

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### New Paper Promotes First Nations Science and Health Research Impact

MTPConnect and the Lowitja Institute have today released a discussion paper to help guide design of research funding programs that will benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.

The paper, *'Targeted Translation Research Accelerator Needs Assessment and Prioritisation Project'*, provides a framework for how Indigenous-led priority setting can inform important funding decisions.

The paper is based on the needs assessment and prioritisation work conducted for the third funding round of MTPConnect's Targeted Translation Research Accelerator (TTRA) program which targets solutions for diabetes and cardiovascular disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

MTPConnect partnered with the Lowitja Institute to lead the work, who ensured the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were centred in all aspects of the process of determining the Indigenous-specific priority areas.

MTPConnect CEO, Stuart Dignam, says the results of that work, captured in the new paper, provide an important resource for health research and help elevate First Nations science.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are significantly disproportionately affected by diabetes and cardiovascular disease at up to four times the rate of the wider population," Mr Dignam said.

"Our TTRA research project round was designed to focus substantial funding and effort to address these stark health inequities and we turned to the Lowitja Institute to lead the priority setting because of their expertise and deep connections to Indigenous communities most affected.

"The discussion paper provides context, methodology and outcomes from this process and we're delighted to share the findings of this work so it can be used by others to make a difference in two important ways.

"Firstly, it serves as a resource of high priority unmet needs in diabetes and cardiovascular disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and, secondly, it provides a framework for determining Indigenous-specific priorities for other areas of research," Mr Dignam said.

Lowitja Institute CEO, Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, explains the critical importance of Indigenous-led priority setting for health research funding and why the discussion paper will make a difference.

"When setting priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples research, it is essential that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are centred and elevated. Research should not be done on us and for us, but with us and by us."

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“This is a long-standing commitment of the Lowitja Institute and we have been pleased to work with MTPConnect, who also share our commitment to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, and ensuring our work has an enduring positive impact on health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” said Adjunct Professor Mohamed.

Successful projects selected from TTRA Round 3 will closely align with one of the stated priority areas, will embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, and will demonstrate significant potential to benefit the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The discussion paper concluded:

“... an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led, evidence-based approach to identifying and assessing priorities is achievable and ensures that input and leadership from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, clinicians, policy makers and thought leaders are embedded, and the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are elevated.”

The report can be downloaded from the Lowitja Institute website [Lowitja Publications | Lowitja Institute](#) and [MTPConnect website](#).

*Round 3 closed on 28 April 2023, and application assessment is currently underway.*

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**Media inquiries:** Caroline Duell, MTPConnect / Tel. +61 439 652 419 / [media@mtpconnect.org.au](mailto:media@mtpconnect.org.au) and Jo Cackett, Lowitja Institute / Tel: +61 474 727 506 / [communications@lowitja.org.au](mailto:communications@lowitja.org.au)

**About MTPConnect:** Established in 2015 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, MTPConnect is championing the growth of Australia’s vibrant Medical Technologies and Pharmaceuticals Industry (MTP) ecosystem.

**About TTRA:** The \$47 million TTRA initiative, supported by the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF), is providing a new integrated research program to improve the prevention, management and treatment of diabetes and cardiovascular disease (D&CVD) in Australia. Research efforts are focused on the most pressing areas of unmet clinical and research needs in D&CVD, which are leading causes of death and disability in Australia.

**About the 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. It is working for the health and wellbeing of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by facilitating high-impact quality research, tools, resources and knowledge exchange, and supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.