

# Recognise Health

Recognise Health is an initiative of the Lowitja Institute that promotes understanding of the important link between health and wellbeing and constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The initiative has brought together a coalition of 117 leading non-government organisations across the Australian health system. With their particular perspective of health, these organisations have signed a statement in support of constitutional change.

The Institute is working closely with Recognise, the people's movement to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution.

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

# The Statement

We call on all Australians to support recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution.

We look forward to a time when all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can fully participate in all that Australia has to offer, enjoying respect for our country's first cultures and leadership, and the dignity and benefits of long healthy lives.

Australia's First Peoples continue to die far earlier and experience a higher burden of disease and disability than other Australians. This is a result of long term economic disadvantage and social exclusion, among other factors. Constitutional recognition would provide a strong foundation for working together towards better health and social wellbeing in the hearts, minds and lives of all Australians.



# The Signatories

5 March 2015

## FOUNDING MEMBERS

Allied Health Professions Australia  
Australasian College of Health Service Management  
Australian College of Nursing  
Australian Health Promotion Association  
Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association  
Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association  
Australian Medical Association  
Cancer Council Australia  
Catholic Health Australia  
Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives  
Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand)  
Heart Foundation  
Indigenous Allied Health Australia  
Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association  
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation  
Public Health Association of Australia  
The Lowitja Institute

## MEMBERS

Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of New South Wales  
Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Inc.  
Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory  
Alzheimer's Australia  
Anwernekenhe National HIV Alliance  
Arthritis Australia  
Asthma Australia

Australasian College for Emergency Medicine  
Australasian Hepatology Association  
Australasian Podiatry Council  
Australasian Neuroscience Nurses Association  
Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists  
Australian College of Mental Health Nurses  
Australian and New Zealand Orthopaedic Nurses Association  
Australian College of Nurse Practitioners  
Australian Council of PVCs and Deans of Health Sciences  
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations  
Australian Institute of Medical Scientists  
Australian Medical Students Association  
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation  
Australian Pharmacy Council  
Australian Physiotherapy Council  
Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association  
Australian Psychological Society  
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth  
Australian Women's Health Network  
Baker IDI and Diabetes Institute  
Breast Cancer Network Australia  
Cancer Council Northern Territory  
Cancer Council South Australia  
Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand  
Charles Sturt University  
Children's Medical Research Institute  
Chronic Illness Alliance  
College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand  
Consumers Health Forum of Australia  
Continence Nurses Society Australia  
CRANaplus



Cure Cancer Australia Foundation  
Cystic Fibrosis Australia  
Diabetes Australia  
Dietitians Association of Australia  
Division of Tropical Health and Medicine, James Cook University  
Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia  
Epilepsy Australia  
Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Adelaide  
Faculty of Health, Queensland University of Technology  
Faculty of Health, University of Canberra  
Faculty of Health, University of Technology Sydney  
Flinders University  
Fred Hollows Foundation  
George Institute for Global Health  
Good Beginnings Australia  
Griffith University  
Headspace  
Health Services Union National  
Hepatitis Australia  
Joint Epilepsy Council of Australia  
Kidney Health Australia  
Lung Foundation Australia  
Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Corporation  
Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia Inc.  
Menzies School of Health Research  
Monash University  
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia  
National Breast Cancer Foundation  
National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee\*  
National Rural Health Students' Network  
National Stroke Foundation

Occupational Therapy Australia  
Occupational Therapy Council (Australia and New Zealand) Ltd  
Osteoporosis Australia  
Palliative Care Australia  
Palliative Care Nurses Australia  
Parkinson's Australia Inc.  
Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia  
Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council  
Rheumatic Heart Disease Australia  
Royal Australasian College of Physicians  
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists  
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners  
SANE  
Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health  
Social Determinants of Health Alliance  
Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia  
South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute  
Southern Cross University  
Speech Pathology Australia  
Suicide Prevention Australia  
The University of Melbourne  
University of South Australia  
University of Wollongong  
Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc.  
Vision 2020 Australia  
Vision Australia  
Walter and Eliza Hall Institute  
Women and Children's Healthcare Australasia

\* Note: This committee has ceased.

# Constitutional Recognition and Health

The Australian Constitution, the main law that guides the operation of the Commonwealth of Australia, took effect in **1901**. At that point in time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had lived on this land for **more than 40,000 years**, keeping alive the world's oldest continuous cultures. However, Australia's founding document does not recognise this first chapter of our national story.<sup>1</sup>

Following the 2012 report of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition, **all major political parties declared their support for recognition**. Subsequently, the Prime Minister announced that the government intends to work towards a referendum. For the referendum to pass, **the people of Australia need to understand and support the case for change**, and there needs to be **strong leadership** from across the political spectrum, business and community sectors, and, of course, from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. Part of the work required for a successful referendum is to

**engage key community organisations**—such as health organisations—in the **national dialogue**, thereby energising their membership and the broader public to engage and support the referendum.

Recognition of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** people would acknowledge their **powerful sense of identity, pride, history and belonging to this land**. It would promote opportunities for full participation in all that Australia has to offer and be a significant step towards equity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

**Recognition, participation and equity** would, in turn, have profound positive consequences for wellbeing, and therefore health. There is significant evidence from health research to indicate that being connected to the wider community, having a strong identity and feeling socially supported, all have **significant positive impacts on health**.

**The story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia is a powerful shared national story that needs to be acknowledged in the Constitution for the wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples, and the nation as a whole.**

<sup>1</sup> Recognise Website <http://www.recognise.org.au/why/why-recognition/> February 2015

# About the Lowitja Institute

The Lowitja Institute is the national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research. It is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation, named in honour of its Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. The Institute was established in 2010, emerging from a 14-year history of Cooperative Research Centres funded by the Australian Government CRC Program.

The Lowitja Institute works with communities, researchers and policy makers across Australia to help facilitate research, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people setting the agenda and driving the

outcomes. We work in partnership with twenty participants around Australia, comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations; State, Territory and Australian government departments; and academic research institutions.

Together, we aim to achieve demonstrable impact in better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through research, capacity building, workforce development, knowledge exchange and research translation.



[www.recognise.org.au](http://www.recognise.org.au)  
@RecogniseAU



the  
**Lowitja**  
Institute

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

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