



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

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Lowitja Institute welcomes independent mental health report for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The Lowitja Institute welcomes the release of an independent report addressing the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lowitja Institute CEO Dr Janine Mohamed was among 30 Indigenous leaders in mental health and wellbeing who contributed to the report, [A National COVID-19 Pandemic Issues Paper on Mental Health and Wellbeing For Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#), produced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander COVID-19 working party and convened through the Transforming Indigenous Mental Health and Wellbeing Project at the University of Western Australia.

Dr Mohamed said the report acknowledges the remarkable success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations at keeping COVID-19 rates low in the pandemic, which demonstrated the importance and impact of self-determination in promoting the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples in Australia.

But it also sounds a warning of “devastating and ongoing” impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing over the longer term unless culturally safe services are accessible and sufficiently resourced to support the psychosocial recovery from lockdown, restricted practices, and the inevitable economic recession to follow, she said.

“It notes that the Federal Government has provided extra investment in mental health support yet, despite known risks, this has been largely directed to mainstream services that will not meet the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities alone,” she said.

“It warns that culturally safe, trauma-informed, lived-experience solutions that respond to the health and wellbeing needs and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities remain chronically under-resourced,” she said.

The report details five key recommendations focused on: right to self-determination, the health and mental health workforce, social and cultural determinants of health, digital and telehealth inclusion with immediate attention to an Indigenous helpline, evaluation that includes Indigenous data sovereignty.

For media queries and/or to arrange an interview with Dr Mohamed, please contact Cristina Lochert on 0413 833 354.

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ABOUT THE LOWITJA INSTITUTE

The Lowitja Institute is Australia's national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, named in honour of its Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. It is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples through high impact quality research, knowledge exchange, and by supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.

Established in January 2010, the Lowitja Institute operates on key principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, a broader understanding of health that incorporates wellbeing, and the need for the work to have a clear and positive impact.

The history of the Lowitja Institute dates back to 1997 when the first Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was established. Since then, the Institute and the CRC organisations have led a substantial reform agenda in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research by working with communities, researchers and policymakers, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people setting the agenda and driving the outcomes.

<http://www.lowitja.org.au>