

# Position Statement



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

31 July 2013

## **Institute welcomes launch of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023**

The Lowitja Institute welcomes the launch of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. We are especially pleased to see that the Plan addresses:

- The centrality of culture and wellbeing.
- The importance of mental health and social and emotional wellbeing, and the relationship between cultural identity and wellbeing.
- A rights-based approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.
- Social determinants which sit outside the health sphere, but which impact our health so greatly.
- The role of evidence-based practice and robust health research and data systems.

We are especially encouraged by the inclusion, for the first time, of racism as a social determinant. The Lowitja Institute knows from our own research<sup>1</sup> that racism makes us sick, and that it must be named, acknowledged, challenged and addressed.

We welcome also a whole of life perspective to health across the life stages. This allows us to address the inter-generational issues that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and wellbeing.

The Plan was developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and health organisations. The Lowitja Institute is a member of the National Health Leadership Forum which had significant input and direction into the development of the Plan.

There is still some way to go yet and the next challenge will be the implementation of the Plan. A national plan will require commitment from all states and jurisdictions to the new national Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes. We would urge all governments and health bodies to commit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Australia must not be dealing with the national shame that is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in ten years' time.

The Lowitja Institute is Australia's only national health research organisation with a sole focus on the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples.

**[www.lowitja.org.au](http://www.lowitja.org.au)**

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<sup>1</sup> Mental Health Impacts of Racial Discrimination in Victorian Aboriginal Communities – Summary Report, available at [www.lowitja.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/LEAD\\_Racism\\_Survey\\_Summary\\_Report.pdf](http://www.lowitja.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/LEAD_Racism_Survey_Summary_Report.pdf)