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Lowitja Institute urges transformation of power and systems to Close the Gap for the next generation

Today the Close the Gap Campaign is calling on Australian governments to embrace genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to collectively close the gap in health outcomes for the next generation.

Lowitja Institute CEO Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed said the *Close the Gap Campaign Report 2022 – Transforming Power: Voices for Generational Change* is a blueprint for that transformation.

“The report is a beautiful and powerful call to action, showcasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led brilliance at work, in all sorts of settings, paving the way ahead as we have done as peoples over millennia,” Adjunct Professor Mohamed said.

“It puts a spotlight on our community-led organisations and services that work tirelessly to provide equitable health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Now it’s time for governments and mainstream services to step up, and step back, if we are to truly close the gap in health outcomes for our peoples.”

Launched today on Close the Gap Day, this year’s report highlights how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are leading the way in transforming health and community services, policies and programs, with foundations of culture and Country at the centre.

Produced by the Lowitja Institute, the report showcases the strength of Aboriginal-led decision-making despite unprecedented health challenges from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

It focuses on themes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led transformation, gender justice and equity, and allyship – highlighting the need for trust and accountability in partnerships to enable transformative change.

Among its key recommendations are calls for action on gender and climate justice, a national housing framework, and full implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

“We need transformation of minds to have transformation of systems,” said June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, and Co-Chair for the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee.



"It's time to recognise a need for large-scale systemic reform and a paradigm shift in policy design and delivery if we want to improve outcomes in health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," said Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee Co-Chair and NAATSIHWP CEO, Karl Briscoe.

For media queries and/or to arrange an interview with Lowitja Institute CEO, Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, please contact Jo Cackett on 0474 727 506.

See the full report: www.lowitja.org.au/CTGReport2022

See the 12 recommendations: See attachment below on page 3.

For interviews with Commissioner June Oscar and Mr Karl Briscoe, Co-Chairs for the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, please contact:

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Close the Gap Campaign Report 2022 – Recommendations

Structural reform

We call on governments to:

1. Fully implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament.
2. Fully implement the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031 and other supporting plans, with a commitment to long term (10+ years) needs-based and coordinated cross-sectional funding by federal, state, territory and local governments.
3. Invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data development at the local level and uphold the principles of Data Governance and Sovereignty by following through on commitments to communities and individuals to access place-based data to design community-driven initiatives.
4. Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research agenda for health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on the impacts of systemic racism in health systems. This should include an investment in knowledge translation and research impact.

Innovation driven by cultural intellect and cultural safety

We call on governments to:

5. Establish and support empowerment and leadership forums for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples at national, state and territory and local levels, to provide them with the opportunity to engage in decision-making processes for policies, programs and services. These forums should privilege and honour the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples and support strengths-based, place-based social and emotional wellbeing initiatives.
6. Invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development to support the growth of the community controlled sector and community-led service delivery solutions. This will support and strengthen the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021–2031. Support for community-driven, holistic approaches to health and wellbeing policies, programs and services is essential to increase access to health care by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
7. Develop a comprehensive National Action Plan which outlines the full implementation of recommendations from the landmark *Wiji Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future* report. This plan should provide a holistic national framework that identifies and addresses the complex needs and intersectional issues that are specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

8. In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, evaluate and report on the effectiveness of policy and programs for the prevention of violence against women. Results should be incorporated into reporting activity conducted by the Productivity Commission on progress against Close the Gap targets. The development of a new National Plan to Reduce Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and their Children should also be prioritised.
9. Support strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the development and implementation of community-designed primary prevention strategies addressing violence against women and their children. This should include the establishment of multi-disciplinary primary prevention networks and workforce across all states and territories.

Empowering communities to improve health and wellbeing through equal access

We call on governments to:

10. Develop a whole-of-government national housing strategy or framework that delivers appropriate housing and strategies to reduce overcrowding, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages in remote communities. Housing and infrastructure planning should include:
 - a) adaptable strategies to mitigate the unique challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly in remote communities
 - b) embedded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge and conservation and land management practices
 - c) investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research into housing and infrastructure needs, including knowledge translation and research impact
 - d) leadership by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the establishment of a national peak body.
11. Invest in IT infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure equal access to the internet, regardless of location for an individual or community. This is essential to ensuring equitable access to health, education and income support services and programs, and to being able to realise the objectives of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031 to improve access to telehealth, digital health, data collection and other technologies.
12. Achieve true energy and climate justice by effectively responding to the climate emergency and the extreme heat and other weather events resulting from climate change in remote communities. Governments must invest in mitigation, prevention and adaptation planning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.