

**MEDIA RELEASE** – 30 August 2023

## **Lowitja Institute calls on Australians to vote ‘Yes’ to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice**

Lowitja Institute puts its full support behind a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice and calls on Australians to vote ‘Yes’ in the upcoming referendum.

CEO, Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, highlighted the opportunity and responsibility that Australians have in exercising their right to vote in the upcoming referendum.

“This is a profound point in our peoples’ history and our shared story as Australians moving forward together. It is so important that we are acknowledged in Australia’s birth certificate.”

“In the 235 years since colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have had policies made about us – without us. This has had devastating impacts to our health outcomes,” Adjunct Professor Mohamed said.

“When we are not included in decision-making, when our voices are silenced, we are harmed. We see these policy failings in the tragic legacy of the Northern Territory intervention; in the appalling gap in health outcomes for our peoples.”

“This referendum is about recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ important place in Australia’s history and future. As First Peoples of this nation, we have been connected to these lands and waterways as traditional custodians for 60 millennia.”

“The Voice is about ensuring that our peoples have a say, and that our daily realities are factored into government decision-making,” she said.

“To non-Indigenous Australians who are considering how they’ll vote in this referendum, your decision is important. You have real power to make a difference in closing the gap.”

“In this referendum, intention doesn’t matter. Impact matters. The reality is that your vote, whether it’s ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, will shape the direction of this country. It will determine whether our peoples’ aspirations for our children and future generations’ health and happiness can be realised. There’s huge responsibility in that.”

“I urge every non-Indigenous Australian to vote from your heart. To vote ‘Yes’ so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can look forward to living long, healthier lives. So that we as a nation can heal and grow towards true reconciliation.”

Selwyn Button, Lowitja Institute Chairperson and member of the First Nations Referendum Engagement Group, spoke to the depth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collective discussion and advocacy that supports the proposed Voice to Parliament.

“The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a document that was written after extensive dialogues that included representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities right across this

