permanent home for CRCATSIH's pioneering work of improving Indigenous health through research and the development of a professional and effective Indigenous health workforce.

Chair of the Institute's interim board, Pat Anderson, said the Lowitja Institute would be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and like its CRC predecessors encourage a collaborative and supportive research environment.

"The need for Indigenous control of the health research agenda is well recognised but it is also essential that the new Institute continues to build strong relationships with governments, academic and other research institutions and the non-government health sector including medical associations and nurses unions," she said.

"As the Prime Minister has consistently emphasised there is a critical need for policy to be evidence-based and the Lowitja Institute will continue to provide rigorous research evidence of what works and where health dollars should be prioritised."

The Lowitja Institute and the CRCATSIH has developed a new research agenda with three program areas:

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

Ms Anderson said the new research agenda reflects the need for research to be focused beyond simply medicines and technology and to address the systemic causes of Indigenous ill health and include innovations at the broader community and social level.

"It's clear that building sustainable health improvements will require evaluation of current programs and policies as well as reforms to current service delivery models and a better understanding of the broader social determinants of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Ms Anderson said that the new research agenda will investigate determinants of health including relationship to land, connectedness to community and family, the impact of racism, and identity and levels of self-determination and community control.



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The Lowitja Institute will be launched by the Minister for Indigenous Health, Warren Snowdon to an audience of politicians, senior health bureaucrats, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and philanthropists.

“We are seeking support from the Federal, as well as State and Territory Governments and the corporate and philanthropic sector the Lowitja Institute to establish an endowment fund to ensure the critical evidence gathering work undertaken by the CRC continues,” said Ms Anderson.

“We are confident that this initiative will have the support of all Australians.”

The Lowitja Institute will be launched tonight at a dinner in the Mural hall of Parliament House at 6.30pm Wednesday February 2010.

For further information:

Alastair Harris - 0409 658 177

Please note that Pat Anderson, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue and recent Torres Strait Islander PhD graduate, Dr Sanchia Shibasaki will be available for interview and photos in Parliament House prior to the launch on Wednesday 24th.