



# **Business case for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health**

## **Short summary**

November 2023

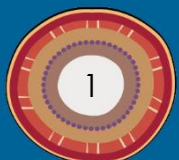
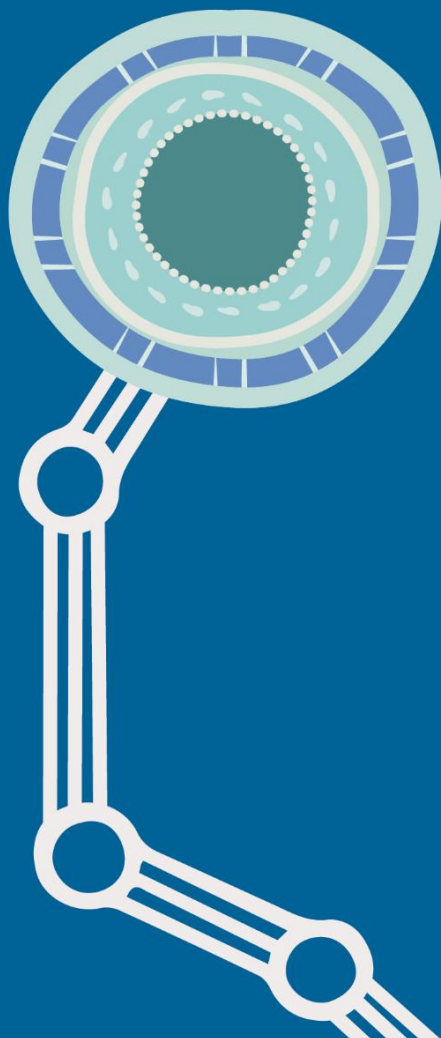
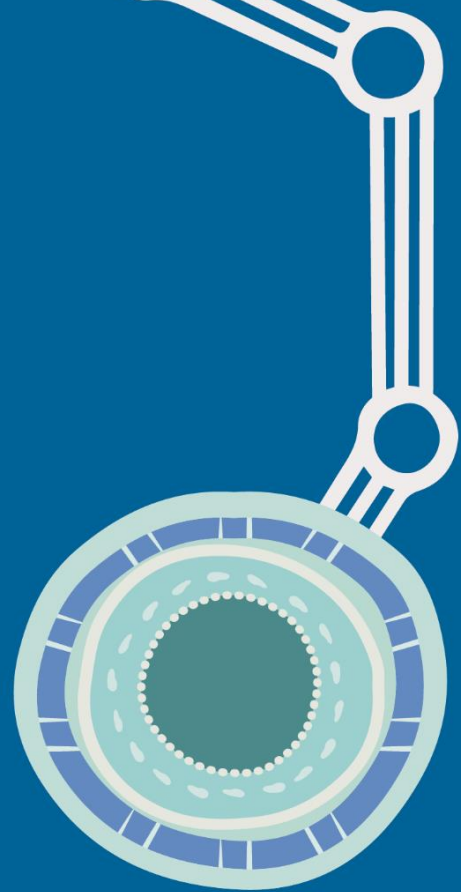
Lowitja Institute acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first custodians of the land, seas and waterways of Australia and pay respect to their culture and knowledges that have sustainably cared for Country. In this spirit, we have a shared commitment to strengthening health system resilience, preparedness and responsiveness to climate change, and reducing health, social and economic inequities within and across communities and generations.

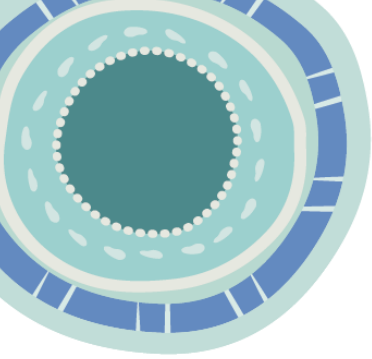
This business case was developed on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung where the

offices of the Lowitja Institute are based. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respect to them, their cultures, and their Elders past, present and future. They have paved the way, with strength, resilience, and fortitude, for future generations.

#### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

The artwork featured on the cover was created by Shannan Bishop, Gunggari/Kabi Kabi Woman.





Copyright © Lowitja Institute

First published in November 2023

This work is published and disseminated by Lowitja Institute.

This work is copyright. As the publisher, Lowitja Institute is granted exclusive rights to copy, publish and use the content of the paper. This paper may be reproduced in whole or in part for study or training purposes, or by organisations or individuals subject to an acknowledgment of the source and no commercial use or sale. Reproduction for other purposes or by other organisations requires the written permission of the copyright holder, Lowitja Institute.

A PDF version of this document can be obtained from:  
[www.lowitja.org.au](http://www.lowitja.org.au)

This business case has been authored by Lowitja Institute, working with Equity Economics.

Artwork and graphic design by Shannan Bishop.

**Author:** Lowitja Institute

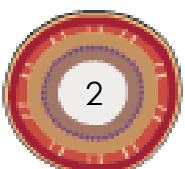
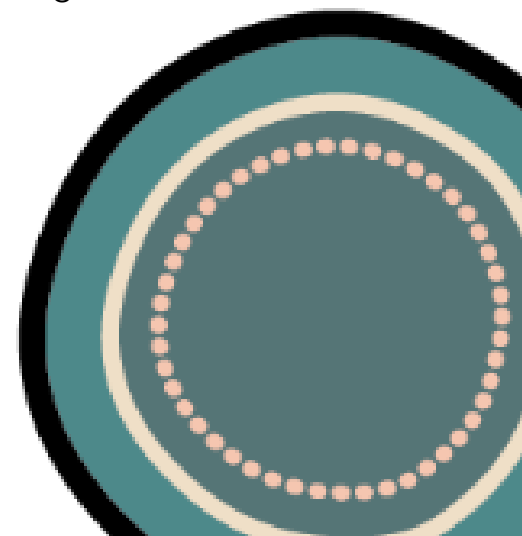
## About Lowitja Institute

Lowitja Institute is Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health research institute, named in honour of its Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. We work for the health and wellbeing of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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, 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.

### Contact:

LOWITJA INSTITUTE  
PO Box 1524,  
Collingwood Victoria 3066  
AUSTRALIA

E: [admin@lowitja.org.au](mailto:admin@lowitja.org.au)  
W: [www.lowitja.org.au](http://www.lowitja.org.au)



Climate and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing is a policy priority for Lowitja Institute. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia are some of the most severely impacted by climate change, which is compounding already existing significant health inequities resulting from impacts of colonisation.

A failure to solve this problem will detrimentally impact on our peoples' health and wellbeing in the short, medium, and long-term, and it will jeopardise our progress on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. It will also obstruct international efforts to meet these global challenges regarding climate and health.

In 2021, Lowitja Institute published a discussion paper, *Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing*. In 2023 we have engaged in community consultation to ascertain communities' priorities and needs relating to the health impacts of a changed and changing climate. In this work, the issue of inadequate poor-quality engagement with our peoples was raised consistently and often.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in this space is being overlooked and ignored by government, and our peoples are being excluded from policymaking. Our peoples want to be included in key national decision-making about Country, climate, and health, and in driving solutions on the ground. We want to be able to maximise opportunities for developing and increasing our climate and health workforce, including in research. At the same time, there is insufficient resourcing or compensation available for our peoples and organisations to participate or contribute. The will is there but government support is required to empower our leadership in this space.

Throughout community engagement, Lowitja Institute identified a need for a national body that brings together diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders with varying levels of capability, interest, and scope to advocate for and create opportunities for our peoples' leadership, and to work alongside government and the international community at the strategic and policy level. We expand more on this in our position paper (forthcoming), *Let's Walk Together, Work Together, We'll be Stronger Together: The need for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health*.

On this basis, **Lowitja Institute recommends the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health (the Coalition)**, which will empower our peoples' leadership and enable our peoples' diverse voices, knowledges, and perspectives to be heard by government and by the international community.

The Coalition's work will be informed by and support other work in the space, including work being done by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. The Coalition will be able to contribute to national policymaking, such as the National Strategy on Health and Climate, activities that come under the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy, as well as policy in other cross-cutting sectors, such as housing.

Lowitja Institute recommends that the federal government commits ~\$2million per annum for an initial four years, with the option to extend that funding for the lifespan of the Coalition, which is initially estimated at 11 years.

- Year 1: \$1,746,582
- Year 2: \$1,751,460
- Year 3: \$1,805,911
- Year 4: \$2,042,462

The Coalition's proposed goal are:

1. to Indigenise climate and health understandings, policy, solutions, practices, and workforces in Australia; and
2. to create permanent leadership positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make decisions regarding climate and health policy in Australia and internationally by 2035.

To mitigate key person risk and to reduce the load on Coalition decision makers, Lowitja Institute recommends a co-chair model whereby two co-chairs are elected by core and active members through a voting process. These co-chairs would be senior leaders (CEOs or chairs) of member organisations.

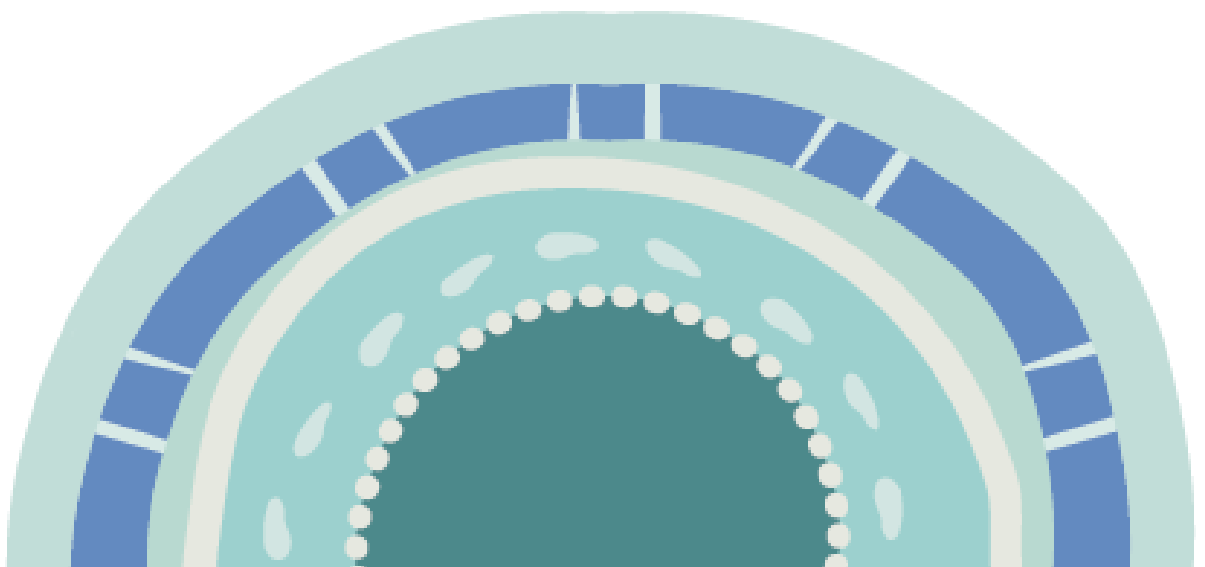
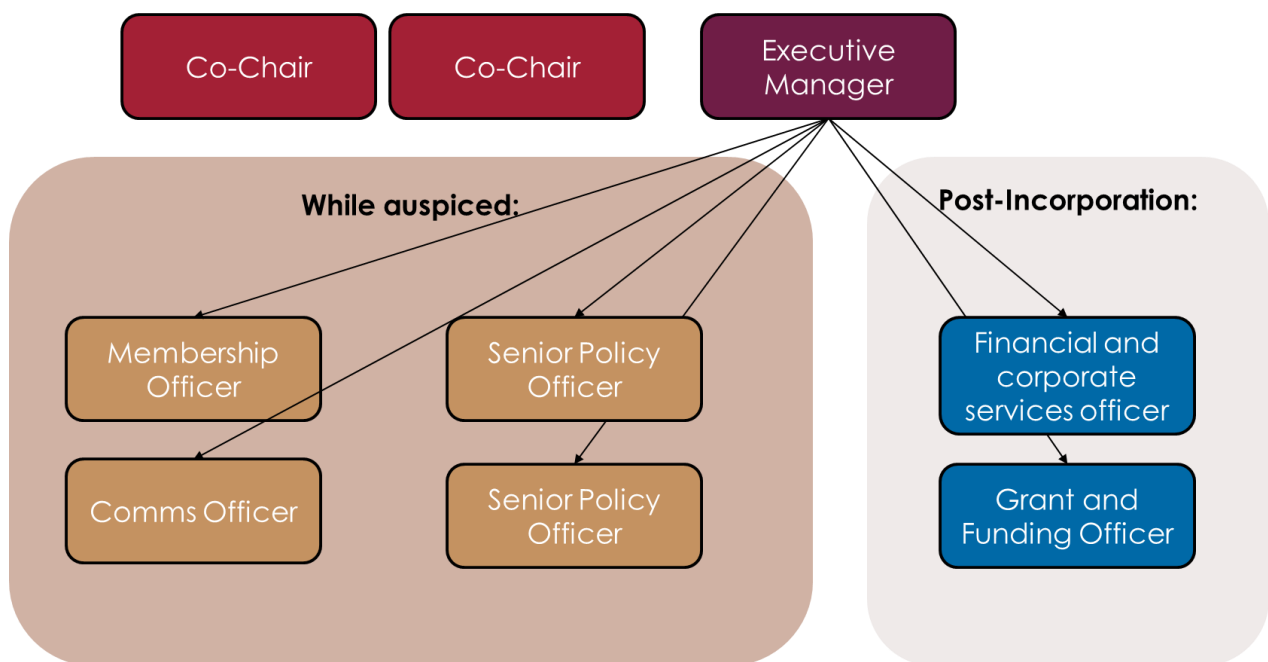


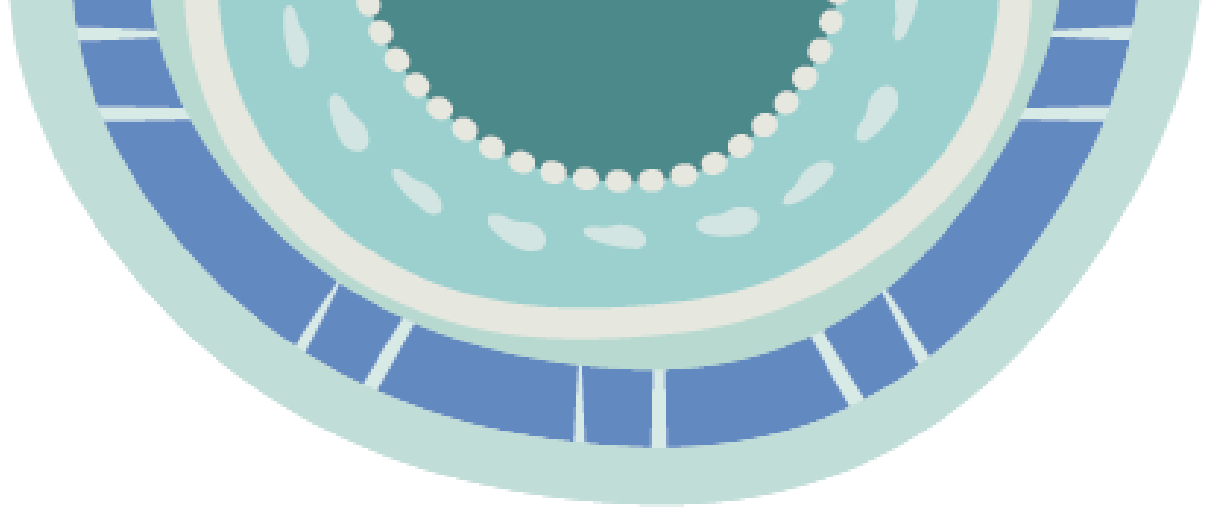
The chairs and the members would be supported by a Secretariat with some core roles:

- Executive Manager
- Senior Policy Officer x 2
- Membership Officer
- Communications Officer

Additional roles may be included as the Coalition is established.

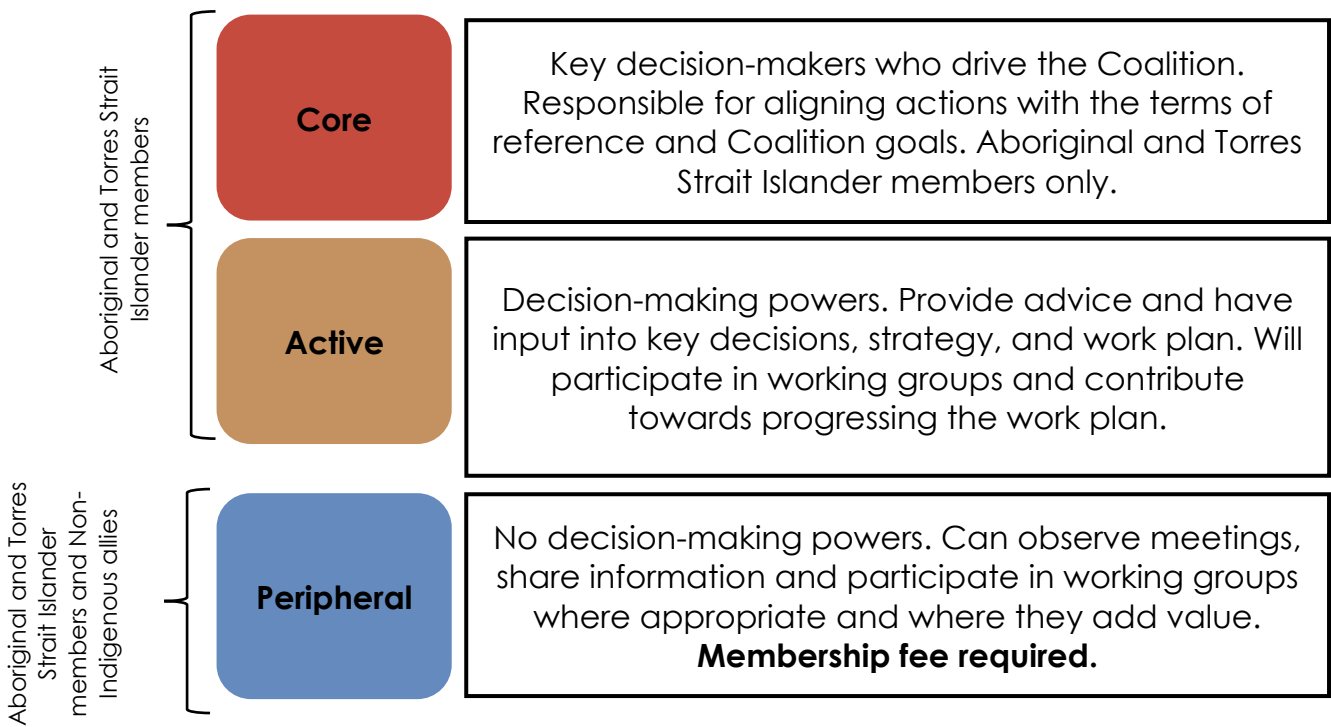
- Financial and Corporate Services Officer – this function can be provided by the auspicing organisation until incorporation.
- Grants and Funding Officer – the Coalition would need to seek additional funding to administer as it evolves to include this function.





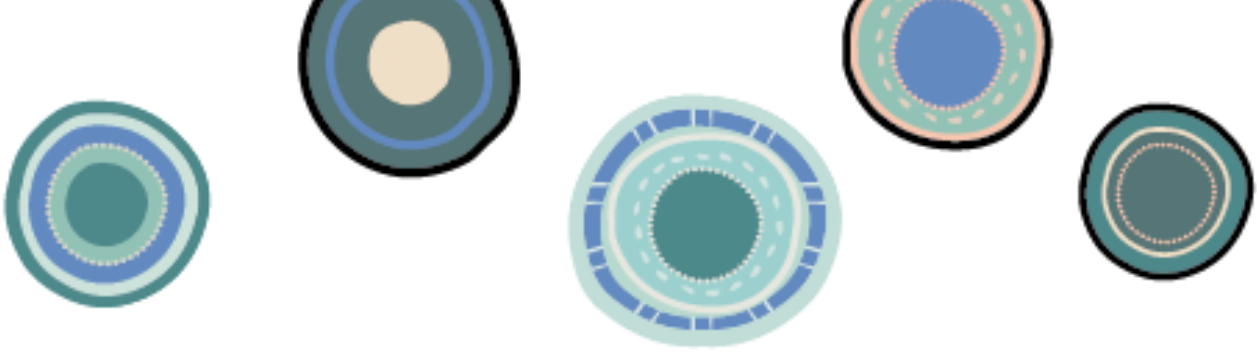
## MEMBERSHIP

There will be multiple tiered membership categories which all require varying amounts of interest, engagement, and contribution. The three tiers are:



## GOVERNANCE

As is common practice, Lowitja Institute recommends that the Coalition be auspiced by a suitable organisation until it has the capability and resourcing to incorporate as its own legal entity. It is proposed that the Coalition will prepare for incorporation in Year 4 of operations in order to operate as an independent entity by Year 5.



Lowitja Institute is the most suitable Aboriginal community controlled organisation to auspice the Coalition. Climate and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health has been a policy priority for Lowitja Institute for many years and we sit comfortably at the intersection between health and climate. Lowitja Institute has an excellent track record for financial management and governance, we also have the ability build the Coalition's capacity to engage in all functions, including grants and capability building.

The auspicings organisation will drive the Coalition's establishment, including the auspicings organisation's CEO, deputy-CEO or chairperson sitting as interim chairs while election processes are completed.

