

Annual Report 2018



the
Lowitja
Institute

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

Who we are



The Lowitja Institute is Australia's national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research. It is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples through high impact quality research, knowledge translation, and by supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.

Established in January 2010, the Lowitja Institute operates on key principles of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander control of the research agenda, a broader understanding of health that incorporates wellbeing, and the need for the work to have a clear and positive impact.

The Lowitja Institute hosts the Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC funded by the Cooperative Research Centres Programme of the Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation and Science.

The Lowitja Institute is a company limited by guarantee with the following membership:

Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association • Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies • Central Australian Aboriginal Congress • Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives • Danila Dilba Health Service • Flinders University • Healing Foundation • Indigenous Allied Health Australia • Menzies School of Health Research • National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association • QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute • The University of Melbourne

Our Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG



Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue was born in 1932 at Indulkana, in north-west corner South Australia, to a Pitjantjatjara mother and an Irish father. At the age of two, she and two of her sisters were taken away from their mother on behalf of South Australia's Aboriginal Protection Board.

In 1954, Dr O'Donoghue became the first Aboriginal trainee nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital where she became charge sister. Following a period in India in the mid-1960s, she returned to Australia and resumed what became a distinguished career of advocacy and achievement for the rights of Australia's First Peoples. Among her many awards, she was the first Aboriginal woman to be awarded an Order of Australia (AO) in 1976, was made a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in 1999, a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1983, and Australian of the Year in 1984, during which time she became the first Aboriginal person to address the United Nations General Assembly. She was named a National Living Treasure in 1998.

Dr O'Donoghue holds a number of honorary fellowships and doctorates and a professorial fellowship. She was the inaugural Chair of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (1996–2003). In 2010, she gifted her name to the Lowitja Institute.

Through a chance meeting, she was reunited with her mother, Lily, in the mid-1960s.

Photo on the cover: Dr Vicki Couzens at work; photo © and courtesy Australian Council for the Arts 2016, see page 29.

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this annual report may contain the names and images of persons who have passed away.

Chairperson's Message



While we are connected nationally through our partnerships, and to local communities and families through the research, the Lowitja Institute Board is deeply committed to connecting directly with our colleagues living and working in communities.

Not only do we learn how to support services, but it is profoundly uplifting for us, as an organisation and as individuals, to see the strong purpose and tangible efforts being made to better the health and wellbeing of our peoples. This is completely aligned with what our Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, wants us to do.

Therefore, in September 2017, the Board visited the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service in NSW. This was a great opportunity for us to learn of the achievements and challenges faced by the Service in the area. It was also an opportunity to visit the Walgett site of the Literacy for Life Foundation. In June 2018, we visited the Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service. We thank both services for their warm hospitality and generosity in sharing their knowledge with us.

We have also participated in important national conversations about the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For example, we made a submission to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to inform the Closing the Gap refresh. In our submission, we called for further development of the language and narrative of the refresh and clarity on the architecture and the accountabilities to support accurate measurement of progress against targets. We also highlighted data collection and dissemination and de-centring Western systems and world views as a considerable challenge due to existing barriers, and therefore requiring prioritisation. Finally, we called for greater leadership from COAG on naming and addressing racism and providing support commensurate to evidenced need.

Planning is well underway for the Institute's second International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference to be held in Darwin in June 2019. Under the theme of *Thinking, Speaking, Being – First Nations solutions for global change*, delegates and presenters will be invited to consider the global implications of their work, the role of First Nations people in leading change, and to highlight Indigenous solutions.

In locating the conference in Darwin, we acknowledge and honour our origins as the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was established in the city in 1997. In August 2017, we launched in Parliament House, Canberra, a publication narrating 20 years of collaboration with organisations and key individuals and the contribution we have made together to changing the narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

Honouring our origins is important as we plan for end of the Lowitja Institute CRC in June 2019 and our continuation as the Lowitja Institute, with Commonwealth Government funding. We acknowledge the Government's support through the Department of Health grant, but continue to work towards achieving funding that will allow us to continue our work at least at current levels. As reported in 2016–17, we are working towards developing business opportunities that will enable us to further deliver public value after June 2019 by leveraging on our research, knowledge and networks. In this reporting period, and in response to a high degree of interest in quality policy research, we have started to develop Lowitja Consulting as the first of those potential activities. It is envisaged that Lowitja Consulting will undertake research, strategy and policy projects to inform governments, mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations decisions.



Pat Anderson AO
Chairperson
The Lowitja Institute

Chief Executive Officer's Report



As we look to the closure in June 2019 of the Cooperative Research Centre that the Institute hosts, the Institute's focus has been on maximizing the benefit of research projects for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This means the completion of established projects, funding previously identified community research priorities and identifying important new priorities in disability research.

In this endeavour, we were especially pleased to welcome in November 2017 Dr Sanchia Shibasaki as Director of Research. The research team has focused on establishing new projects, progressing current ones, and on strategic knowledge translation (KT) to maximise the impact of our work.

Knowledge translation activities were expanded during 2017–18 by continuing the appointment of a dedicated knowledge translation manager, offering KT funding to all research projects, and holding a KT forum for invited policymakers in Canberra. These events are vital as they enable us to create a direct link from community priorities, to evidence base, to policy development, then finally to monitoring and evaluation.

Twenty-three new projects were established in areas of workforce, families, Elders, the health and wellbeing of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, health care and biomedical science. In addition, we convened a disability research roundtable to discuss key research priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability and subsequently funded important projects in this area.

Through our scholarships program and key research projects, we have continued to support the development and strengthening of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce. Of our current scholars, two PhDs and one Master completed their studies; we established project to evaluate the impact of the scholarship investment by the Institute and associated CRCs from 1997 to 2017, and were

pleased to award the Lowitja Institute Research Leadership Award to Associate Professor Ray Lovett from the Australian National University.

There were many successes during the reporting period. For example, in November 2017, we co-hosted the 6th NHMRC Research Translation Symposium. A record number of just under 400 delegates came together to learn from national and international Indigenous delegates on ways that research can deliver real and measurable positive impacts. Keynote speakers in particular, highlighted the importance of ethical Indigenous research that focuses on solutions.

Providing seed funding to enable projects to develop their capacity to attract additional major funding has long been a priority of the Institute. An example of this is the Service Integration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Development, which, led by SNAICC under the auspices of the University of Melbourne, received seed funding from the Lowitja Institute CRC in 2016–17, and was successful in its 2018 NHMRC funding application, being awarded \$836,500.

We welcomed to Melbourne our CRC Participants from around Australia twice during the reporting period to discuss ongoing research, as well as strategic considerations for the organisation. In addition, we have continued to engage proactively with Lowitja Institute member organisations.

Building on more than 20 years of CRC and the Lowitja Institute, I have every confidence that our organisation will grow in strength and influence always underpinned our Patron Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's call to be a strong and sustainable organisation working fearlessly for change and improvement in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Romlie Mokak
Chief Executive Officer
The Lowitja Institute

The Year's Highlights



23 new research projects



investigating what makes families and Elders strong; the cultural determinants of health; the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men; disability in our communities, workforce, health care and science.

Workshop to identify



research priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability

Internal review on **ethics** to examine how HRECs contribute to and impede ethical health research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Visitors to Llt.search, an online search tool that facilitates searches in PubMed for literature on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, reaches **20,000**

Associate Professor Ray Lovett from the Research School of Population Health at the ANU is awarded the Lowitja Institute Research Leadership Award



Three outstanding pieces of research published:

- 1 An Evaluation Framework to Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- 2 Deficit Discourse and Indigenous Health: How narrative framings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reproduced in policy
- 3 Deficit Discourse and Strengths-based Approaches: Changing the Narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing

A record number of delegates attend the NHMRC 6th Research Translation Symposium co-hosted by the Lowitja Institute in November 2017, on the lands of the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, at the Brisbane Convention Centre



41 million Twitter impressions for #ResearchTranslation17

Knowledge translation forum held in Canberra to highlight community priorities into policy to policymakers

5 million Twitter impressions for #ResearchintoPolicy



Contributed to the Partnership for Justice in Health of which we are a member



Development of a number of **video resources** for research projects

A number of speeches were delivered by Lowitja Institute leadership

Three enthusiastic **interns** made



a much valued contribution to the Institute

We launched **Changing the Narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research**, a report on 20 years the Lowitja Institute and associated CRCs, maps the evolution of a new, collaborative and culturally appropriate way of carrying out health research



Started planning for the Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing **Conference 2019** to be held in Darwin in June: *Thinking, Speaking, Being: First Nations Solutions for Global change*

The Canada – Australia Indigenous Health and Wellness Working Group progressed initiatives in **racism** and **Indigenous youth**

Took a day out to learn about the culture and history of the **Kulin Nation**, on whose land our main office is located

The Lowitja Institute CRC hosted two **Participants Forum** in its Melbourne offices, in November 2017 and in May 2018, to discuss activities and ongoing research, as well as strategic considerations for the organisation.



Participated in a number of **conferences and forums**



Higher degree completions by Institute scholarship holders included **2 PhD** and **1 Master** candidates

The Board of Directors **visited two regional Aboriginal Health Services**, in Walgett NSW and in Ceduna SA

Directors also **visited the Walgett site** for the Literacy for Life Foundation

25,000 items of research and policy material were downloaded from our website

Twitter following grew to **9,000** followers

Website traffic grew to **93,000** unique visits



Engaged with our partners, collaborators and media outlets in **key news and promotions**

Research and Knowledge Translation



The Lowitja Institute strives to achieve the best outcomes for Australia's First Peoples. Ensuring that our activities effectively address inequities in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is central to this effort. To this end, the Institute identifies priorities, and develops research and knowledge translation processes to ensure that maximum value is created through its collaborative partnerships. These collaborations include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, participant organisations, and other research and policy partners.

At present, the research activities of the Lowitja Institute are identified and funded under the umbrella of the Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC (Lowitja Institute CRC). The work is conducted by our partner or Participant organisations. [SEE PAGE 38](#)

To guide this effort the Lowitja Institute has identified five key principles that underpin our approach to research:

- 1 Beneficence – to act for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the conduct of our research
- 2 Leadership by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- 3 Engagement of research end users (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, policymakers, other potential research users)
- 4 Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce, and
- 5 Measurement of impact in improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health.

Research governance

The Lowitja Institute research governance structure has been developed to support the strategic development of, and priority setting for, a body of research most likely to contribute to positive impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and wellbeing. The governance structure is consistent with the Institute's research principles of ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including those with expertise as potential research end users, participate in setting research priorities and guiding the direction of the work of the Institute.

Program Committees

Three Lowitja Institute research programs committees, each headed by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Chair, guided the research agenda. The committee develop the work of the research programs (see below); identify priorities and scope specific research topics; assure quality and build researcher capacity.

1 PROGRAM 1 - Community capability and the social determinants of health

was guided by Professor Kerry Arabena. Work through this program deepens our understanding of how individuals, children, families and communities can mitigate the negative impacts of the social determinants of health, and maximise the effectiveness of positive cultural, social, economic and environmental influences.

2 PROGRAM 2 - Needs and opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce

was guided by Professor Cindy Shannon. Work through this program is driven by the need to know how to better grow and sustain a health workforce to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health needs in all health services and systems.

3 PROGRAM 3 - Health policy and systems

was guided by Dr Mark Wenitong. Work through this program will provide evidence on the broader health policy and system settings that are most effective in supporting improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Research highlights

Work on established projects continues and on page 14 we feature three new publications from completed research.

The Lowitja Institute funded 23 new projects during 2017–18.



Under the community capability and the social determinants of health program, we funded research under the themes of families, Elders, young men and disability:

Strong Families and Strong Elders:

- Developing a physical activity program for aboriginal families with Machado Joseph Disease
- Sharing the wisdom of our Elders: Understanding and promoting healthy ageing with older Aboriginal Australians
- Listening to Country: Exploring the value of acoustic ecology with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison
- Scaling up Mayi Kuwayu – The National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing
- Ngadhuri-nya (To care for): Intergenerational and educational influences on social, mental and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Following our March 2017 workshop convened to discuss the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men and the supporting role they play — and aspire to play — in their relationships, families, and communities, five new projects were established under the theme **Young Men’s Health**:

- Health literacy among young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males in the Northern Territory: Understanding the intersections with gender and cultural identity
- Roles and Ritual: The Inala Wangarra Rites of Passage Ball Case Study
- Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Men.
- Tell My Story: Hearing from the Dads in the Indigenous Birthing in an Urban Setting (IBUS) Study
- Strong Dads Strong Futures.



Valuing Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men: yarning with mob at Wuchopperen about Valuing Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males: Jack Bulman, Uncle Mick Adams, Keith Elaisa, Jesse J. Fleay

In October 2017 we convened a workshop to discuss key research priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability. The workshop comprised of people with lived experience of disability, as well as policymakers, disability sector researchers and advocates, and national leaders. Subsequently, three new research projects were funded **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability**:

- Is the National Disability Insurance Scheme meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? Evaluating the roll-out in Queensland and the Northern Territory
- Yarning together: Developing a culturally secure rehabilitation approach for Aboriginal Australians after brain injury
- Wellbeing through cultural participation: An affirmative strategy for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

The Institute's needs and opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce program funded four new research activities under the theme **Strong Workforce**:

- Moving beyond the front line: A 20 year retrospective cohort study of career trajectories from the Indigenous Health Program at The University of Queensland
- Working well: Tailoring a workforce development model to deliver sustained improvements in community controlled healthcare
- Aremele Arratye Mpwaretyeke – Doing it Right: Research knowledge generation and translation in Central Australia



Valuing Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men: having great yarns with deadly workers from Apunipima Cairns

Evaluation of a successful anaemia prevention program in a remote Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory

This project aimed to identify if a community driven anaemia prevention program was successful in reducing the prevalence of anaemia in infants aged less than 2 years. Anaemia during the first few years of life has significant effects on development which can last a life time.

We reviewed electronic records of primary health care presentations in the first 2 years of life for children born between January 2010 and July 2014. We included three communities, one of which was the driver of the prevention program, and two other communities which did not have an anaemia prevention program in place.

The anaemia prevention program aimed to give kids three prophylactic doses of iron per week from the age of 6 months. We found that of the kids on the prevention program, only 50% developed anaemia compared to 91% of kids not on the program. These kids developed anaemia at a later age (13.5 months) than kids not on the program (9 months).



Valuing Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men: more yarns valuing young aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men



Literacy for Life Foundation

The Lowitja Institute is a founding partner of Literacy for Life Foundation, an Aboriginal-led initiative aiming to lift adult literacy in Indigenous communities. An estimated 40 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults have minimal English literacy, a figure that rises to as high as 70 per cent in many remote areas. So long as these adult illiteracy rates exist, meaningful progress towards many Closing the Gap targets will be impossible.

The Foundation uses an innovative, evidence-based, campaign approach that has been implemented in 30 countries around the world and is now delivering results in Australia. So far more than 170 students have graduated campaigns run in eight NSW communities and the organisation is working towards national expansion.

Initially Lowitja Institute provided funding for a pilot of the Literacy for Life Foundation approach, building on the well documented links between literacy and improved health outcomes. Support was extended following the promising results achieved during pilot phase. The graduation rate of Literacy for Life Foundation students was five times higher than existing programs and the campaigns created a range of benefits across the community.

Building on this evidence base, the Lowitja Institute helped Literacy for Life Foundation design and carry out a longitudinal study of individual and community impacts, with a focus on measuring improvements in areas such as health, education and community safety.

The Literacy for Life Foundation's campaign approach relies on community ownership and control. It is driven by local leaders and delivered by local staff. Originally developed in Cuba, the method was designed to raise adult literacy levels quickly across a region.



Jenny Fernando, Literacy for Life Foundation student, Walgett



Lowitja Institute Board member Ali Drummond is shown Literacy for Life Foundation lesson material by Facilitator Sarah Flick



L-R: Joe Boughton-Dent, Romlie Mokak, Lucy Nunez, Jack Beetson, Pat Anderson, Ali Drummond, Brendon Douglas and Peter Buckskin

- Understanding stress and staying strong in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and human services workforce.

Six new research activities were established in the health policy and systems program under the theme of **Strong Health Care** and **Strong Science**:

- Meriba buay – ngalpan wakaythoemamay (We come together to think): Evaluating a Community of Practice for Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing
- First response: Integrating trauma-informed care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing violence within primary healthcare
- Healing the past by nurturing the future: Strengthening foundations for supporting Indigenous parents who have experienced complex childhood trauma
- Engaging Australia's First Peoples in the development of ethics and protocols for a family-based microbiome study and social health history project
- Catching Some AIR – Asserting Indigenous information rights in renal disease
- Discourse, Data and Deficit: Deconstructing the 'Indigenous Health' paradigm and its effects on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Developing a physical activity program for Aboriginal families with Machado Joseph Disease (MJD) living in the Top End of Australia

Machado Joseph Disease (MJD), an inherited autosomal dominant neurodegenerative disease, is the most common spinocerebellar ataxia worldwide. Characterised by progressive loss of mobility and coordination of movement, MJD has the highest prevalence in remote Aboriginal communities in the Top End of Australia, such as Groote Eylandt. In some communities, three generations of individuals in one family have been affected at the same time. Although there is no cure, evidence suggests physical activity delays disease progression.

Aboriginal families with MJD from Groote Eylandt and Ngukurr, local community researcher partners (CRPs) and a non-Indigenous researcher from James Cook University have been working together on this project. The aim is to find the best ways for families with MJD to keep walking and moving around. Families lead the research, as exercise is helping them stay strong, but they also want to know what is helping other families with MJD around the world.

The team has been listening and working together with families at the beach, in the

bush, under big shady trees, in their homes and communities, speaking in each other's languages and putting ideas together. Families feel that staying strong on the outside (physically) and on the inside (emotionally, mentally, spiritually) is critical for keeping walking and moving around as long as possible.

Research partners are now working together to combine the knowledge of families with MJD with knowledge from Western research to develop a program or 'toolbox' on the best ways keep walking and moving around for families to use. Families feel strongly about developing this, so their relatives now and in the future can use the tools to keep walking and moving around and living a good life for longer.



Information about our 41 research projects is available from the Institute website: www.lowitja.org.au

Identifying research priorities

Key research priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability

The Lowitja Institute hosted a one-day workshop in October 2017 to discuss key research priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability. The workshop comprised of people with lived experience of disability, as well as policymakers, disability sector researchers, advocates and national leaders. The aim for the day was to identify key research questions to inform a call for research applications.

The Institute Program Committees (see page 7) identified disability as a priority area for research. This priority was influenced by two factors:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability are often further disadvantaged by experiences of ongoing systemic racism and ableism.
- The current government policies, particularly the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), are driving significant change by re-defining interactions and relationships between services and clients. This climate adds to the uncertainty and complexity of an already challenging reality for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability.

The scope of the workshop focused on how disability intersects with broader health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To do this, the discussions at the workshop pushed beyond the issues and opportunities with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This encouraged discussions that could potentially guide future research, as well as provide valuable knowledge to communities, policymakers and service providers; leading to better health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability.



Disability workshop participants, October 2017

The workshop identified the following research priorities:

- How can Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities be practically empowered and resourced to provide disability services and supports through local Aboriginal workforces and organisations?
- How do we increase the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability, families and advocates?
- Tell me about your life: what supports/services have you accessed that have improved your life? What services haven't worked? What were the differences before and after the NDIS?
- How can spiritual and cultural knowledges be optimised in a metric based decision-making evaluation framework?
- How do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability define "success"? Within how they choose to self-identify
- In living in harmony, family, community.

Subsequently, these priorities were developed into research questions and, following a call for applications in October 2017, some were funded by the Institute (see page 9).

A full workshop report is available from the Institute's website: <https://www.lowitja.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/Disability-Workshop-Report.pdf>



Congratulations to Associate Professor Ray Lovett, the 2018 Lowitja Institute Research Leadership Award winner!

Associate Professor Lovett is the Program Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Epidemiology for Policy and Practice ANU College of Health and Medicine. Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health has been a pivotal goal in Ray's work, study and research for over two decades. His journey in Aboriginal health has included working as a nurse and Aboriginal health worker, within AMS administration, and study including a PhD in Epidemiology. Ray's passion for improved public health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has led him to his current role at ANU. He is also an adjunct research fellow with AIATSIS.

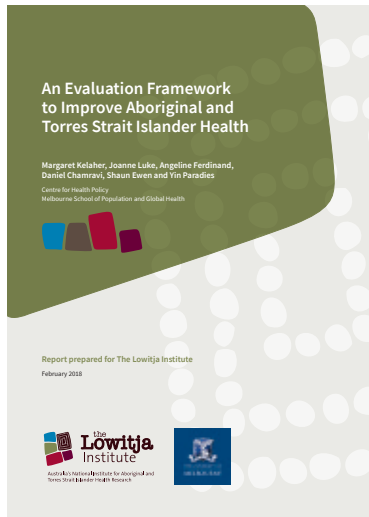
Ray has a long-standing relationship with the Lowitja Institute, through several funded projects, and as the recipient of the Congress Lowitja 2012 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student award. He is currently the Chief Investigator on the Mayi-Kuwayu project at ANU, a large scale longitudinal study of cultural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, initially funded by the Lowitja Institute and subsequently by the NHMRC.

The award was announced at the Community Priorities into Policy forum in Canberra on 14 May 2018. On behalf of the Lowitja Institute, and our award partner, the Cranlana Programme, we congratulate Ray and wish him all the best with his leadership goals.



Associate Professor Ray Lovett.
Photo courtesy ANU

Research publications



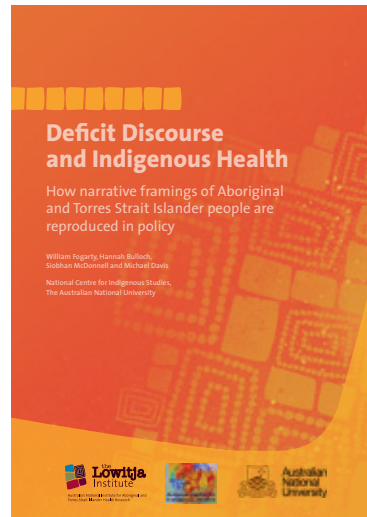
An Evaluation Framework to Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

M. Kelaher, J. Luke, A. Ferdinand, D. Chamravi, S. Ewen & Y. Paradis 2018



Evaluation has the potential to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through improved policy and programs. Evaluation also provides opportunities to harness and develop community expertise. However, communities, evaluators and government are concerned that evaluations of programs addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing do not always deliver these benefits.

This report, sets out a framework for the evaluation of policies, programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. The development of the framework was oriented towards improving the benefits of evaluation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The process focused on identifying the essential elements of evaluation planning and practice, and highlighting the requirements needed to undertake evaluations in this area. A policy brief was also published.



Deficit Discourse and Indigenous Health: How narrative framings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reproduced in policy

W. Fogarty, H. Bulloch, S. McDonnell & M. Davis 2018



This report explores 'deficit discourse' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy. 'Discourse', in this context, encompasses thought represented in written and spoken communication and/or expressed through practices. The term draws attention to the circulation of ideas, the processes by which these ideas shape conceptual and material realities, and the power inequalities that contribute to and result from these processes. 'Deficit discourse' refers to discourse that represents people or groups in terms of deficiency – absence, lack or failure. It particularly denotes discourse that narrowly situates responsibility for problems with the affected individuals or communities, overlooking the larger socio-economic structures in which they are embedded. Understanding how deficit discourses are produced and reproduced is essential to challenging them. Thus, this report examines various aspects of deficit discourse in policy, but in particular considers deficit metrics: the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are homogenised and statistically compared to non-Indigenous Australians. A summary report was also published.



Deficit Discourse and Strengths-based Approaches: Changing the narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing

W. Fogarty, M. Lovell, J. Lagenberg & M-J. Heron 2018



This report explores strengths-based approaches to shifting the deficit narrative in the Australian aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. Studies, including a companion report to this one entitled *Deficit Discourse and Indigenous Health: How Narrative Framings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are Reproduced in Policy*, have identified a prevalent 'deficit discourse' across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy and practice. There is evidence that deficit discourse has an impact on health itself — that it is a barrier to improving health outcomes. Accordingly, there are growing calls for alternative ways to think about and discuss Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. This report builds on *Deficit Discourse and Indigenous Health* by reviewing and analysing a growing body of work from Australia and overseas that proposes ways to displace deficit discourse in health, or that provides examples of attempts to do so. The most widely accepted approaches to achieving this come under the umbrella term 'strengths-based', which seek to move away from the traditional problem-based paradigm and offer a different language and set of solutions to overcoming an issue. A summary report was also published.

Online resources for researchers

Ethical research, where the definition of ethics is identified by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, is a key research principle of the Lowitja Institute. **EthicsHub** supports people and organisations working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research to access processes and resources that ensure that work done in this space is safe and culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

This resource is available at www.lowitja.org.au/ethics but is currently under review.



Lit.search is an online search tool that facilitates searches in PubMed for literature on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. This continues to be a particularly popular resource with some 18,049 unique views during the reporting period; this represents a significant increase in usage (from 9209 in the last period). Lit.search users can choose to look at all literature or one of 27 predetermined topics, and can refine each choice with keywords, publications dates, and a full text or citation option. PubMed is a global database that with more than 24 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals, and online books. Lit.search is available at www.lowitja.org.au/litsearch.



Policy, Programs and Impact



Translating research into practice

Knowledge translation

The Lowitja Institute has further developed our knowledge translation (KT) activities during 2017–18 by continuing the appointment of a dedicated knowledge translation manager and further refining the Lowitja Institute’s approach to KT. Our current practice defines KT as a series of strategic interactions that effectively connect research evidence to changes in policy and practice. KT enables us to create a direct link from community priorities, to evidence base, to policy development, then finally to monitoring and evaluation.

All our KT activities stem from our research principles that we will act for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, provide research leadership, engage end users, strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce, and measure impact.

Internally, we encourage and support a systematic approach to embedding KT across our current 41 plus research projects. This is done throughout the research design and also by providing additional funds to implement KT plans. The plan ensures that projects translate research based on their key findings and their intended audiences. The steps that each KT plan covers is outlined below in Figure 1.

Recent articles from the Lowitja Institute on KT:



L. Smith 2018, Why knowledge translation matters in Indigenous health, *Medical Journal of Australia*, InSight, Issue 26, 9 July.

L. Smith 2018, Turning research into action through knowledge translation, *Health Voices*, Issue 22, April.

Figure 1: Steps that Lowitja Institute Knowledge Translation Plans cover



Externally, we engage in a series of strategic interactions that support organisations, policymakers, and communities to engage effectively. For example, we hold regular KT events and forums that give us an opportunity to highlight the work of the Institute to commission, coordinate, collaborate on, and translate research to inform future strategic decisions in policy development, service delivery and evaluation.

6th NHMRC Research Translation Symposium co-hosted by The Lowitja Institute

The NHMRC 6th Research Translation Symposium co-hosted by the Lowitja Institute was held on 14–15 November 2017, on the lands of the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, at the Brisbane Convention Centre. A record number of just under 400 delegates came together and created a unique space for participants to learn from success stories and ways to maximise impact. Also, to hear insights from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on ways that research can deliver real and measurable positive impacts.

From the moving Welcome to Country and the opening speeches by the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, and Professor Ian Anderson AO, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Symposium demonstrated strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership capability at every level.

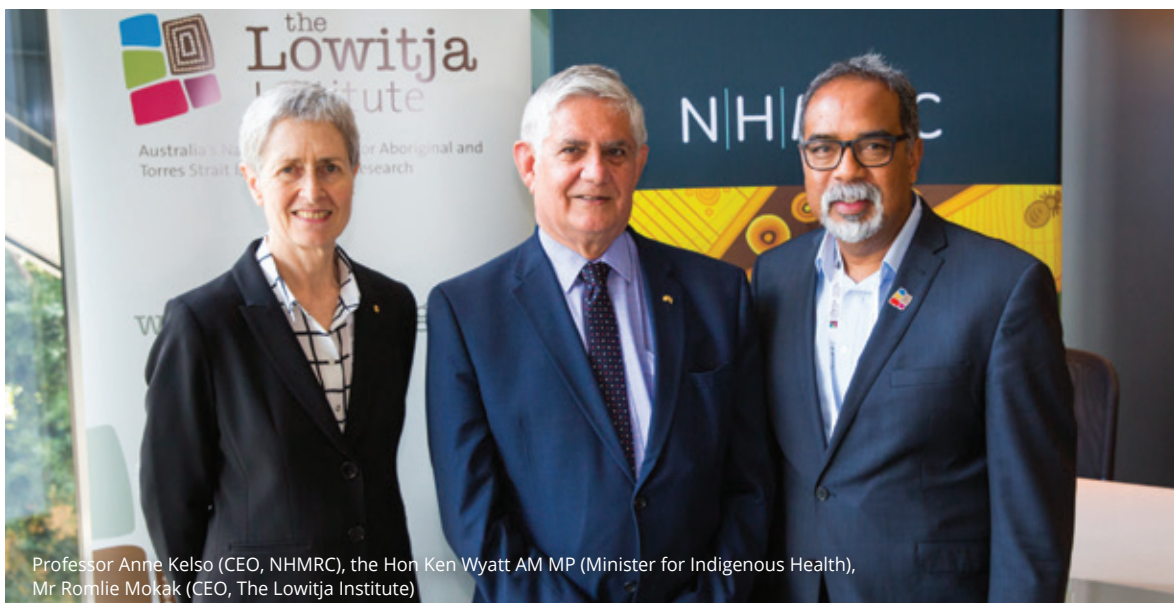
The opening keynotes by Ms Donna Ah Chee, CEO of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Mr John Paterson, CEO of Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory, outlined the innovative ways in which research is being delivered in collaboration with Aboriginal community controlled health organisations.

This philosophy of collaboration is one that the Lowitja Institute and the NHMRC also adopted as co-hosts for this Symposium. As CEOs, Mr Romlie Mokak and Professor Anne Kelso enabled their respective organisations to draw on their different approaches to learn from each other and disrupt existing frameworks for better outcomes.

This was also the overarching goal for the Symposium, to deliver benefit for our people by way of better outcomes and impact.

The collaboration acknowledged that the challenge for all of us, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander institutions, government, researchers and for communities, is to improve the systems and structures so the research and knowledge we generate can be successfully translated to positive changes at ground-level and right through to policy.

The Symposium also received a record number of abstracts—more than 200—assessed by a Scientific Committee made up of 18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. Those abstracts populated an outstanding program for the two days.



Professor Anne Kelso (CEO, NHMRC), the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP (Minister for Indigenous Health), Mr Romlie Mokak (CEO, The Lowitja Institute)



Songwoman Maroochy Baramba performs the Welcome to Country



Gaja Kerry Charlton



Uncle Milton Walit

“ ... I'm pleased to welcome you to such an important event for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. I congratulate the Lowitja Institute and the NHMRC for partnering to co-host this 6th Symposium on Research Translation which has attracted many national and international delegates of such caliber and experience. The concept of co-hosting is probably the first that I can remember and it's an important step in the partnership between two key bodies in that you are equals, you both influence but you both lead as equal partners. I congratulate you on that. ”



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP,
Minister for Indigenous Health,
opening the 6th NHMRC Research
Translation Symposium co-hosted
by the Lowitja Institute,
14 November 2017

Two statements were endorsed by Symposium delegates. The first statement called for the Commonwealth Government to support the Referendum Council's Uluru Statement from the Heart in its entirety and put the creation of the Voice to Parliament to a referendum. The second statement called for the Commonwealth Government to provide long term, sustainable funding for the Lowitja Institute.

In her closing remarks, Professor Kelso spoke of the spirit of the Symposium—the spirit of sharing, of humility, of community, of family—as a standout, and highlighted Indigenous health research and researchers as leading the way to a better health system for all. She also acknowledged the important opportunity to address racism and how it continues to serve as a barrier to achieving healthy Indigenous communities across the globe. Finally, Professor Kelso put forward the NHMRC Roadmap 3 as a vehicle for achieving what needs to be celebrated in ten-years' time: fostering leadership by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, ensuring genuine community

engagement, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of doing research and career trajectories are fully recognised and valued through NHMRC funding.

Mr Romlie Mokak closed by reflecting that the Indigenous-led Symposium was unique in the way it provided a solid space for deep and meaningful impact. He reminded delegates of Sir Mason Durie's emphasis on the importance of promoting and supporting research that focuses on solutions, and not just problems. Delegates were also reminded of Dr Carrie Bourassa's point that Indigenous peoples are the original scientists, have always undertaken scientific research, and that ethical Indigenous research and Indigenous knowledge translation are critical to Indigenous self-determination. Mr Mokak also emphasised the Lowitja Institute's commitment to working with the NHMRC to carry forward the outcomes of the Symposium.

The Lowitja Institute report and resources such as videos and presentations are available at: www.lowitja.org.au/nhmrc-research-translation.



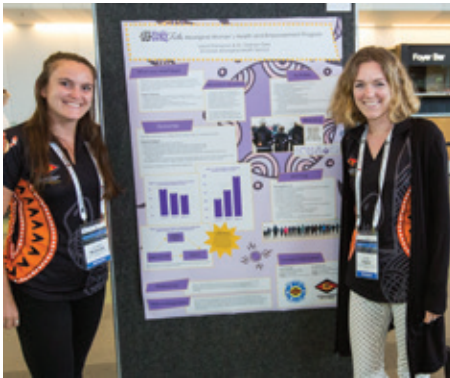
Dr Carrie Bourassa, Scientific Director of the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research



Professor Kerry Arabena



Mr John Paterson (AMSANT), Ms Donna Ah Chee (CAAC)



Aboriginal Women's Health and Empowerment Program presenting a poster by Ms Laura Thompson & Dr Graham Gee



Evening reception



Presentation by Romlie Mokak



Professor Emeritus Sir Mason Durie



Translation of Knowledge, Jyi Lawton 2017, Yimbana, oil on canvas



Professor Ian Anderson

Knowledge translation forum

In May 2018, we held a knowledge translation forum in Canberra, for some 100 attendees. The forum, titled 'Community priorities into policy', was a conversation with researchers, policy makers, and stakeholders from across the health sector about research projects driven by the priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The forum featured presentations on three Lowitja Institute funded projects, and discussed how decision makers can translate the findings into effective policy for the health and wellbeing of First Peoples.

The projects discussed focused on deficit discourse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, on program evaluation and on service integration for early childhood development. Project presentations were:

- An evaluation framework to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, by Professor Margaret Kelaher and Ms Fran Eades
- Deficit discourse and Indigenous health; reframing discourse and strength-based approaches by Dr Hannah Bulloch and Mr Scott Gorringe
- Service integration for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander early childhood development, by Professor Kerry Arabena

Three related publications were launched at the forum (see page 14).

The forum was also an opportunity to develop video resources to enhance the translation of research outcomes and recommendations, which are available from the Lowitja Institute website: www.lowitja.org.au/community-priorities-policy

Submissions

The Lowitja Institute provided the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) with a submission to inform the development of the Closing the Gap refresh. This feedback highlighted areas for further development challenges we see in implementing the refreshed Closing the Gap agenda as proposed, initiatives demanding greater leadership from COAG, and recommendations for moving forward. The submission called for further development of the language and narrative of the refresh and clarity on the architecture and the accountabilities to support accurate measurement of progress against targets. We also highlighted data collection and dissemination and de-centring Western systems and world views as a considerable challenge due to existing barriers, and therefore requiring prioritisation. Finally, we called for greater leadership from COAG on naming and addressing racism and providing support commensurate to evidenced need.



Romlie Mokak introducing Prof. Margaret Kelaher & Ms Fran Eades



KT Forum panel discussion: Prof. Margaret Kelaher, Ms Fran Eades, Dr Hannah Bulloch, Mr Scott Gorringe, Prof. Kerry Arabena

Seminars and workshops

- The Lowitja Institute convened the Disability Research workshop held in October 2017, to discuss key research priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability (see page 12).
- Dr Sanchia Shibasaki, Director of Research, attended the NHMRC Workshop: Strengthening and growing capacity and capability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Researchers in Melbourne in May 2018, at The University of Melbourne Business School.
- Senior Research Officer, Dr Shayne Bellingham, attended the Science meets Parliament Event in Canberra in February 2018. Shayne met with the Hon Senator Patrick Dodson and discussed important issues around access to housing, employment, incarceration rates and how science can contribute to improving outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



2018 Science meets Parliament Indigenous Scholarship recipients sponsored by Australian Academy of Science: Dr Kalinda Griffiths (Research Fellow, University of Sydney and former Lowitja PhD Scholarship holder), Ms Amy Searle, Mr Bradley Moggridge, Dr Shayne Bellingham (Lowitja Institute Senior Research Officer).



Ms Leila Smith facilitating a panel at the ANZOG Conference, October 2017

Speeches and seminars

- The future is in your hands; Lowitja Institute 20th Anniversary and launch of Changing the Narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research; Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue; Canberra; 9 August 2017
- The journey so far; Lowitja Institute 20th Anniversary and launch of Changing the Narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research; Ms Pat Anderson AO; Canberra; 9 August 2017
- Our Hope for the Future: Voice. Treaty. Truth; 2017 Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture; Ms Pat Anderson AO; Charles Darwin University, Darwin; 16 August 2017
- The Lowitja Institute, represented by Ms Leila Smith, was part of a panel discussion for The Doherty Institute's inaugural Indigenous Health forum on 6 September 2017.
- Charles Perkins Address; Indigenous Affairs and Public Administration: Can't We Do Better? The Australia and New Zealand School of Government and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet International Conference; Ms Leila Smith; Sydney; 9 October 2017
- Keynote presentation; First 1000 Days Australia Summit; Mr Romlie Mokak, Brisbane; 20 October 2017
- Re-setting the relationship: why we need constitutional change; Dr Charles Perkins AO Annual Memorial Oration; Ms Pat Anderson AO; Sydney; 27 October 2017
- 2017 NHMRC Research Translation Symposium co-hosted with the Lowitja Institute; Closing Remarks; Mr Romlie Mokak; Brisbane; 15 November 2017
- Reorienting our approach to Aboriginal health: Embracing the voice of Aboriginal people in leading change; Mr Romlie Mokak & Ms Leila Smith, Wingara Aboriginal Health Seminar Series; Canberra, 26 February 2018
- Keynote address; Close the Gap Vision 2020; Mr Romlie Mokak; 16 March 2018
- Address; Harmony Day, University of Melbourne Union; Mr Romlie Mokak; Melbourne; 21 March 2018
- Deficit Discourse research, 2018 BioMedVic Communications Professionals Forum, Ms Cristina Lochert, 24 April 2018, Melbourne
- Address to the World Health Organisations World Health Assembly on the launch of its Indigenous Working, Mr Romlie Mokak and the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, 24 May 2018, Geneva (video)
- First 1000 Days short course presentation, Romlie Mokak, Melbourne, 10 April 2018
- Presentation to the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet Melbourne Roundtable, Romlie Mokak, 6 June 2018.

Interns

During 2017–18, we hosted three interns who each contributed to the work of the Lowitja Institute and, in turn, reported benefit from their interaction with the organisation.

Ms Brontë Spiteri

After applying through the Auroral Project, I began my internship during my first semester of a Master of Public Policy and Management. I have a passion for health and social policy, and have previously

worked in the research team at Scope Australia, a disability not-for-profit. This broader interest led me to discover insightful reports about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing, published by the Lowitja Institute. I thought the Institute's guiding principles were something special, and I wanted to work for an organisation that strived to provide benefit for people.

I completed my internship from June–July 2017, and was employed as a Research Project Officer until January 2018. I worked on various tasks including policy submissions, campaign strategies, stakeholder engagement plans, ethics applications, literature reviews, and workshop design and reporting. I also attended a number of forums, and recorded minutes for interesting and diverse working groups and meetings.

I now work in the Aboriginal Affairs Policy Branch of the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet. I work in the Aboriginal economic development team and continue to use the professional and personal skills I developed whilst at the Lowitja Institute. In my day-to-day work, I find myself thinking, 'what or how would we do this if I was at the Lowitja Institute', because I believe their guiding principles should be applicable to all working in Aboriginal affairs.



Audrey Berdahl-Balwin

I interned at the Lowitja Institute from March to April 2018 through the work placement program of the University of Cambridge's MPhil in Public Policy. For my internship, I wrote an internal report on ethical health research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, focusing specifically on the role of Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) in the ethics process. I applied to be an intern, since I was motivated to support and learn from the Lowitja Institute's work on improving health research for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As someone with a background in contributing to racial equity in the USA, I was also driven to learn from the foreign and familiar challenges of racial inequality in Australia, given our nations' histories of settler colonial conquest. I am continually grateful for the warmth and generosity of the staff at the Lowitja Institute and for the opportunity to witness and participate in the organisation's incredible work. As I leave the Institute, I plan to return to the USA and go to law school to further deepen my capacity to contribute to racial equity.



Alex Zurawski

When nearing completion of my Development Studies degree, I was eager to apply the skills developed through my course within the workplace. Having elected to take a number of Aboriginal studies subjects, I was very grateful to gain acceptance to the Aurora Internship Program, placed at the Lowitja Institute. I saw this as an exciting opportunity not only to gain a greater insight into the sector but also a good alignment between the Institute's key principles and my professional and personal values.



The internship took place from January to March 2018. From the start, I was made to feel a welcomed addition to the team. I was also tasked with interesting work: supporting the development of the Institute's submission to the Closing the Gap refresh discussion paper; preparing the report on the Research Translation Symposium held by the Lowitja Institute and NHMRC in November 2017; attending and contributing to knowledge translation meetings; and providing secretariat support to bilateral Indigenous health working groups. To be involved in something as topical as

the Closing the Gap refresh was very exciting and being given the space to find my own way with the work, with expert guidance, helped to build confidence and skills.

During my internship, I gained a broad insight into the work of the Lowitja Institute specifically and the field of Indigenous health research, here and overseas. Since my internship, I've applied and obtained the position of Research Project Officer with the Institute and have completed my degree.

Measuring the impact

In August 2017, we celebrated 20 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led and focused health research – recognising the journey of the Lowitja Institute and the four associated Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs). To commemorate this anniversary, we launched a report *Changing the Narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research: Four Cooperative Research Centres and the Lowitja Institute: The story so far* at Parliament House in Canberra.

The report was prepared by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in collaboration with the Lowitja Institute. AIATSIS was commissioned to write a brief history of our organisation – including audio-visual recordings of individuals influential in the development of the CRCs and the Institute, highlighting their vision for the organisation. This audio-visual material was published in an e-book edition of the report (available from www.lowitja.org.au/lowitja-publishing).

Changing the Narrative outlines the journey and the successes of the Institute and the CRCs, and showcases how their cumulative efforts have pioneered a new way of conducting health research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It maps the evolution of a new, collaborative and culturally appropriate way of carrying out health research. It's an approach driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities – an approach developed by the CRCs, and embodied in the Institute.



POLICY, PROGRAMS AND IMPACT

Each of the CRCs and the Institute has progressed the work to develop health research expertise and processes to achieve lasting reform. Efforts are based on key principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control of the research agenda, a broader understanding of health that incorporates wellbeing, and the need for research to have a clear and positive impact.

Two decades of work showcased in the report highlight that

- the solutions for the challenges in the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples sit with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our institutions
- all health research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must to be driven by the priorities of those communities, and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, institutions and solutions must be at the heart of health policies that affect Australia's First Peoples.

Since 1997, the CRCs research programs and approach to identifying and prioritising research changed. As such, the reporting of projects (ie. classification) changed from disease and research type themes to life course and systems approach themes.

A total of 290 reported projects were funded and completed from 1997 to 2017 this includes projects undertaken by higher degree research students.

More than 100 scholarships were funded during the two decades, including 63 doctorate and PhD scholarship and 31 for programs at Masters levels.

The broader achievements of the organisations have been the translation of research into practice and production of evidence for good policy; supporting a research community and workforce; developing networks of knowledge and reaching out to our global Indigenous family.



Senator Patrick Dodson, Senator Rachel Siewert, Ms Pat Anderson AO, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, Mr Romlie Mokak



Ms Pat Anderson AO, Professor John Matthews (inaugural Director CRCATH 1997), Mr Romlie Mokak, Dr O'Donoghue



Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG



Ms Pat Anderson AO, Chair of the Lowitja Institute



Mr Craig Ritchie, AIATSIS CEO and Dr Blake Singley from the AIATSIS research and report writing team

Forging relationships

The Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2019

The second Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference will be held at the Darwin Convention Centre on 18-20 June. The theme for the conference will be *Thinking, Speaking, Being* – First Nations solutions for global change.

This theme highlights to delegates and presenters to consider the global implications of their work, the role of First Nations people in leading change, explores what constitutes 'Indigenous solutions', and reflects the framing of the program around solutions. The conference will also showcase indigenous ways of thinking and knowing in research, and ways of interacting and sharing knowledge (including the role of language in this). We hope to build on the success of our last conference which welcomed over 700 delegates from Australia and overseas.

We have hired an events coordinator, established three committees to oversee the design and coordination of the conference, and engaged the assistance of a professional Conference Organiser.

Centres of Research Excellence collaborations

The Lowitja Institute has partnered with two successful National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Centre of Research Excellence applications, aligning well with two of our programs: Social Determinants of Health, and Policy, and Systems Research.

- Centre of Research Excellence on Social Determinants of Health Equity: Policy research on the social determinants of health equity
- Centre of Research Excellence for Integrated Quality Improvement (CRE-IQI).

6th NHMRC Research Translation Symposium co-hosted by The Lowitja Institute

In November 2017, we co-hosted the 6th NHMRC Symposium on Research. The Symposium attracted around 400 delegates from Australia and abroad, reflecting the strong interest in sharing knowledge about effective research processes and outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. The event also provided a opportunity for both institutions to align priorities and demonstrate their commitment deliver a measurable, positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples (see page 17).

Collaborations such as these are critically important to the Institute as they enable organisations, from sometimes very different approaches, to learn from each other and disrupt existing frameworks for better outcomes.

The Lowitja Institute symposium report is available at: www.lowitja.org.au/nhmrc-research-translation.

Work across Canadian and Australian Indigenous Health and Wellbeing

Visit by new Australian High Commissioner to Canada

Prior to commencing her role in Canada, Her Excellency Ms Natasha Smith, Australian High Commissioner to Canada, visited the Lowitja Institute in December 2017 to discuss health, wellbeing and research priorities for Indigenous peoples in both countries.

The Canada–Australia Indigenous Health and Wellness Working Group

The Working Group was established to progress initiatives from the Canada–Australia Roundtable on Indigenous Health and Wellness held in Canberra in December 2016. Lowitja Institute CEO, Mr Romlie Mokak, and the High Commissioner of Canada, His Excellency Mr Paul Maddison, are co-Chairs, ensuring membership encompasses government, academic, community and public service perspectives. The Lowitja Institute provides secretariat for the collaboration.

The aim of the Working Group is to identify priorities related to Indigenous health and wellbeing for bi-national collaboration and action. The main priorities identified for collaboration and action are the need to genuinely address racism and to provide a platform for the voices of Indigenous youth, with two sub-groups established to focus on each of these priorities.

The primary focus of the racism sub-group is to develop a discussion paper to assist in the sharing of knowledge and strengthening of impact and to engage with diverse urban, rural and remote Indigenous communities in both countries. The paper also aims to influence bi-national action to address racism, as experienced by First Peoples of Canada and Australia.

The sub-group established to consider the voices of Indigenous youth will progress young people's priorities through an intersectional understanding of identity and experience. The aim is to represent a range of Indigenous youth perspectives, through the recruitment of youth from a diversity of locations, professional experiences, abilities and sexual and gender identities.



Ms Natasha Smith, Australian High Commissioner to Canada and Mr Romlie Mokak

Partnership for Justice in Health

The Partnership for Justice in Health comprises key health, legal and research Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations. They have come together to explore the intersections between the health of Australia's First Nations and the justice system. The Lowitja Institute is a founding member of the Partnership.

The Doherty Institute Indigenous Health forum

The Lowitja Institute was part of a panel discussion for **The Doherty Institute's** inaugural Indigenous Health forum on 6 September 2017.



Extending hospitality

The Lowitja Institute Melbourne office offers organisations working for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the use of our meeting rooms as culturally safe spaces for meetings and conversations.

We are also considering offering the use of new workstations to individuals working in the health and research sectors.

In late March 2018, we welcomed Anne Hollonds (Director) and some of the team from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) to the office for morning tea and to yarn about research, family matters and the social determinants of health. CEO Romlie Mokak was part of a panel discussing 'How do families matter in the 21st century' at AIFS conference in July 2018.



The objectives of the forum were to showcase and raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research programs at the Doherty Institute, and deepen conversations with leaders in Indigenous health about how we can best partner with their communities. The Doherty Institute invited leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health from across Australia to share their insights on how they can grow their capacity as an Institute.

Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet

The Lowitja Institute continues to be a member of the Australian Indigenous **HealthInfoNet** Advisory Group and attended the meeting on 13 September, and also the 20th Anniversary of the **HealthInfoNet** on the same day. Romlie Mokak also presented to the **HealthInfoNet** Melbourne Workshop on 6 June 2018.

Cranlana Programme

The Lowitja Institute and the Cranlana Programme collaborated in the establishment of the Lowitja Institute Research Leadership and Excellence Award. The Award is a fully funded position in the Cranlana Programme's Executive Colloquium, which is a unique development course for senior leaders from across the public, private and community sectors. The award recognises senior, established Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers who have made a significant contribution to their academic field. The 2017 winner of this award was Associate Professor Ray Lovett, NHMRC Research Fellow and Program Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Epidemiology for Policy and Practice ANU College of Health and Medicine (see page 13). Past winners are Professor Sandra Eades now that University of Melbourne and Professor Gail Garvey from the Menzies School at Health Research. The partnership with Cranlana Programme is set to continue for the next three years.



THE CRANLANA PROGRAMME

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers

The Lowitja Institute Scholarship Program

The Lowitja Institute is committed to developing a strong base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers. Current scholarship holders are listed in Appendix 2. There were two PhD and one Masters program completions during the reporting period (see next page).

The Lowitja Institute scholarship program provides an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and workers to develop their health research skills and contribute to strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. Funded research activities will also contribute to the Lowitja Institute's research evidence and ability to impact policies, programs, and practises that lead to positive change in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Lowitja Institute Scholarship holders are supported to undertake research that contributes to the Lowitja Institute research agenda. A research activity funded by a Lowitja Institute scholarship will contribute to a field of health research that falls within one or more of the Lowitja Institute research program areas.

Co-funded scholarships

Co-funding scholarships enable the Lowitja Institute to collaborate with Participants to provide additional scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and 11 postgraduate scholarships were established in the last reporting period with Queensland University of Technology, La Trobe University, Edith Cowan University (The Neil Thomson Scholarship), The George Institute of Global Health, The University of Melbourne, Griffith University, the Australian National

University, and the Menzies School of Health Research. One scholar from Queensland University of Technology withdrew in late December 2017.

PhD partnership with the Starlight Foundation

Late in 2017, we offered a unique 3-year PhD scholarship to investigate the 'Value of humour, imagination and distraction for the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – focusing on the resilience of children'.

The scholarship was made possible through a partnership with the Starlight Children's Foundation, an Australian children's charity working to brighten the lives of seriously ill children and their families. This research is a unique opportunity to understand the value of laughter and imagination in the treatment and care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

This project is the first time the Lowitja Institute has offered a non-Government funded scholarship. The scholarship amount was \$40 000 per year (which includes \$10 000 for travel and related expenses) and was an identified position for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.



Higher Degree Completions

Vicki Couzens, PhD, RMIT University

'Kooramookyan-an Yakeeneeyt-an Kooweekoowee-yan, Vicki's PhD project, examined the questions: How have Possum Skin Cloaks re-emerged as significant cultural icons of cultural regeneration and revitalisation in contemporary times? And within this re-emergence: What impact can reviving age-old Aboriginal traditional practices have on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people and their communities?

This project represents the first study to investigate, narrate and document, the technical and creative processes, and the health and wellbeing impact of revitalising the cultural practice of Possum Skin Cloak making. I investigated this re-emergence across 75+ Aboriginal communities across south-eastern Australia over a 17 year history.

Findings show that the sustainability of this traditional practice is dependent on the sharing of cultural knowledge, of cultural and spiritual health and wellbeing, community development, and ethical engagement with ATSI communities. A Model was developed to provide tools, teachings and resources. I discuss the potential for this model to be adapted for use across a range of community and healthcare sector services such as crisis centres, Aboriginal women's safe houses, social and mental wellbeing programs and so on. The Model intends to enable communities to continue cultural revitalisation practices into the future towards living legacy. (© V Couzens 2018)



Dr Vicki Couzens at work;
photo © and courtesy Australian Council for the Arts 2016

Robert Monaghan, M. Public Health, Kirby Institute, UNSW

The aims of this study were to determine:

1. The uptake of Aboriginal Adult Health Check in NSW ACCHSs participating in a CQI program
2. What proportion of Aboriginal Adult Health Checks had a chlamydia test conducted as part of the check in NSW ACCHSs participating in a CQI program?
3. Did integration of chlamydia testing into Aboriginal Adult Health Check lead to an increase in the uptake of chlamydia testing overall?

Over the 4-year study period, the proportion of females aged 15-54 years who had an Aboriginal Adult Health Check in 12 months ranged from 37-56% by year.

Of the Aboriginal Adult Health Checks conducted in females, the proportion which included a chlamydia test was low, ranging from 4.8-5.6% per year. Overall and in each age group, there was no significant annual trend in the proportion of Aboriginal Adult Health Check in females, with a chlamydia test conducted as part of the check.

Among males, of the Aboriginal Adult Health Check conducted, the proportion which included a chlamydia test was also low, ranging from 2.7-6.5% per year.



Robert Monaghan graduation;
photo Lisa Monaghan

Elizabeth Orr, PhD, La Trobe University

The over-representation of Aboriginal patients in hospitals across Australia is a strong indicator of health inequalities. Planned prevention strategies to address the social and cultural determinants of health will reduce health inequalities and associated hospitalisation rates in the longer term. Of equal importance is the current provision of culturally safe and effective care and support for Aboriginal patients in hospitals, and their families. This thesis presents a set of principles for good practice to guide the socio-cultural care and support of Aboriginal patients, drawn from the practice wisdom of Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers and Social Workers.

An ethnographic action research methodology, informed by principles of Indigenous research and guided by an Aboriginal Critical Reference Group, constituted the study design. In-depth interviews were held with AHLOs, social workers and Aboriginal health policy and program informants. Separate focus groups verified the study themes and findings. A conceptual scaffold, built from the literature about Aboriginal health and social work practice with Aboriginal people, was a further point of reference for the thematic analysis of the narratives of practice.

Practice narratives about working with Aboriginal people across general, specialist, urban, and regional hospitals in Victoria were shared during the interviews. Focusing on self-reported strengths in the practice by AHLOs and social workers, principles for good practice with Aboriginal patients, their families, and their communities, were drawn together in the findings from the study. The diverse narratives of good practice confirmed that there is a specific sociocultural practice with Aboriginal people in hospitals across Victoria. Strategies for knowledge translation are discussed throughout the thesis and ideas for further research are highlighted in the conclusion.



Elizabeth (Liz) Orr graduation, receiving her degree and the Nancy Millis Medal from Deborah Radford, Deputy Vice Chancellor. Photo courtesy La Trobe University



Future research leaders sharing their insights with the Lowitja Institute Board and invited guests

In early December 2017, the Lowitja Institute Board met in Canberra for its December Board meeting and AGM. The Board hosted a dinner at the National Portrait Gallery, and welcomed **Mr Matthew West**, podiatrist and Lowitja Institute PhD scholarship recipient, to discuss with us the topic: Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander leadership in research and policy. Conversations were held with friends, colleagues and key stakeholders about the important work being done in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research and about how we work towards a stronger future in 2018 and beyond.



Mr Romlie Mokak, Dr Tamara Mackean, Ms June Oscar AO, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, Ms Pat Anderson AO, Professor Peter Buckskin PSM



Mr Matthew West presenting at the Board dinner



Ms Pat Anderson AO



Lowitja Institute's Day Out

On Friday 1 September 2017, Lowitja Institute staff had the very great pleasure of visiting the National Gallery of Victoria's (NGV) Past Legacy Present Tense exhibition featuring 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from city and bush studios who have made their mark by reinterpreting and transforming semiotic signs and customary objects of another time and place into something daringly different and modern' (text by NGV).

We also visited the Koorie Heritage Trust, where Jordan Edwards (pictured right) spoke to us about the languages and countries of south east Australia. He also led a very informative walk to Birrarung Falls on the edge of Melbourne CBD. Thank you, Jordan!

In addition, we had a very nice lunch and celebrated the start of spring.



Contributing to national policy

Journeys to Health and Strong Wellbeing Project

The Lowitja Institute was commissioned in June 2017 by the National Mental Health Commission to conduct research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health. The research aims were to identify the key risk and protective factors as they relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experience of trauma and other identified factors, and, using that knowledge to improve the mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A Reference Group was established to oversee the project. The project also used qualitative data collection methods that drew on multiple sources to ensure that the approach built on previous research and reflected the knowledge and experience of key stakeholders while privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices. The research design included focus groups and semi-structured interviews held in Brisbane, Melbourne and Broome, as well as a stakeholder workshop in Canberra to test emerging themes and preliminary findings. Representatives from each of the three study locations were invited to the stakeholder workshop.

The purpose of the focus groups was to hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experienced the impacts of trauma to confirm understandings on how they experience good mental health and ways that trauma impacts on their lives. In addition to these focus groups, semi-structured interviews were held with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health workforce and experts from the mental health sector.

Some of the partners who collaborated in this work were

- the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (Brisbane),
- the Koori Youth Council (Melbourne), and
- the Kimberly Aboriginal Health Service (Broome).

The project's Reference Group included

- Professor Pat Dudgeon, Chair, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health
- Dr Graham Gee, Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Ms Lisa Hillan, the Healing Foundation
- Prof. Helen Milroy, National Mental Health Commissioner
- Prof. Ngiare Brown, National Mental Health Commissioner
- Ms Tania Dalton, Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association

The project report will be available at www.lowitja.org.au/lowitja-publishing.

A Strong and Sustainable Organisation

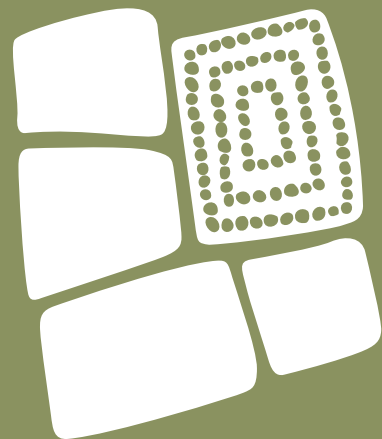


Our Strategic Direction

When Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue agreed to have the Lowitja Institute named after her, she entrusted in us **her spirit and energy, her values and priorities.**

Dr O'Donoghue told us to **be a courageous organisation committed to social justice and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to match words to action, to achieve real tangible and immediate outcomes.**

Also, to be **known throughout Australia** as a strong and sustainable organisation **working fearlessly for change and improvement in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.** Our strategic plan and all the work that follows will honour Dr O'Donoghue's vision.



The Lowitja Institute Strategic Plan 2015–2018



The purpose of the Lowitja Institute is to value the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Our vision is that the Lowitja Institute will be an authoritative and collective voice for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and wellbeing



Our aspirations

The Lowitja Institute will facilitate research and knowledge exchange that improves the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will strengthen the Lowitja Institute's ability to influence policies, programs and practices that reflect the Institute's vision while ensuring that we endure into perpetuity.

To facilitate research and knowledge exchange that makes a positive difference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and wellbeing

Through our research, knowledge exchange and advocacy, to impact policies, programs and practice that will improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

To be a strong and sustainable organisation.

Board of Directors



L-R: Mr Brendon Douglas, Professor Peter Buckskin, Ms Pat Anderson (Chair), Dr Tamara Mackean, Mr Ali Drummond, Mr Selwyn Button.
Absent: Ms June Oscar, Professor Fiona Stanley, Mr Adrian Carson

The Lowitja Institute is governed by a skills based and representative Board of Directors. The Board is chaired by Ms Pat Anderson AO, an Alyawarre woman who is known nationally and internationally as a powerful advocate for the health of Australia's First Peoples. Ms Anderson has extensive experience in Aboriginal health, including community development, advocacy, policy formation and research ethics. In June 2014, Ms Anderson was appointed Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the Indigenous community as a social justice advocate, particularly through promoting improved health, educational and protection outcomes for children. She was awarded the Human Rights Medal 2016 by the Australian Human Rights Commission. Ms Anderson completed her term as Co-Chair of the Prime Minister's Referendum Council on 30 June 2017. During the reporting period, Ms Anderson was also appointed Chair of the Remote Area Health Corps.

During the reporting period, other Institute directors included:

- **Professor Peter Buckskin PSM**, a Narungga man from the Yorke Peninsula and the Dean: Aboriginal Engagement and Strategic Projects at the University of South Australia
- **Mr Selwyn Button**, a Gungarri man from south-west Queensland and the Assistant Director-General (Indigenous Education), Department of Education, Training and Employment, Queensland
- **Mr Adrian Carson**, a Cobble Cobble/Wakka Wakka man is the Chief Executive Officer of the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (UIH) Ltd
- **Mr Brendon Douglas**, the Director of Research and Innovation at Charles Darwin University and an Executive Council member of the International Development Contractors Group
- **Mr Ali Drummond**, a qualified nurse of Torres Strait Islander descent and a Lecturer in the School of Nursing, Queensland University of Technology
- **Dr Tamara Mackean**, a descendant of the Waljen Peoples of Western Australia and a Senior Research Fellow (joint appointment) at the Southgate Institute for Health, Society and Equity at the Flinders University of South Australia and the George Institute for Global Health in Sydney
- **Ms June Oscar AO** is a Bunuba woman from Fitzroy Crossing and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner
- **Professor Fiona Stanley AC**, Founding Director and Patron of the Telethon Kids Institute (formerly Telethon Institute for Child Health Research), Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Western Australia and Vice-Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION

The Lowitja Institute Board is committed to holding some of its meetings in regional areas. While we are connected nationally, and to local communities and families through the research, it is important for us to connect directly with people living and working in communities. Not only do we learn how to support services, but it is profoundly uplifting for us, as an organisation and as individuals, to see this tangible and strong purpose to better the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples everywhere. This is completely aligned with what our Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, wants us to do.



On 28 September 2017, the Board visited the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service in NSW. This was a great opportunity for the Board to learn of the achievements and challenges faced by the Service in the area.



L-R: Brendon Douglas, Melissa Haley, Lyn Rummery, Christine Corby OAM, Pat Anderson AO, Phillip Dowse, Peter Buckskin, Romlie Mokak, Ali Drummond, Ricco Lane, Reg Rutene



It was a great pleasure for the Lowitja Institute Board to visit, on 14 June 2018, the Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service (CKAHS) and we thank their Board, CEO Ms Zell Dodd and staff for their generous hospitality.



Tamara Mackean, Romlie Mokak, Pat Anderson, Leeroy Bilney, Tina Miller, Peter Buckskin, Zell Dodd, Selwyn Button

The visit to Walgett was also an opportunity to visit a site for the Literacy for Life Foundation and to learn more about its work. [SEE PAGE 12](#)



Pictured L-R: Joe Boughton-Dent, Romlie Mokak, Lucy Nunez, Jack Beetson, Pat Anderson, Ali Drummond, Brendon Douglas and Peter Buckskin.

Corporate

As host of the Lowitja Institute CRC, delivery of CRC projects is a priority for the Lowitja Institute until funding from this program ceases in June 2019.

With a view to the post-June 2019 future, the Institute is undergoing a transformational process from sole reliance on government funding to a bold program of business development that will ensure its sustainability into the future. With this in mind, the Institute has started to convert its extensive research base into valuable insights and product offerings.

During the 2016–17 period, four business opportunities were identified: **Lowitja Insight**, **Lowitja Standards**, **Lowitja Consulting** and **Lowitja Ventures**. A fifth, **Lowitja Publishing**, was prioritised in 2017–18.

In this reporting period, and in response to a high degree of interest in quality policy research, we have started to develop Lowitja Consulting as the first of those potential activities. It is envisaged that Lowitja Consulting will undertake research, strategy and policy projects with governments, mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. In doing this, we are ensuring that our approach and deliverables align with our principles of strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and workforce, community beneficence, engaging end users, and measuring impact.

The Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC

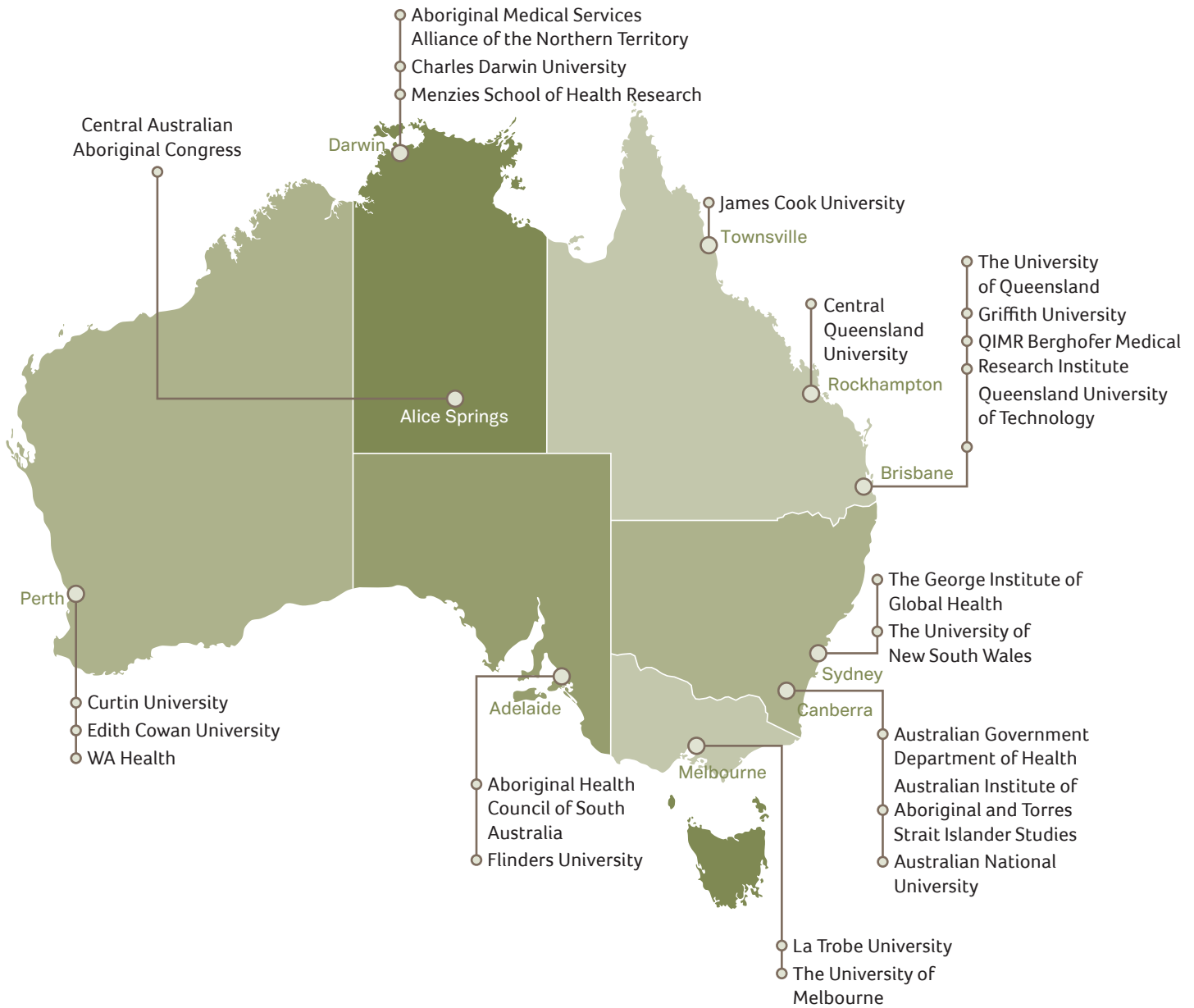
The Lowitja Institute hosts the Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC (The Lowitja Institute CRC) funded by the Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation and Science Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Programme.

The history of the Lowitja Institute CRC dates back to 1997 with the establishment of the CRC for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (CRCATH, 1997–2003), which was followed by the CRC for Aboriginal Health (CRAH 2003–09), and the CRC

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (CRCATSIH 2010–14).

At present, the Lowitja Institute CRC works with 22 Participants that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations, State and Australian government departments, and research institutions. This group meets twice a year to discuss current work, future activities and issues of governance and funding; this year we met in Melbourne on 8 November 2017 and 21 June 2018.

The Lowitja Institute CRC Participants



The Lowitja Institute CRC hosted two Participants Forum in its Melbourne offices, in November 2017 and in May 2018, to discuss activities and ongoing research, as well as strategic considerations for the organisation.

In November 2017, Participants heard presentations from Dr Bill Fogarty on the reframing discourse and changing the narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing research, published in 2018 as the Deficit Discourse papers **SEE PAGE 14**.

Participants also heard from Mr Scott Avery about his PhD work on critical analysis of disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and from Dr Anne Lowell and Professor Lawurrpa Maypilama about growing up children in two worlds: building Yolŋu skills, knowledge and priorities into early childhood assessment and support.

In May 2018, PhD Scholarship holder, Miss Emily Munro-Harrison presented on her thesis: Urban invisibility: Identities of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban Victoria. In addition, the Lowitja Institute research team, Dr Shayne Bellingham, Ms Tahlia Eastman, Ms Jessie Motlik and Mr Alex Zurawski presented to Participants on the Lowitja Institute Alumni Project.



Ms Emily Munro-Harrison, Lowitja Institute scholarship holder, presenting on her research on 'Urban invisibility: Identities of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people in urban Victoria'; Participants Forum, 2 May 2018



Presentation by Ms Lawurrpa Maypilama on the project 'Growing up children in two worlds: Building Yolŋu skills, knowledge and priorities into early childhood assessment and support'; Participants Forum 23 November 2017



Uncle Bill Nicholson welcoming the Participants Forum to Wurundjeri lands on 2 May 2018.



Participants Forum 23 November 2017

Strong brand and communications



Publications

Publications continue to be an important communications tool for the Institute and for the research teams we support. This year we published four new reports, a policy brief and a summary report (see Appendix 3).

The *Changing the Narrative* publication was a collaboration with AIATSIS, and, in a first for the Institute, we published a companion eBook along with the hard copy report. The eBook contains audio and video recordings of reflections on the establishment and growth of the Institute by individuals who were critical to its history, including our Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue.

All of our publications are available online and through RMITInformat and EBSCO internationally. During the reporting period, material was downloaded from our website more than 25,000 times.

over 25,000+
publication
downloads



Videos

Video content is a great way to reach audiences around the world, and we have been working to produce a range of videos from our researchers and the Lowitja Institute team. This financial year we added 13 new videos to our public Vimeo channel (which had over 7000 views).

over 7,000+
video views



Social media

Twitter continues to be our strongest social media platform and in this reporting period we grew to over 9000 followers. The Lowitja Institute is also expanding in other areas of social media, including growth for our Facebook and LinkedIn profiles.

We held three major events in this financial year – an anniversary event and launch of the *Changing the Narrative* report in August 2017, we co-hosted the NHMRC Research Translation Symposium in November 2017, and held a knowledge translation forum in May 2018. Social media engagement exceeded expectations for each event with the August 2017 event trending nationally; the #ResearchTranslation17 conversation gathering more than 41 million impressions on Twitter; and the forum achieving over 5 million impressions using the #ResearchIntoPolicy hashtag.

over 9,000+
Twitter
followers



Website

In this reporting period we saw an increase in our website traffic, with more than 93,000 unique visits to the site. Our continuing Google AdWord grant accounted for 27% of the visits to our site. Visits to Lt.search doubled in this financial year, reaching more than 20,000.

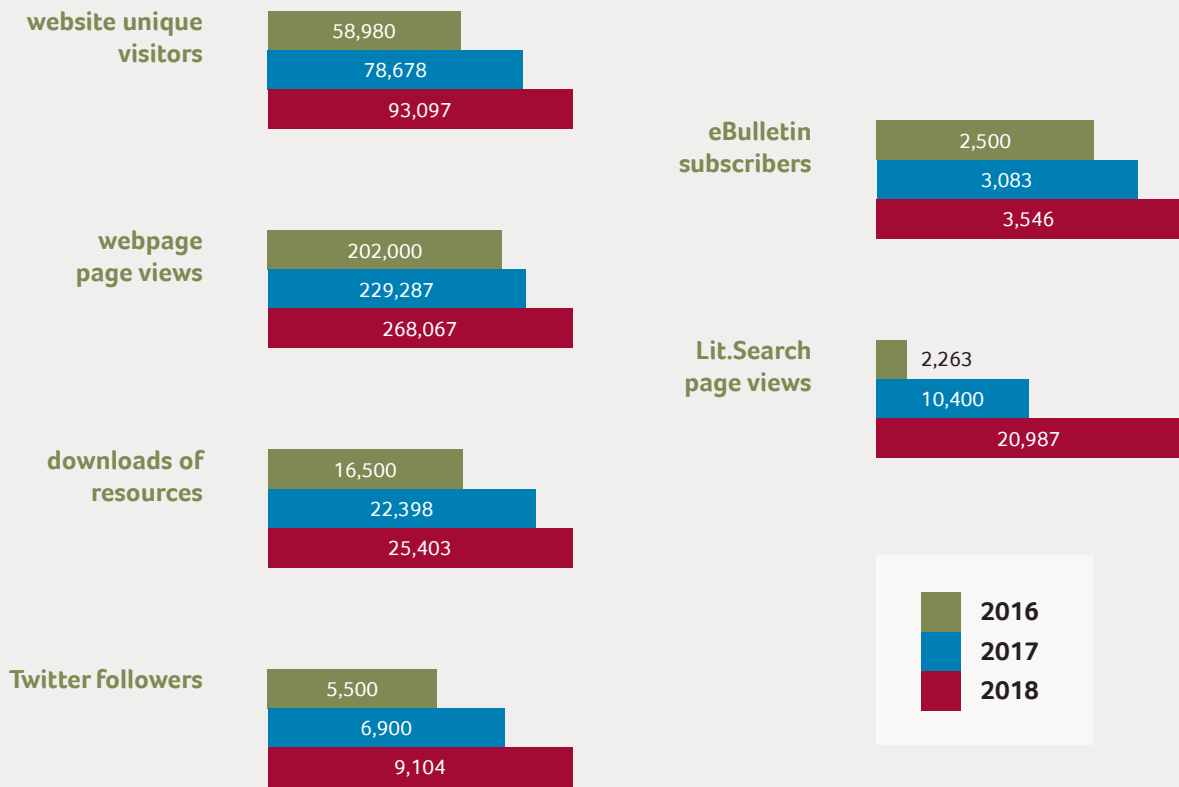
The Lowitja Institute website was last updated in 2012, and since that time there have been significant changes in accessibility, functionality and design options for websites. The Institute is also changing as an organisation, so we're working on a new site which will evolve with us and make finding out about our work easier and more engaging.

over 93,000+
unique web
visits

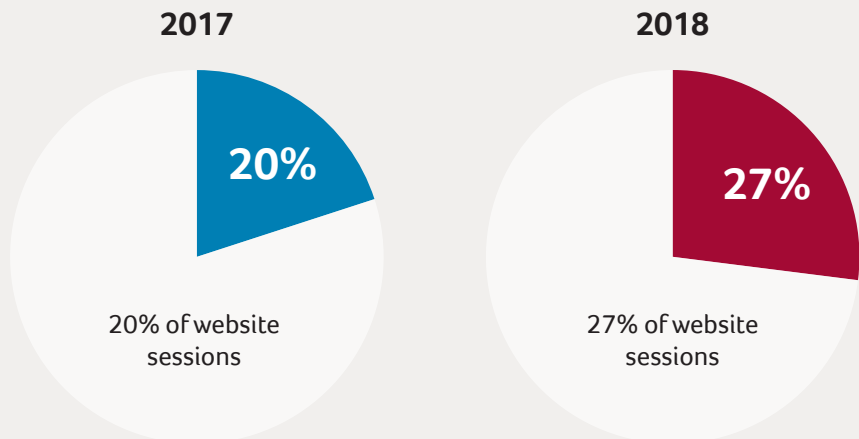


Speeches and presentation

The communications team also supported the preparation of several speeches and seminars and presented to the 2018 BioMedVic Communications Professionals Forum on deficit discourse research (see page 21).



Google ad impact





Key media & promotions

Engaging with our partners, collaborators and media outlets on news and promotions is vital to communicating with our audiences.

August 2017

Anniversary celebration. Changing the narrative: Indigenous people controlling Indigenous health, *The Wire*, 9 August 2017 <http://thewire.org.au/story/changing-narrative-indigenous-people-heading-indigenous-health/>

October 2017

'But I Didn't Mean It Like That!', *Girlfriend*, 18 October 2018 <https://www.girlfriend.com.au/racism-in-australia>

Institute directors visit Walgett Medical Service, *Koori Mail*, 18 October 2017

Pat Anderson on The Point, 31 October 2017 <https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/video/1074629187551/the-point-31-october>

Indigenous Data Sovereignty: More than scholarship, it's a movement, *Croakey*, 29 October 2018 (Lowitja Institute sponsored reporting of University of Melbourne/AIATSIS Indigenous Data Sovereignty Symposium) <https://croakey.org/indigenous-data-sovereignty-more-than-scholarship-its-a-movement/>

November 2017

'Taking away basic rights of children': Calls for age of criminal responsibility be raised in Australia, *SBS News*, 22 November 2017 <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/taking-away-basic-rights-of-children-calls-for-age-of-criminal-responsibility-be-raised-in-australia>

Stop "stacking your CVS" and ensure Indigenous communities lead research, *Croakey*, 21 November 2017 (Lowitja Institute sponsored reporting of NHMRC Research Translation Symposium) <https://croakey.org/category/croakey-news-and-projects/croakey-conference-news-service/researchtranslation17/>

January 2018

How Australia is failing its Indigenous population, *CNN*, 29 January 2018 <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/26/asia/indigenous-australian-australia-day-statistics/index.html>

February 2018

Romlie Mokak included as part of the *Close The Gap - 10 Year Review* social media campaign <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/close-gap-10-year-revie>

March 2018

International Women's Day 2018: Celebrating women's leadership in health, World Health Organisation Western Pacific Region, March 2018 http://www.wpro.who.int/equity_social_determinants/2018-womens-day-ps/en/

National Geographic apology: 'We were anticipated to be a dying race', *BBC News*, 17 March 2018 <https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-australia-43410584>

April 2018

Black women taking leadership in Australia's health sector, *NITV*, 13 April 2018 <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2018/04/12/black-women-taking-leadership-australias-health-sector>

May 2018

A question of value: Time to redress the price of silence, Romlie Mokak in the *Griffith Review*, May 2018 <https://griffithreview.com/articles/a-question-of-value-price-of-silence-mokak/>

Culturally Appropriate Health Research, *Speaking Out*, 6 May 2018 <http://www.abc.net.au/radio/sydney/programs/speakingout/romlie-mokak/9734352>

Putting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community priorities into policy: What will it take?, *Croakey*, 13 May 2018 (Lowitja Institute sponsored reporting of the **Community priorities into policy** knowledge translation forum) <https://croakey.org/putting-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-community-priorities-into-policy-what-will-it-take/>

The Deal: Leila Smith, Lowitja Institute, *The Australian*, 18 May 2018 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/the-deal-magazine/leila-smith-lowitja-institute/news-story/cbf8a786b430537d74a599a8bec93f1a?csp=0cf1f72175a0272e757aa559bbd8c541>

Coming of age: What I know, Pat Anderson in *Elle Magazine* feature, May 2018

Report: Change how we define Indigenous people, *Koori Mail*, 30 May 2018

31 May 2018 was #IHMAYDay. A great BIG wrap of the news tweeted from the fifth annual IHMayDay, *Croakey*, 11 June 2018 <https://croakey.org/a-great-big-wrap-of-the-news-tweeted-from-the-fifth-annual-ihmayday/>

June 2018

In the shadow of Terra Nullius, Pat Anderson featured in 3 part series for *Rear Vision*, June 2018 <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/in-the-shadow-of-terra-nullius-part-1/9861316>

Finance

The Lowitja Institute finished the 2017–18 financial year with a \$142,576 surplus.

Income

totalled \$7.5m with \$6.9m in CRC Programming Funding including \$223,333 in cash contributions from CRC Participants; project income of \$60,455 related to research support funding from National Mental Health Commission and Research Program for the Partnership for Justice in Health; interest income of \$153,660; sundry income of \$121,680, including a \$100,000 donation.

Expenditure

totalled \$7.3m, with research related activities representing 91% of expenditure and corporate services 9%. Project activity expenditure was \$4.3m, with the majority of expenditure related to project funding and completion of residual research activities of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. Expenditure also included scholarship payments, and expenditure costs of the Lowitja Institute other project activities.

Administration activities cost \$237,608; corporate related employment \$404,329; research related employment \$1.5m, and operational expenditure was \$0.9m.

Cash reserves

reduced from \$7.2m to \$6.8m, during the financial year as a result of a significant increase in research funding expenditure from \$1.8m to \$4.3m from the surplus funds recognised as a liability. It is anticipated that these funds will be expended on the Lowitja Institute research agenda in future reporting periods with more project funds due to be released for the final year of CRC Funding Programme. Cash reserves included accounts receivables of \$2.2m for the new Indigenous Australians' Health Programme (IAHP) grant from Commonwealth Department of Health.

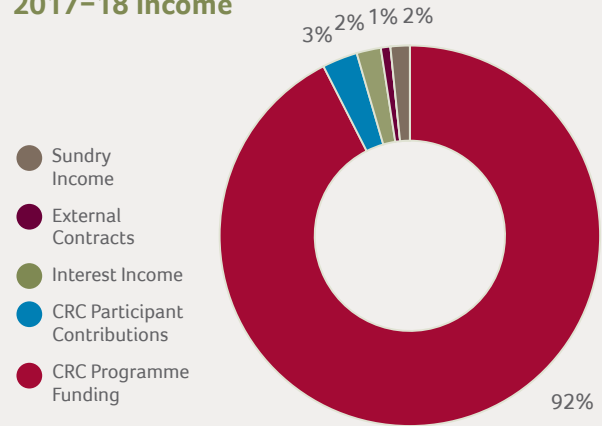
Debtors

at \$2.25m the majority related to the new Indigenous Australians' Health Programme (IAHP) grant funding received in advance from the Commonwealth Department of Health. There was minimal movement in fixed assets, with the overall reduction in asset value due to depreciation.

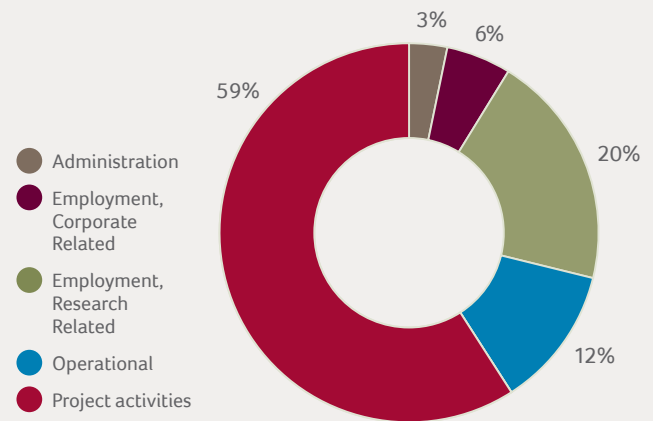
Current liabilities

at \$6.8m including \$5.95m of income in-advance and project commitments from CRC Programme, employee accruals of \$219,991 and \$135,537 in GST payable.

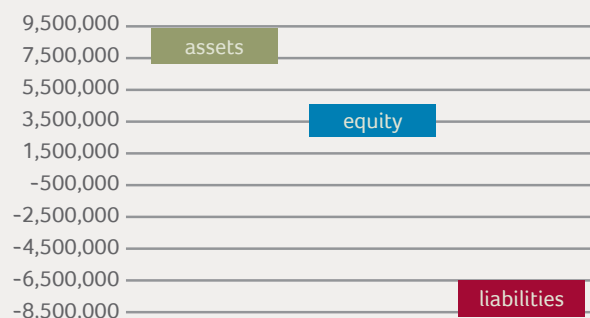
The Lowitja Institute 2017–18 Income



The Lowitja Institute 2017–18 Expenditure



The Lowitja Institute Financial Position at 30 June 2018



Other highlights









PHOTO CAPTIONS

- 1 Meeting with the Doherty Institute, March 2018: Leila Smith, Belinda Collins, Sharon Lewin, Steven Tong, Katherine Kedzierska. Photo courtesy Doherty Institute
- 2 Visit by the Hon Catherine King MP, Shadow Minister for Health and Medicare, Australian Parliament, January 2018
- 3 Canada Day Celebrations 2018: Romlie Mokak, Pat Anderson AO, Her Excellency Connie Taracena Ambassador of Guatemala, Craig Ritchie.
- 4 Disability workshop held in October 2017 (see page 12): Margaret Kelaher, Kerry Arabena and June Oscar AO
- 5 Diversity Week at the University of Melbourne, March 2018: Romlie Mokak, Reem Faiq and Angeline Ferdinand
- 6 Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet Melbourne Roundtable, June 2018: Romlie Mokak, Alana Killen, Neil Drew, Amanda Lawrence and Hugh Taylor AC. Photo courtesy Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet
- 7 Senator Richard Di Natale, Leader of the Australian Greens, Australian Parliament, attending the launch of the Changing the Narrative 20th anniversary publication, August 2017 (see page 23)
- 8 Establishing MRFF Priorities Workshop, June 2018: back row – Gregory Phillips, Catherine Chamberlain, Chelsea Bond, Lisa Whop, Romlie Mokak, Shayne Bellingham, Allan Groth, Roxane Bainbridge, Prebhjot Kaur and David Bowser from Curio, Jacinta Elston. Front row: Fiona Petersen, Leila Smith, Alex Zurawski, Ray Lovett, Glenn Pearson
- 9 Dr Chelsea Bond, speaking at the NHMRC Research Translation Symposium 2017 co-hosted by the Lowitja Institute, November (see page 17)
- 10 Culture is Life filming; Romlie Mokak and Banook Rind, March 2018
- 11 Poster released on International Women's Day by the World Health Organization, Western Pacific Region, for their #HealthForAll campaign, March 2018
- 12 Communications Officer Fiona Walls talking up the good work at the 6th Rural and Remote Health Symposium held in Canberra, April 2018
- 13 Indigenous Allied Health Conference 2017: Matthew West, Lowitja Institute scholarship holder and past winner of the IAHA Conference Future Leader Award sponsored by the Institute, with the 2018 winner Michale Chandler, and Lowitja Institute Board Director June Oscar AO
- 14 Lowitja publications on display at Knowledge Mobilization Forum in Winnipeg, Canada, June 2018
- 15 Lowitja Institute sponsor banner at the AIDA Conference 2017
- 16 Justin Mohamed and Shaun Ewen attending the launch of the Changing the Narrative 20th anniversary publication, August 2017 (see page 23)
- 17 Leila Smith, Donna Murray, Peter Buckskin AM, attending the launch of the Changing the Narrative 20th anniversary publication, August 2017
- 18 Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Company. NHMRC Research Translation Symposium 2017 co-hosted by the Lowitja Institute (see page 17)
- 19 Disability workshop, October 2018, Scott Avery presenting, interpreter (see page 12)
- 20 NAIDOC MARCH 2017, Melbourne, Ms Maya Mokak and Ms Perina Drummond
- 21 Mr Romlie Mokak, Dr Tamara McKean, Ms June Oscar AO, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, Ms Pat Anderson AO, Professor Peter Buckskin PSMat Parliament House, Canberra, December 2017
- 22 His Excellency Mr Paul Madisson, High Commissioner of Canada to Australia, Ms Pat Anderson AO, a celebrating bear, Ms Perina Drummond and Mr Romlie Mokak enjoying the Canada Day 2018 celebrations

Supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart

At its March 2018 meeting, the Board of the Lowitja Institute resolved to formally support the Uluru Statement from the Heart:



We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.

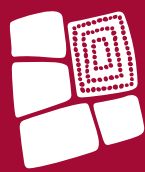
We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.



the
Lowitja
Institute

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

The Lowitja Institute

PO Box 650, Carlton South
Victoria 3053 Australia

T: +61 3 8341 5555

F: +61 3 8341 5599

E: admin@lowitja.org.au

www.lowitja.org.au

 [@LowitjaInstitut](https://twitter.com/LowitjaInstitut)