

Annual Report

2017



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 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 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.



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Chairperson's Message



As Chairperson of the Lowitja Institute I have been my privilege to work with some outstanding Board members. This year we farewelled Professor Greg Anderson (QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute), Mr Russell Taylor AM (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies), and Ms Robynne Quiggin (Australian Human Rights Commission) and I thank them for their contribution.

This reporting period, the Board visited some of the communities and stakeholders whom we serve including Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service in Canberra and the Joyce Palmer Health Service in Palm Island following a Board meeting in Townsville; we are grateful for their warm welcome.

The Institute made a number of significant expert contributions to reviews of national importance. In June 2017, it made a submission to the National Health and Medical Research Council and suggested both high-level and process-level improvements to promote awareness and measure the effectiveness of the two guidelines to ensure they are used adequately.

In December 2016, we made a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into Freedom of Speech in Australia highlighting the link between racism and health. Subsequently, our CEO was invited to give evidence to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights in Melbourne.

The Lowitja Institute also provided the Royal Commission into the Detention of Children in the Northern Territory a submission to inform improvements to the child protection system and the youth justice system.

In July 2016, we submitted recommendations to the Medical Research Futures Fund where, in our view, their investment could make a valuable contribution to the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In March 2017, the Lowitja Institute hosted a briefing by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals for the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz. The discussions focused on the need for Australian governments to have a new and different way of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Also, the need for efforts that value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledges, address and eliminate racism, and are underpinned by a rebalancing of power toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander institutions and communities. The Lowitja Institute called for government to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and for global networks to bring together Indigenous health experts, academics and policymakers to effect positive outcomes for First Peoples.

On a personal note, I was honoured to receive the 2016 Human Rights Medal from the Australian Human Rights Commission and, early 2017, a Doctor of Medical Science *honoris causa*, conferred on me by Edith Cowan University.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the first Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health in 1997. Work is complete on a publication that describes the evolution of the Lowitja Institute and its predecessor organisations in the health research landscape, captures its contribution and highlights the vision of influential individuals embodied in the Institute's work.

We honour all those who have contributed, especially our Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, and look forward to delivering, with our partners and colleagues, health research that will have a transformative, positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our peoples.

Pat Anderson AO
Chairperson
The Lowitja Institute

Chief Executive Officer's Report



The research projects established in 2015 are well underway and focussing on knowledge translation plans. The work ranges from narrative framing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing; models and quality of genetic health services; to cultural determinants of health. New projects established during 2016–17 include important workforce and career pathways projects, as well health system competence for culturally safe care.

During 2016–17, we paid particular attention to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men and convened a workshop to share knowledge on their strengths, their roles and aspirations, families and communities. Also, to identify research priorities to be funded in the second half of 2017.

Planning for a research translation symposium co-hosted by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Lowitja Institute was advanced during the reporting period. Together with NHMRC CEO, Professor Anne Kelso AO, I see this as an opportunity to bring relevant expertise to the business of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research translation and put forward Indigenous perspectives that inform the most effective policies and programs. The joint symposium also indicates an alignment of priorities and a strong commitment from the two institutions to deliver a measurable, positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples.

We have also focussed on strengthening our national and international networks and held our first international conference in November 2016, offering a comprehensive scientific and cultural program over three days. The conference brought together more than 700 delegates from Australia and overseas.

Of a total of 143 presenters, 72 per cent were Indigenous. The conference also released a Conference

Statement, disseminated widely nationally and internationally and announced research excellence awards, including the inaugural Lowitja Institute Outstanding Achievement in Indigenous Health and Wellbeing.

In December 2016, in Canberra, a Canada–Australia Roundtable on Indigenous Health and Wellness was convened by the Canadian High Commission, the Lowitja Institute, and the Australian National University, bringing together experts and community health representatives from both countries. As an outcome, a Canada–Australia Indigenous Health and Wellness Collaboration was established which I will chair together with the High Commissioner for Canada, His Excellency Mr Paul Madisson. The aim of the collaboration is to identify priorities related to Indigenous health and wellbeing for bi-national collaboration and action.

The 2016 Medicine and Society Oration for the Cranlana Programme, which I delivered in August 2016, expanded on many of the fundamental concepts that inform our work and the identity of the Lowitja Institute. On that occasion, I advocated that in order to achieve significant, measurable, positive change in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we need to expand our idea of value to a concept that

- values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges
- places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, institutions and solutions at the centre of policymaking
- resets the power balance between those making the decisions and those for whom the policy is intended.

I look forward to embedding those principles in the transformative work we are undertaking in the development of business opportunities for the Institute within four new initiatives—Lowitja Insight, Lowitja Standards, Lowitja Consulting and Lowitja Ventures.

I take this opportunity to thank all our research, community and policy partners who have contributed over the year to help us ensure that our activities effectively address inequities in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Romlie Mokak
Chief Executive Officer
The Lowitja Institute

Research & Knowledge Translation



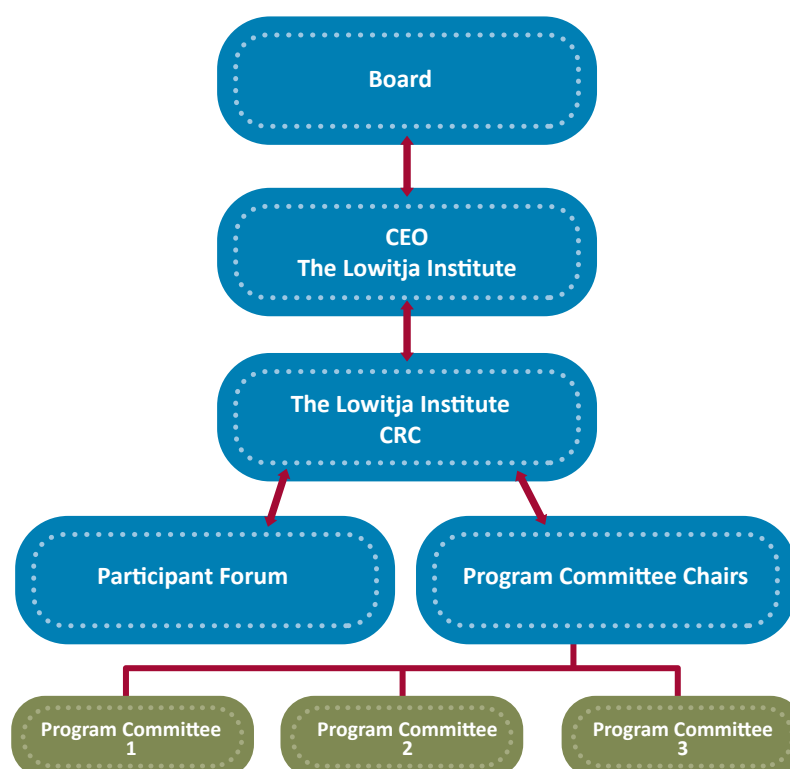
The Lowitja Institute strives to achieve the best outcomes for Australia's First Peoples. Ensuring that our activities effectively address inequities in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is central to this effort. To this end, the Institute is identifying priorities, and developing 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.

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.**

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 32).

The Lowitja Institute's 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 CRC research programs committees, each headed by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Chair, guided the research agenda.

The role of each Program Committee is to provide the Institute with strategic advice on research program development, identification of priorities, quality assurance, and building Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander researcher capacity into research activities.

Program 1 – Community capability and the social determinants of health

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.

Program 2 – Needs and opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce

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.

Program 3 – Health policy and systems

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.

Role of Program Committees

The role of each Program Committee is to provide the Institute with strategic advice on:

1. Development of each research program within the broad parameters described
2. Identification of research priorities within each research program, including
 - a. scoping specific topics and requesting that work, such as evidence reviews, be commissioned to assist with this
 - b. obtaining input from others should additional advice be required for priority setting or refinement of priorities
 - c. Identifying potential research projects and research questions
3. Quality assurance processes for program activities, including peer review of research activities
4. Building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researcher capacity into the activities of the program.



Professor Kerry Arabena
Chair, Community capability
and the social determinants
of health

Dr Roxanne Bainbridge
Ms Vanessa Harris
Ms Suzanne Ingram
Dr Ray Lovett
Professor Adrian Miller



Professor Cindy Shannon
Chair, A health workforce
to address Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander health

Mr Scott Avery
Professor Marion Kickett
Ms Janine Mohamed
Professor Roianne West
Dr Michael Wright



Dr Mark Wenitong
Chair, Health policy
and systems

Ms Donisha Duff
Dr Jill Guthrie
Dr Kim O'Donnell
Associate Professor Ted Wilkes

Research highlights

Current projects

This was a year of consolidation for the projects established during the period 2015–16 and work continues in the following area:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation of a successful Anaemia Prevention Program in a remote Aboriginal community in NT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growing up children in two worlds: Building Yolŋu skills, knowledge and priorities into early childhood assessment and support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empowering Indigenous individuals, families and communities to create supportive environments for children to thrive
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ‘Mayi – Kuwayu’: Longitudinal study of cultural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity of young people in flexi schooling contexts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The role cultural connectedness plays in pathways to resilience experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key factors associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide in SA
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service integration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The narrative framing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing: A review
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reframing discourse and changing the narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing: An analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying the core elements of the cultural determinants of health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reclaiming strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities through a gender equity lens
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research training towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce: Review and analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Models and quality of genetic health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of framework for evaluation of policies, programs and services that aim to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing

More information about this work can be found on our website:
www.lowitja.org.au

New projects

The following projects were established during the reporting period:

A review and analysis of progress in building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researcher workforce since 2000

The project aims to identify changes in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce, since 2000. Investigations will chart current educational and career-pathway models and initiatives; outline how research training can be more responsive, enriching and affirming of and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers and communities; and explore new ways to increase numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.

The main outcome of the project will be a national knowledge base on the characteristics and experiences of research training infrastructure that is connected to the further growth and success of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researcher workforce. A final report will be provided with recommendations.

Health system competence for culturally safe care: Building a collaboration to develop a national intervention study

This project will develop a proposal for a major national intervention study with the aim of improving competence in the Australian health care system for the provision of culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It will build a collaborative team with the relevant expertise and networks (e.g., other researchers, partners, policy makers, services providers), and lead the development of a research proposal suitable for submission to other competitive funding schemes.

Career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals

The Career Pathways Project (CPP) is focussed on providing insights and guidance to enhance the capacity of the health system to retain and support the development and careers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce.

This project is a partnership between the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) and UNSW Sydney, and includes other participating institutions. This partnership represents a landmark collaboration between the two organisations brought together by the Lowitja Institute research funding application process.

The CPP has a national focus through a planned survey, literature review and analysis of existing workforce data, as well as interviews to be conducted nationwide and consultations with key stakeholders at multiple levels. Local case study sites in NSW and the NT will provide perspectives from diverse urban, regional and remote areas. An important deliverable from this project will be to share learnings from these NSW and NT local case study sites with other states and territory so they may utilise and or adapt as needed.

This project will develop a set of evidence-based guiding principles to assist health service managers and policy makers across sectors in identifying barriers and facilitators. It will also outline a proposed monitoring mechanism to track progress in policy and practice to address the barriers and improve the recruitment, retention and career

The Lancet–Lowitja Institute Global Collaboration

In April 2016, the prestigious international medical journal, *The Lancet*, published a study commissioned from the Lowitja Institute titled ‘Indigenous and tribal peoples’ health (*The Lancet*—Lowitja Institute Global Collaboration): A Population Study’. The report is a world-first study into the health and wellbeing of more than 154 million Indigenous and Tribal peoples (approximately half the world’s Indigenous populations).

The report, by I. Anderson, B. Robson, M. Connelly et al, analysed data from 28 Indigenous and Tribal groups across 23 countries and brought together 65 experts from countries such as Australia, United States, Canada, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Sweden, Nepal, Norway, Denmark, Russia, China, India, Thailand, Pakistan, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Myanmar, Kenya, Peru, Panama, Venezuela, Cameroon and Nigeria.

Researchers assessed data on basic population, life expectancy at birth, infant mortality, low and high birth weight, maternal mortality, nutritional status, educational attainment, poverty and economic status. The research does not make cross-country comparisons.

The paper responds to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development signed in September 2015 with the stated aim ‘to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change while ensuring that no one is left behind’, and shows much is yet to be done.

In November 2016, the Lowitja Institute published a second report, *A Global Snapshot of Indigenous and Tribal People’s Health: The Lancet–Lowitja Institute Collaboration*, edited by K. Silburn, H. Reich and I. Anderson (eds), providing a more detailed understanding of the context of each population included in *The Lancet* paper. Contributors endeavoured to provide a summary of the history, culture, legal and political status as well as socio-demographic factors of each Indigenous or Tribal group. Unfortunately the political situation in some countries meant that in some cases authors were not able to include important facts pertaining to their Indigenous peoples.

In presenting these short summaries, the editors caution the reader to heed Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s warning about the dangers of relying on single stories as definitive statements about peoples or places. Each piece is intended to provide a very brief context for the reported data and can in no way do justice to long, rich and complex histories and cultures of the groups described.



A Global Snapshot of Indigenous and Tribal People’s Health: *The Lancet*–Lowitja Institute Collaboration, K. Silburn, H. Reich and I. Anderson (eds) 2016

Full detail, including the report, infographics, videos and podcasts and related media articles can be found at www.lowitja.org.au/indigenous-tribal-health.

Identifying research priorities: Workshops

Workshops with key participants representing research, community and policy perspectives, are critical to the identification of research priorities and formulation of research questions.

Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Men

In March 2017, the Lowitja Institute convened a workshop and research meeting to share knowledge on 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.

The objective of the meetings was to bring people together in a collaborative way to gain specific knowledge towards the design of research questions and innovative activities, to increase understanding of what enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men to be the best they can be. The majority of participants were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, with all participants contributing community, research, service delivery and/or policy experience in the area of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander men's health and wellbeing.

Participants shared their experiences of what led them to work in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's health and wellbeing. Positive and negative experiences were spoken of as being part of a learning journey, from which you learn from mistakes and aspire to make change.

Participants understand the difficulty of finding your way in the world, and continue to learn from each other to help others and support the journey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men. Personal experiences of loss, trying to fit in or escape circumstances, being shown a different way of thinking, becoming parents, or being involved in research, continues to drive participants to making change.

Many spoke of the importance of positive role models in their lives, people who looked out for them or gave them something to aspire to. Participants spoke of the important connections with others who have been a part of their journey and how, in the same way, they now 'try to get others to come along'.

Participants saw the role of research as something that could add value and be a vehicle for change, if carried out in appropriate ways. Research about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be

led by them and driven by community concerns and agendas. Community are involved in research and are already building evidence and finding solutions in their own way.

In sharing their journeys and knowledge, themes emerged of what participants see as working to enable young men. Participants underlined that research and activities about young men must be informed and guided by young men. As a starting point, however, participants put forward that enabling young men requires a focus on:

- Talking with and listening to young men
- Strong identities
- Connection to culture
- Roles and place of young men
- Strong families and communities
- Self-determining lives of agency
- Role modelling a good life
- Creating a safe space.

An Advisory Group was established at the workshop to support further development of research questions and activities. The Group met since the workshop to finalise proposed research questions and support the development of a collaborative project for project partners to be funded in the second half of 2017.

"All of this is part of my journey, to help other young men. Having kids has made it personal. I have invested in culture, learning language and dances, and returning home for ceremonies. Family Wellbeing has helped me understand, and let go of things I can't control. I make sure that every mistake has something to learn, to pass on."

[workshop participant]

"I come to this work through evaluation and research, and as a daughter, niece and mother. My cousin took his life, which drove me forward to do and learn everything I can, and be part of the design. I am not here to speak for men, but to offer my skills."

[workshop participant]



Uncle Bill Nicholson welcoming to Wurundjeri Country at the Lowitja Institute Young Men's Health Workshop, March 2017; James Henry Photography



Young Men's workshop participants, March 2017; James Henry Photography



Jindi Worabak dance performance at the Lowitja Institute Young Men's Health Workshop, March 2017; James Henry Photography



Jindi Worabak dance performance at the Lowitja Institute Young Men's Health Workshop, March 2017; James Henry Photography

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability research

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability was identified by a combined meeting of the research program committees (see page 5) as a high priority for the Lowitja Institute. This priority covers all research program areas of the Institute, aligning closely with the social determinants of health program, particularly in the realm of agency and control at all levels for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Preparatory work for a national workshop to be held in early October 2017 was conducted during the reporting period.

The purpose of the workshop will be broader than discussing current government policies, particularly the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). It is intended that the workshop will guide future research to provide valuable knowledge to policymakers and disability services, inform policy and practice, and lead to better health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability.

2017 Knowledge Translation Plans

The Lowitja Institute is committed to knowledge and research translation. We have updated our Knowledge Translation Plan to guide funded projects through this process and tested this approach at a planning workshop where the importance of early planning was highlighted. As a result, the Institute has designed knowledge translation information sessions for broader implementation across all future funded projects.



2017 Research funding round

In early 2017, a workshop was held to discuss themes and priorities for expenditure for the final round of research funding for the Lowitja Institute CRC. That workshop identified the need to conduct research under the following themes, which are consistent with our three research programs and key principles:

- Theme 1: Strong Workforce
- Theme 2: Strong Families
- Theme 3: Strong Elders
- Theme 4: Strong Science
- Theme 5: Strong Health Care

At the same time, the Lowitja Institute CRC invited applications for grants to support activities such as:

- pilot interventions/implementation studies
- scaled up activities
- knowledge exchange or translation activities
- seed funding for future larger projects
- evaluation of community programs or interventions
- value adding to another relevant project
- researcher capacity building and community research partnerships.

The emerging needs identified for these grants were:

- Healthy ageing and aged care
- Child and family development
- The health workforce
- Building biomedical research and workforce pathways
- Mainstream arrangements for health and the effect on community organisations
- Understanding the impact of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations on health outcomes
- Data sovereignty.

Applications closed on 30 June 2017 and the projects that emanate from the process will be established in the second half of the year.

Policy, Programs and Impact



Translating research into practice

Submissions

- The National Health and Medical Research Council is reviewing its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research ethics guidelines in June 2017. The Lowitja Institute provided a submission to inform this Review and suggested both high-level and process-level improvements to promote awareness and measure the effectiveness of the two guidelines to ensure they are used adequately. The submission partly draws on a past evaluation that was undertaken in 2013 by the Lowitja Institute in partnership with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). The evaluation reviewed previous versions of the NHMRC's ethics guidelines.
- The Lowitja Institute made a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into Freedom of Speech in Australia on 19 December 2016. The Institute outlines how evidence shows that racism is a fact of life for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and also that racism and ill health are linked. Through drawing on research that was funded by the Institute, the submission maintains that allowing people to 'offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people' on the basis of race, can potentially cause harm and thus widen the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. The Lowitja Institute CEO, Mr Romlie Mokak, was also invited to give evidence in person to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights in Melbourne on 31 January 2017.
- In April 2017, the Lowitja Institute provided the Royal Commission into the Detention of Children in the Northern Territory with a submission to inform improvements to the child protection system and the youth justice system. The submission highlights the urgent need to reduce the detention and incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system and outline recommendations to support the Royal Commission's consideration of alternatives to the incarceration of young people and how systems can be improved. The submission outlines three critical factors to achieve improvements: (1) drive any future changes through new targets set in national policy, (2) investigate all stages of the justice system particularly early intervention and diversion, and (3) engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations, and researchers with expertise and experience with the social and cultural determinants of health and wellbeing.

- The Lowitja Institute submission to the Medical Research Futures Fund (MRFF) in July 2016 recommended a number of key areas in which MRFF investment could make a valuable contribution to the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:
 - Scope of research: Recommended that the MRFF should acknowledge health equity, and the role of prevention and early intervention in improving health for all people, when setting priorities and strategies for funding research
 - Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders: Recommended genuine partnership and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, through the NHLE, in the governance of the MRFF
 - Research training: Recommended identifying a long-term commitment and investment in capacity building for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce.



Redfern Coalition meeting 20 September 2016, L–R: Mr Romlie Mokak (The Lowitja Institute), Mr Craig Dukes (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association), Ms Donna Murray (Indigenous Allied Health Australia), Ms Vicky Wade (National Heart Foundation), Ms Pat Turner (National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation), Mr Rod Little (National Congress of Australia's First Peoples), Mr Wayne Muir (National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Mr Geoff Scott (National Congress of Australia's First Peoples)

#redfernstatement

Seminars and workshops

- For two days in December 2016, in Canberra, the High Commissioner for Canada and the Lowitja Institute CEO chaired a Canada–Australia Roundtable on Indigenous Health and Wellness Roundtable convened by the High Commission, the Institute and the Australian National University. The roundtable was also supported by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. The aim of the roundtable was to bring together experts and community health representatives from Canada and Australia to discuss, examine and compare health policies and services for Indigenous peoples in both countries. Some of the common themes include negative experiences of colonisation and cultural disruption, poor health and wellbeing over many generations, a powerful desire for self-determination, and the need for cultural differences around health and wellbeing to be understood and applied at the community, family and individual levels. For more information about this collaboration see page 21. The roundtable report is available at <https://croakey.org/canadian-and-australianindigenous-health-leaders-urge-the-97-percent-tostep-up/>)
- In March 2017, the Lowitja Institute hosted a briefing by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals for the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz. With 10 participating representatives, the discussions focused on the need for Australian governments to have a new and different way of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To do this, the Lowitja Institute discussed the need for efforts that value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledges, address and eliminate racism, and are underpinned by a rebalancing of power toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander institutions and communities. The Lowitja Institute also accepted the Special Rapporteur’s invitation to provide additional follow-up information and proposed recommendations for the Final Report.
- This additional input included a call for government to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and infrastructure, and a description of global networks that can be bring together Indigenous health experts, academics and policymakers to effect positive outcomes for First Peoples.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, visited Australia in 2017 and it was a great pleasure to welcome her to the Lowitja Institute on Wednesday 29 March. Ms Tauli-Corpuz, her team and other guests, were able to join us for a casual lunch which was followed by an open and productive discussion about the health and wellbeing of Australia’s First Peoples.



L–R: Mr Richard Weston (CEO of the Healing Foundation and Chair of the National Health Leadership Forum), Mr Romlie Mokak (CEO of The Lowitja Institute), Aunty Di Kerr (Wurundjeri Elder), Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), Ms Pat Anderson AO (Chairperson, The Lowitja Institute), Dr Mark Wenitong (Public Health Medical Advisor, Apunipima Cape York Health Council), Mr Karl Briscoe (CEO of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association)

- The Lowitja Institute convened the Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Men workshop to share knowledge on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men and the supporting role they play, aspire to play, in their relationships, families and communities. Held 30-31 March 2017, the meeting commenced the design of research questions and innovative activities to increase understanding of what enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men to be the best they can be. An Advisory Group was established at the workshop to support further development of research questions and activities (see page 9).

Changing the Narrative

This project, being undertaken with AIATSIS, will result in the production of a printed book and an online resource eBook with enhanced audio-visual capabilities. The project:

- Describes the evolution of the Lowitja Institute and its predecessor organisations in the health research landscape
- Highlights the vision of influential individuals embodied in the Institute's work
- Captures the contribution that the Institute has made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research (methodology and body of work), and
- Highlights important partnerships and the reasons for their success.

The project manuscript was prepared for launch in August 2017.



Forging relationships

The Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2016

On 8, 9 and 10 November 2016, in Melbourne, the Lowitja Institute conducted its first International conference: The Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference.

The aim of the conference was to celebrate, share and strengthen Indigenous knowledges and bring together Indigenous people from around Australia and the world.

The Conference themes—Identity, Knowledge, Strength—provided the opportunity for delegates to:

- celebrate Indigenous knowledges in a safe and strong cultural space
- share wisdom and stories, and learn from Elders and each other
- learn about the best science, practices and solutions
- participate in exploratory and difficult conversations and leave the conference with new perspectives and expanded methodologies
- connect and enrich engagement with colleagues and peers
- build and enhance opportunities for partnerships across research, policy and community
- craft a strong statement to inform action and influence national and international Indigenous health and wellbeing agendas
- enjoy a rich and varied art, performance and social program
- leave the conference inspired and energised by our identity, knowledge and strength to drive individual and collective work that benefits Indigenous peoples.

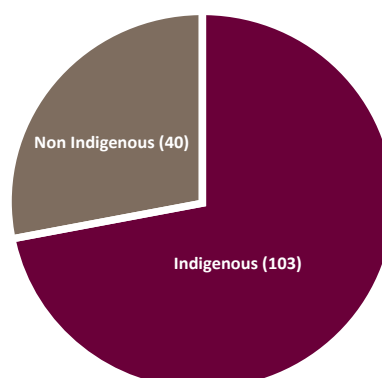
More than 700 people registered for a range of Conference events. These delegates came from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, India, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Nepal, Norway, the Phillipines and the United States of America.

The conference had a strong keynote speaker agenda, including:

- The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, then Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care who opened the conference
- Lowitja Institute Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG
- Professor Megan Davis, Professor of Law at the University of New South Wales, and immediate past Chair and current expert member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- Moana Jackson, Ngati Kahungunu/Ngati Porou and a lawyer working in New Zealand on Treaty/constitutional issues and international Indigenous rights
- Chief Wilton Littlechild, Commissioner with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- Professor Karina Walters, William P. and Ruth Gerberding Endowed Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Washington, an enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- Ms Gunn Heatta, a Sami woman from northern Norway, Director of the only Sami mental health and drug and alcohol service in the country.

The conference offered a comprehensive concurrent workshop program across the three days and a rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural program.

Of a total of 143 presenters, 72 per cent were Indigenous.



The conference received 320 abstract submissions out of an initial target of 120.

The conference awarded the inaugural **The Lowitja Institute Outstanding Achievement in Indigenous Health and Wellbeing** posthumously to Mr TIGA Bayles. The award recognises an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as nominated by the Lowitja Institute Board of Directors.

The Lowitja Institute recognises excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research with three biennial awards which were announced at the 2016 conference.

The Lowitja Institute Emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researcher Award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers at the mid-career level and was awarded to Associate Professor Roxanne Bainbridge from James Cook University.

The Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers undertaking either Masters or PhD study, awarded to Dr Lisa Whop from the Menzies School of Health Research.

The Lowitja Institute Research Leadership Award is a partnership between the Cranlana Programme and the Lowitja Institute to offer this award that recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research leadership and excellence. The 2016 winner was Professor Gail Garvey, Deputy Division Leader, Wellbeing and Preventable Chronic Diseases division, Menzies School of Health Research.



The late Mr TIGA Bayles, recipient of the inaugural Outstanding Achievement in Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Award



Dr Lisa Whop, Professor Gail Garvey, Dr Roxanne Bainbridge



Conference logo created by Carbon Media



Professor Megan Davis, Ms Gunn Heatta, Mr Romlie Mokak, Professor Karina Walters, Moana Jackson and Chief Wilton Littlechild

Conference delegates crafted a strong statement to inform action and influence national and international Indigenous health and wellbeing agendas.

Conference Statement

The Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference, Melbourne, 8–10 November 2016

The Conference asserts that Indigenous peoples across the world have the right to self-determination, as expressed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The right to self-determination underpins the right to health.

The truth about Indigenous peoples must be told, heard and known for justice to ensue. Only then can we achieve genuine reconciliation.

The experience of Indigenous peoples the world over is a shared experience of colonisation. The conference heard that the primary goal of colonisation was about 'killing the spirit of Indigenous peoples' – as evidenced through the theft of land, language and culture.

We are all responsible for knowing the historical trauma and the continuing impacts that trauma has on Indigenous peoples today. This requires decolonisation of everyone's thinking and of attitudes, in order to reset the relationship between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people. Indigenous intellect, knowledge, values, practice and ceremony must be at the forefront of solutions to Indigenous issues.

We honour our ancestors' resilience, strength and wisdom. In this moment in time, our obligation is to our future generations. As Indigenous peoples, we ask ourselves: What kind of ancestor did my own ancestors want me to be? What kind of ancestor do I want to be? What kind of ancestor do I want my children to be?

Based on its themes of Identity, Knowledge and Strength, the conference states that:

Identity

- Indigenous peoples must be recognised as such.
- The importance of culture in continuing our strength and resilience must be recognised.
- Indigenous peoples share common experiences but also diversity across and within communities.

Knowledge

- Indigenous thinking, intellect, wisdom must be valued.
- We must decolonise the research process. Indigenous peoples are the leaders in the research in relation to our own people. Any Indigenous research must primarily and directly be for the benefit of Indigenous people.

Strength

- We must be fully empowered to exercise the right to self-determination over our own lives.
- We must change the pathway, directed by Indigenous peoples, to deliver a promising future for our children.

Call to Action

We call on everyone to ensure that we grow strong Indigenous children into strong and healthy adults able to reach the full potential of their lives. For this to happen, we must

- Have a new and different way of working together.
- Enable Indigenous children to have cultural security and strong identity.
- Enable Indigenous children to have access to have culturally secure early childhood education.
- Enable Indigenous people to measure and monitor our progress.
- We call on all governments to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- We call on all nations and their citizens to know the truth in relation to Indigenous peoples, and to act on that truth.
- We call on all governments to support the goals that have been identified by Indigenous peoples. This requires proper resourcing and long-term commitment to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.
- We call on governments to resource, to fund and to commit to Indigenous Institutions at all levels. Indigenous institutions need to lead the way in supporting Indigenous Peoples to achieve health and wellbeing.
- We call on all governments to establish cultural models of care, and for Indigenous peoples to define our own success and how we measure that success.
- We call on all to protect the land to which we belong. Only when the land is healed, can we achieve true health and wellbeing.

Furthermore, the Conference stands by, and with, Standing Rock Sioux in its opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline in the United States of America.

10 November 2016



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, then Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care opening the conference



Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue receiving gifts from international delegations at the welcoming ceremony



Conference dinner international delegations performance



Mr Archie Roach and Mr Craig Pilkington performing



Wagga Torres Strait Islander Dancers performing at the conference dinner



One Fire Aboriginal Dance Group performance at the conference dinner



Chief Wilton Littlechild, Ms June Oscar AO, Professor Karina Walters

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 (Fran Baum CIA, Flinders University)
- Centre of Research Excellence in Integrated Quality Improvement (CRE-IQI).

6th NHMRC Research Translation Symposium co-hosted with the Lowitja Institute

Planning for a Research Translation Symposium co-hosted by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Lowitja Institute was well advanced during the 2016–17 period. For co-host CEOs Professor Anne Kelson AO and Mr Romlie Mokak, the joint symposium indicates an alignment of priorities and a strong commitment from the two institutions to deliver a measurable, positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples.

The Symposium, planned for November 2017, is an outstanding opportunity to focus on action needed to improve the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples through effective translation of health, wellbeing and medical research into policy and practice. It will also be a forum to share knowledge of what successful research looks like at community level and what the key elements of success are.

All aspects of the Symposium will have a sound cultural frame and reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values.

The two-day program attracted more than 220 abstracts 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 call for abstracts invited submissions that translate the knowledge authors have gained from their community groups, workplace, research and policy environment into action for positive change. In particular, abstracts that:

- demonstrate the embedding of the principles of research knowledge translation throughout the research
- celebrate accomplishments
- facilitate nurturing and support of early career researchers and community members
- facilitate collaboration between experienced and less experienced researchers
- engage Centres of Research Excellence
- involve allied health, clinical, and community health personnel, and
- engage policy makers.

Authors were encouraged to consider their abstracts under the following broad themes in conjunction with the life course stages in which projects may reside:

- Capacity building
- Social and cultural determinants of health
- Data sovereignty: Capturing, storing and managing knowledge
- Indigenous knowledges and community engagement: receiving and interpreting knowledge
- Translation and impact: integrating knowledge to shape outcomes.



Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council



the Lowitja
Institute

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

6th Annual NHMRC Symposium on Research Translation co-hosted by the Lowitja Institute and NHMRC

The Butterfly Effect: Translating Knowledge into Action for Positive Change
14-15 November 2017, Brisbane

"Translation of Knowledge, Jyi Lawton 2017, Yimbanao"

The Canada – Australia Indigenous Health and Wellness Collaboration

The Collaboration was established to progress initiatives from the Canada–Australia Roundtable on Indigenous Health and Wellness held in Canberra in December 2016 (see page 14 for more information about the roundtable). The Lowitja Institute is the Australian lead and will provide the secretariat under the co-Chairmanship of His Excellency Mr Paul Maddison, High Commissioner of Canada to Australia and Lowitja Institute CEO, Romlie Mokak. The aim of the Collaboration is to identify priorities related to Indigenous health and wellbeing for bi-national collaboration and action. This includes addressing racism and power imbalances, and further supporting Indigenous people to utilise their skills to create change. The Collaboration will do this by developing mechanisms for sharing knowledge and strengthening impact, guiding the development of specific initiatives, including project stewardship and evaluation.

It was a pleasure to welcome His Excellency Mr Paul Maddison, High Commissioner of Canada to Australia on 22 June, the day after Canada's National Aboriginal Day, and discuss over morning tea the common experiences of First Nations in Canada and Australia and the work ahead to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples in both countries.

Mr Maddison is co-host of the Canada–Australia Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Collaboration together with Lowitja Institute CEO Romlie Mokak. See story above, also page 14.



Mr Romlie Mokak and His Excellency Mr Paul Maddison, High Commissioner of Canada, June 2017

Professional Certificate in Indigenous Research

This course is offered by the University of Melbourne, a Lowitja Institute Essential Participant. It is an interdisciplinary coursework program that explores research and develops research skills from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. Lowitja Institute staff contribute a specialist writing and editing workshop to the program.

Extending hospitality

Several meetings by external organisations, such as the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Premier and Cabinet, as well as NGO organisations were held in the Lowitja Institute Boardroom. Here, the purpose of the Institute is to provide a culturally safe space to organisations and colleagues working for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was also a pleasure to host staff from the Menzies School of Health Research.



Growing the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers

Lowitja Institute CRC Scholarship Program

The Lowitja Institute is committed to developing a strong base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers. In recognition of the emphasis placed on this outcome, The Lowitja Institute CRC, which the Institute hosts, has funded 16 PhD scholarships from 2014 to 2019.

The Lowitja Institute CRC 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 CRC'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.

Current scholarship holders are pursuing research in the following areas, among others:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Matthew West, University of Newcastle — Development of a targeted foot complications screening and intervention program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Vicki Couzens, RMIT University — 'Koorramook Yakeeneeyt' (Possum Dreaming): Cloaks, cultural traditions and wellbeing in Aboriginal communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Alister Thorpe, The University of Melbourne — The Engage-Exchange-Change: Strengthening Indigenous health research engagement, action, translation and impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Emily Munro-Harrison, The University of Melbourne — Urban Invisibility: Identities of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban Victoria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Margaret Harvey, Monash University — Researching my island home – Navigating through the intersection of research and culture in the creation of live performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Suzanne Ingram, Australian National University — Communication needs for Aboriginal people for culturally competent chronic disease healthcare
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Tara Lewis, The University of Queensland — Culturally responsive methodology for the communication assessment of Australian Aboriginal children
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Robert Monaghan, University of New South Wales — The role of management in improving sexual health service delivery in Aboriginal community controlled health services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Nicky Flynn, Flinders University — (De)Colonising ADHD: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoints
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Scott Avery, University of New South Wales — A critical analysis of disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Co-funding scholarships enables the Lowitja Institute CRC to collaborate with Participants to provide additional scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Institute supports eleven postgraduate scholarships together 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. The work is ongoing and there were no completions during the current reporting period.

Scholarship in honour of Professor Neil Thomson, co-funded by the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet and The Lowitja Institute



Professor Neil Thomson;
photo courtesy Australian
Indigenous HealthInfoNet

The Neil Thomson Scholarship honours the Foundation Director of the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, Professor Neil Thomson. Professor Thomson's distinguished career in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health spanned over 40 years and he was a pioneer in the provision of high quality evidence based information to support workers in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. The research supported by this scholarship will further his important work.

The Lowitja Institute co-funded Scholarship Program has been established to develop pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to postgraduate study programs. Edith Cowan University's Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet is inviting scholarship applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Lowitja Institute CEO, Mr Romlie Mokak says 'A highly skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce is fundamental to our common goal of achieving the best health and wellbeing outcomes for Australia's First Peoples. The Lowitja Institute is also very proud that this co-funded scholarship acknowledges the great contribution and lasting legacy of our colleague, Neil Thomson'.

The Neil Thomson Scholarship recipient will undertake research to develop a better understanding of how the outcomes of research are understood and utilised in the everyday work of health professionals in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector.

Other activities

Literacy for Life Foundation

The Lowitja Institute continues to support the Aboriginal Adult Literacy Program run by the Literacy For Life Foundation through in-kind activities, including the Lowitja Institute Chair being a member of the Foundation Board and as partner to an ARC grant.

The Lowitja Institute is a founding partner of Literacy for Life Foundation, an Aboriginal-led initiative aiming to lift adult literacy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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. The Lowitja Institute believes that literacy is a key social determinant of health.

The Literacy for Life 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 120 students have graduated campaigns run in seven 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.

2016 Medicine and Society Oration for the Cranlana Programme

Mr Romlie Mokak, CEO of the Lowitja Institute, delivered the 2016 Medicine and Society Oration for the Cranlana Programme, in Melbourne, in August. His Oration was titled A Question of Value: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

In his oration, Mr Mokak advocated that in order to achieve significant, measurable, positive change in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we need to expand our idea of value from a construct inextricably linked to the quantum — so many dollars to achieve so many results — to a concept that

- values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges
- places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, institutions and solutions at the centre of policymaking
- resets the power balance between those making the decisions and those for whom the policy is intended.

The Cranlana Programme was founded in 1993 and operates independently as a non-partisan, not-for-profit organisation to promote informed discussion on matters of responsible leadership and ethical practice.

A copy of Mr Mokak's speech is available at:

<http://www.lowitja.org.au/speeches>.



Mr Romlie Mokak at the podium, Cranlana Oration, August 2016, William Hung Photography, courtesy The Cranlana Programme



Mr Mokak thanking Cranlana Programme CEO, Ms Kate Latimer, with a copy of *Traditional Healers of Central Australia: Ngangkari*; William Hung Photography, courtesy The Cranlana Programme

Cranlana Programme

The Lowitja Institute and the Cranlana Programme collaborate in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 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 2016 winner of this award was Professor Gail Garvey, Deputy Division Leader, Wellbeing and Preventable Chronic Diseases division, Menzies School of Health Research (see page 17).



THE CRANLANA PROGRAMME

Speeches and seminars

- A Question of Value: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, The 2016 Medicine & Society Oration, The Cranlana Programme, delivered by Mr Romlie Mokak, Melbourne, August 2016
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Futures: More Than Closing The Gap, delivered by Mr Romlie Mokak, CEO of the Lowitja Institute, to the NIDAC 4th National Indigenous Drug & Alcohol Conference, Adelaide, October 2016
- The Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2016, delivered by Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, Patron of the Lowitja Institute, to the Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference, Melbourne, November 2016
- How are you contributing to the targets? Finding your place in the NATSIHP Implementation Plan, delivered by Mr Romlie Mokak, CEO of the Lowitja Institute, to the 2016 IAHA National Forum, Canberra, December 2016
- Opening remarks and contribution to panel discussions, Mr Romlie Mokak, CEO of the Lowitja Institute, to the Canada - Australia RoundTable on Indigenous Health and Wellness, Canberra, December 2016
- Things have got to change, delivered by Ms Pat Anderson AO, Chair of the Lowitja Institute, to the AIATSIS National Indigenous Research Conference 2017, March 2017.

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.



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 10,400 users during the reporting period; this represents a significant (more than quadruple) increase in usage from the previous 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.



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 2015–18

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

As the national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, a significant responsibility rests with the Lowitja Institute to provide leadership on work that will result in improvements to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To achieve this, the Lowitja Institute will embrace those who likewise share a firm commitment in valuing the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our work encompasses all areas that contribute to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including the social and cultural determinants of health and wellbeing. The work of the Lowitja Institute will be ambitious, rigorous and culturally safe. We will directly contribute towards our people achieving their greatest potential.



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.

The Lowitja Institute will pursue a new generation of solutions that will make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will facilitate work that benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples first and foremost. To do this, we will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities and collective ways of working. We will ensure that our work recognises the strength and agency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The knowledge we provide will be culturally ethical and intellectually rigorous.

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.

Strategies:

- Facilitate research and knowledge exchange that is world-class, culturally ethical and advances the purpose of the Institute
- Work with partners to contribute in practical ways to improve 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.

Strategies:

- Translate research into more effective policies and programs
- Influence national agendas and priorities which impact on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and wellbeing
- Advocate for programs that have shown positive results and/or promise.

To be a strong and sustainable organisation.

Strategies:

- Continue to develop capacity to address current and future opportunities and challenges
- Develop a plan for the Lowitja Institute to thrive into perpetuity.

Board of Directors

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 (AO) for distinguished service to the Indigenous community as a social justice advocate, particularly through promoting improved health, educational and protection outcomes for children. 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 awarded the Human Rights Medal 2016 by the Australian Human Rights Commission and Edith Cowan University conferred on her a Doctor of Medical Science *honoris causa*.

The Lowitja Institute is governed by a Board of Directors, who are elected by members (see inside front cover). The Board is chaired by Ms Pat Anderson AO.

During 2016–17, Institute directors included:

- **Professor Greg Anderson**, the head of the Iron Metabolism Laboratory who until recently served as Deputy Director of the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute (2012–16)
- **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 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 joint appointment Senior Research Fellow at the Southgate Institute for Health, Society and Equity, Flinders University, Adelaide, and the George Institute for Global Health, Sydney
- **Mr Russell Taylor AM**, a Kamilaroi man with family connections to La Perouse in Sydney and CEO of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
- **Ms June Oscar AO**, a Bunuba woman from Fitzroy Crossing and Chief Executive Officer of Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre
- **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
- **Ms Robynne Quiggin**, Wiradjuri Lawyer and Deputy Commissioner Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice, Australian Human Rights Commission.

At the Annual General Meeting in December 2016, the Financial accounts and reports were presented. At the close of the meeting it was noted that current Directors, Russell Taylor, Greg Anderson and Robynne Quiggin would step down from the Board.





L-R: Mr Selwyn Button, Dr Tamara Mackean, Ms Pat Anderson AO (Chair), Ms June Oscar AO, Professor Peter Bucksin PSM, Mr Russell Taylor AM. Not in photograph: Professor Greg Anderson, Mr Brendon Douglas, Mr Ali Drummond, Ms Robynne Quiggin, Professor Fiona Stanley AC

On 16 September 2016, the Lowitja Institute Board met in Canberra and took the opportunity to visit Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Service, of which Lowitja Institute CEO Mr Romlie Mokak is Patron. Many thanks to Chairperson Mr Craig Ritchie and CEO Ms Julie Tongs for their hospitality and for sharing information about their work.



Mr Craig Ritchie, Ms Pat Anderson AO, Julie Tongs OAM, Mr Romlie Mokak at the Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Service, Canberra; photo Stefan Postles

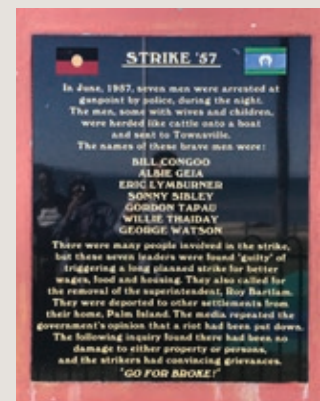
On 8 June, the Board met in Townsville and took the opportunity to visit Palm Island to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the 1957 strike. Thank you to everybody at the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service and the Joyce Palmer Health Service for their warm welcome.



Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Services Chair Jacinta Elston & Lowitja Institute Chairperson Pat Anderson AO



Joyce Palmer Health Service staff with Dr Tamara Mackean & Ms June Oscar AO



Corporate

The Lowitja 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.

This vision comes with challenges including the need to develop new skills in our workforce, identifying resources to encourage business growth, and understand our points of difference. The Institute must be both determined and innovative to transform from being an organisation 100 per cent dependent

on government funding to one that has a robust funding base with a new generation of products, devices and partners. This has to be completed by June 2019 to ensure its existence now and into the future.

The Lowitja Institute views the Federal Government as a central financial contributor to this endeavour now and beyond 2019.

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.

Innovation and business development



Lowitja INSIGHT

Is where the Institute will convert its research and knowledge translation into useful insight to enable better decision-making and policy development.



Lowitja CONSULTING

Tapping into its wider researcher and expert network, the Lowitja Institute will expand its consulting services to ensure programs and health outcomes achieve greater benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Lowitja STANDARDS

As the peak health research body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Lowitja Institute in partnership with peak service providers is seeking to set new levels of health standards as they apply to the delivery of health services across Australia.



Lowitja VENTURES

Although the Institute is small, its strength has always been its relationship with key stakeholders. Through partnerships including commercial, the Institute is ready to tackle some key health priorities and make positive in-roads for communities across Australia.

Resilas – designing research and evaluation that benefits communities

The Lowitja Institute is committed to high impact research that has direct benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. With this in mind, it is building a new online tool called Resilas to create better health results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and help researchers and policymakers better demonstrate the results of their work. Resilas draws on the extensive work undertaken in the Lowitja Institute impact tool by Professor Komla Tsey and colleagues from James Cook University and extends the application and reach of this work.

Resilas will be a user-friendly resource to help guide researchers and policymakers apply a culturally and methodologically validated program logic interface.

Using Resilas will:

- engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as decision makers, leaders, researchers and participants
- be appropriate to the research context and the research question

- facilitate translation of research knowledge and evidence into policy and practice and
- represent value for money.

The intuitive drag-and-drop interface will help users prototype a proposed research or program as well as ensure they can report on its progress using our culturally and methodologically validated program logic interface.

It is anticipated that Resilas will be completed in the first half of 2018.



Apunipima Christmas campaign

This year is the first time we have trialled a Christmas Fundraising campaign in support of one of our partner organisations Apunipima Cape York Health Council. The campaign was targeted to be practical and supported the baby basket program. It offered a small number of gifts ranging from \$15 to \$300 each of which would be delivered by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker led home visiting service. This service provides vital care, support and health education from pregnancy until the baby is 1000 days old.



Apunipima video screenshot

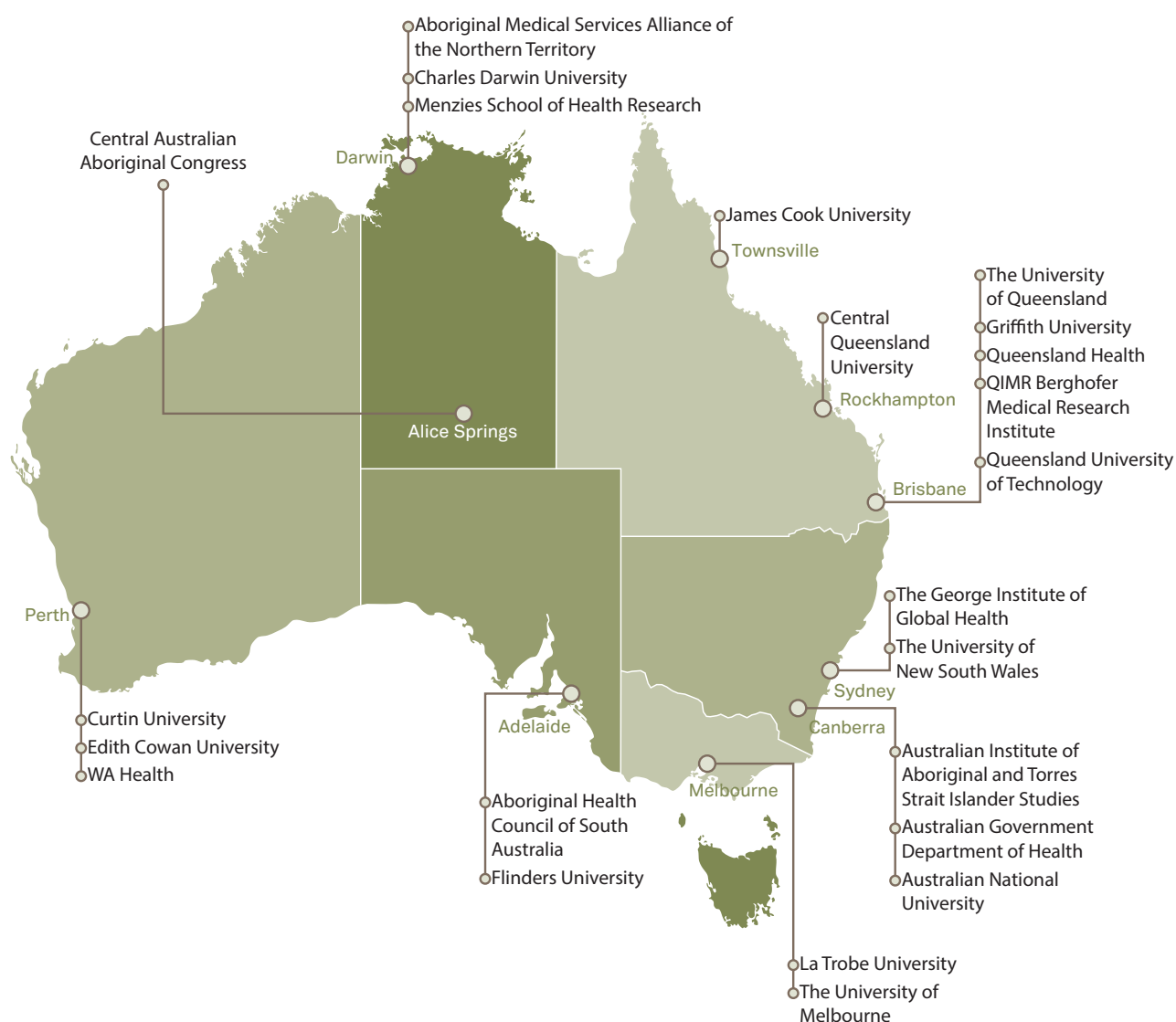
The Lowitja Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC

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 2016 and 21 June 2017.

The Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CRC Participants



The Participants Forum was held at our offices in Melbourne on 21 June with partners from around Australia. The Forum, which is held twice a year, discussed our strategic plan and forward direction, shared information about research and other activities and heard presentations on two current projects: a large scale longitudinal study of cultural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, presented by Mr Lachlan Russell from ANU, and an early childhood project presented by Prof. Kerry Arabena from the University of Melbourne.



Participants meeting 21 June 2017



Mr Craig Ritchie (AIATSIS), Professor Kerry Arabena (University of Melbourne), Professor Dennis McDermott (Flinders University)



Associate Professor Maree Hackett (George Institute), Mr John Patterson (AMSANT), Ms Bronwyn Silver (CAAC)



Dr Marlene Kong (UNSW), Ms Leila Smith (Lowitja Institute), Ms Nicole McCartney (WA Health)



Australian Government
**Department of Industry,
Innovation and Science**

Business
Cooperative Research
Centres Programme

Strong brand and communications

In accordance with our environmental sustainability policy, we have reduced the number of printed publications and increased digital distributions:



Hardcopy distributions have been reduced by 50% from the last reporting period.



Downloads from our website have increased 26 per cent to some 22,400 items.



Website use in general grew 25 per cent during the reporting period, with approximately 78,700 unique visitors and 229,300 page-views.



We published 21 editions of the fortnightly eBulletin:

3180 subscribers, about 27 per cent higher than the year before.

The stakeholder database is now 6700 names strong, a growth of 27 per cent over the last reporting period.

Careful segmentation makes this a very important communications resource for the Lowitja Institute CRC not only for promotional/marketing purposes, but to identify and bring together specific interest groups, or segments, around activities such as workshops, roundtables and seminars.



Lowitja Institute CRC publications are also available through the Australian Indigenous Health/InfoNet, Australian Policy Online, RMIT Publishing Informit Collections, the EBSCOhost international bibliographic database and through the National Library of Australia, the State Library of Victoria and the library of the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.



Twitter, which grew by 25 per cent to approximately 6900 followers.

Social media/Twitter has been particularly useful in the promotion of our conference. Targetted 'tweets' contributed significantly to the very successful call for abstracts (see page 16). Similarly, it enabled us to reach audiences from northern Russia to rural Peru, and throughout Australia, and assisted the representation of 15 countries in the conference registrations.

We continue to enjoy a Google Ads grant that currently gives us US\$10,000 per month advertising value for the promotion of our activities.

Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2016



2000 subscribers to our Conference Update email list.

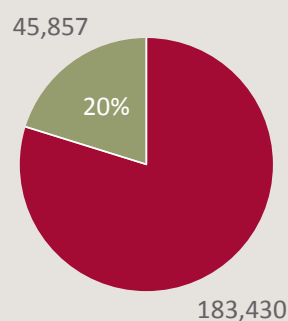


Conference website received some 23,000 individual visitors.

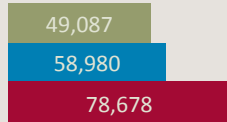


50 million Twitter impressions over the three days.

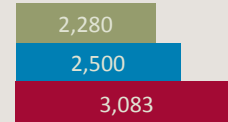
Google ad impacts



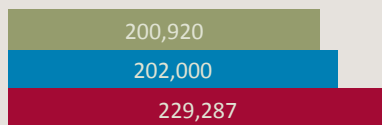
Website unique visitors



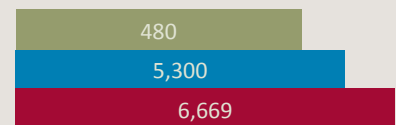
eBulletin subscribers



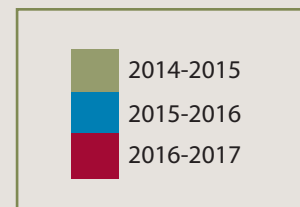
Website page views



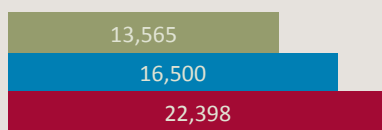
Stakeholder database



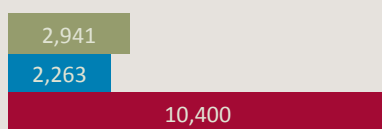
Kindle



Downloads of resources



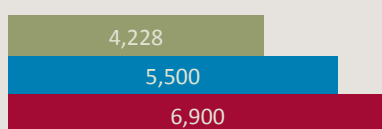
Lit.Search (page views)



Ethicshub (page views)



Twitter followers



Key Media

- Multiple media interviews were held around the November 2016 conference, featuring Ms Gunn Heatta, Professor Karina Walters, Chief Wilton Littlechild and Mr Romlie Mokak, including with ABC radio and television, Koori Mail, National Indigenous Times, CAAMA Radio, and Radio Larrakia
- A conversation with Romlie Mokak and the *Medical Journal of Australia* news and online editor Cate Swannell available on YouTube and podcast
- Indigenous prison rate soared 52% in decade, report reveals, by Melissa Davey, *The Guardian*, August 2016
- Cranlana Medicine and Society Oration, ABC RM Big Ideas podcast, August 2016
- Addressing racism in Australia's health system, Romlie Mokak on ABC RN Life Matters, March 2017

Finance

The Lowitja Institute finished the 2016–17 financial year with a \$120,328 surplus.

Income

totalled \$4.8m with \$4m in CRC Programming Funding including \$220,000 in cash contributions from CRC Participants; project income of \$291,167 related to research support funding from National Mental Health Commission, and sponsorship for the Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2016; interest income at \$163,891; sundry income of \$79,872.

Expenditure

totalled \$4.7m, with research related activities representing 90 per cent of expenditure and corporate services 10 per cent. Project activity expenditure was \$1.8m, with the majority of expenditure related to project funding. Expenditure also included scholarship payments, and expenditure costs of the Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2016.

Administration activities cost \$176,590; corporate related employment \$290,773; research related employment \$1.36m, and operational expenditure was \$1.09m.

Cash reserves

increased significantly, from \$5.1m to \$7.2m, during the financial year as a result of CRC Programme funding not matching research funding expenditure, with the surplus funds recognised as a liability. It is anticipated that these funds will be expended on the Lowitja Institute CRC research agenda in future reporting periods with more project funds due to be released.

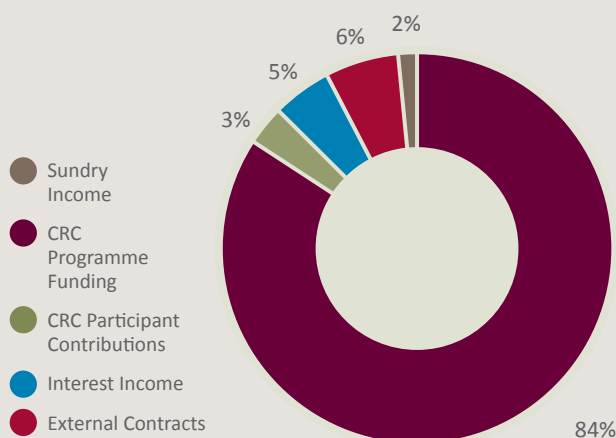
Debtors

at \$154,143 related to the external contract work with the National Mental Health Commission. There was minimal movement in fixed assets, with the overall reduction in asset value due to depreciation.

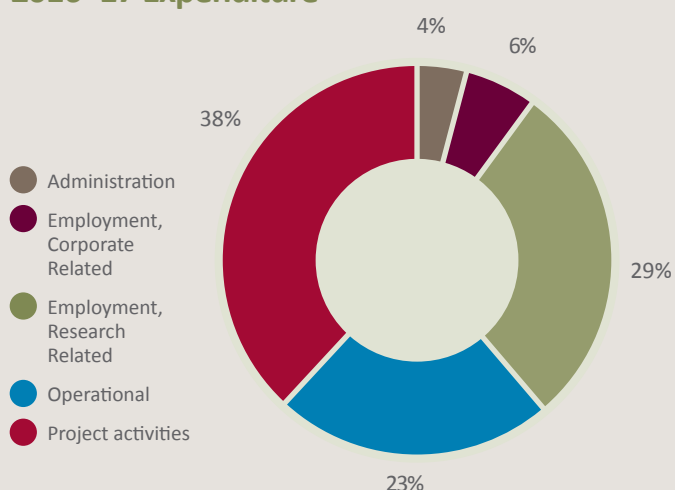
Current liabilities

at \$6.24m included \$5.87m of income in-advance and project commitments from CRC Programme, employee accruals of \$144,322 and \$41,150 in GST payable.

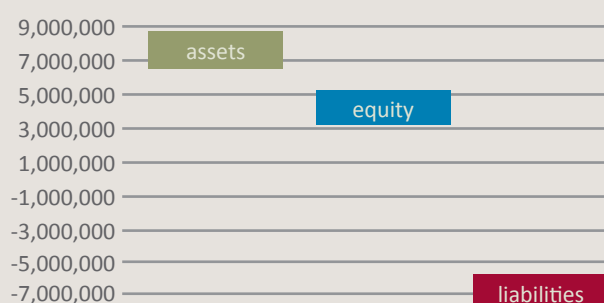
The Lowitja Institute 2016–17 Income



The Lowitja Institute 2016 -17 Expenditure



The Lowitja Institute Financial Position at 30 June 2017



Appendix 1: Acronyms

ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation	DoH	Australian Government Department of Health
ACCHS	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service	FAR	Funding, Accountability and Results
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies	HSRAANZ	Health Services Research Association of Australia and New Zealand
ANU	Australian National University	Lowitja Institute CRC	Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC
APY	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara	NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
BCR	Benefit to Cost Ratio	NCSP	National Cervical Screening Program
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis	NHLF	National Health Leadership Forum
CBR	Cost Benefit Ratio	NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement	NICaN	National Indigenous Cancer Network
CRE	Centre of Research Excellence	NPY	Ngangkari from the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
CRE-IQI	CRE in Integrated Quality Improvement	PDSA	Plan–Do–Study–Act
CRCAH	Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health	PSRs	Pap smear registers
CRCATH	Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health	PHC	Primary Health Care
CRCATSIH	Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health		
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre		
CRE	Centre for Research Excellence		

Other Highlights





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1. Ms Pat Anderson AO and Professor Gillian Triggs, Australian Human Rights Commissioner
2. Award Sponsors, with Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, L-R: Professor Doug Hilton (Walter + Eliza Hall Institute), Ms Kate Latimer (The Cranlana Programme), Mr Aemon Quinn (Aspen Medical)
3. Early morning walk with Boon Wurung Elder Aunty Caroline Briggs (second from the right)
4. Young Men's workshop participants, March 2017; James Henry Photography
5. Young Men's workshop participants, Day 2, March 2017
6. Ms Pat Anderson AO at the lectern during an Edith Cowan University awards ceremony on 11 February 2017 when she received a conferred a Doctor of Medical Science *honoris causa*
7. Professor Colleen Hayward AM, ECU's Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Indigenous). Photography by Paul Santelmann at GFP Graduations, courtesy Edith Cowan University
8. Mr Romlie Mokak with Senator Malandirri McCarthy, March 2017
9. Sharing knowledge at the Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2016
10. NPY Women's Council Ngangkari Program
11. Aunty Di Kerr, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, Mr Romlie Mokak, Professor Megan Davis, The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP. Fiona Hamilton Photography




Thank you to the photographers who are included in this annual report:




Fiona Hamilton Photography

James Henry Photography



A special thank you to



Dixon Patten for the graphic layout of this report
based on an original design by Carbon Creative.



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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)