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MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11:59PM, 17 JANUARY 2024

AU\$4.4M GRANT LAUNCHED TO CHAMPION HEALTH EQUITY FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

- *A new 3-year grant program co-created by the Lowitja Institute, The University of Queensland Poche Centre for Indigenous Health and Gilead Sciences Australia.*
- *Developed to address inequities in the prevention, treatment and care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities living with or at risk of HIV and viral hepatitis.*

Melbourne, Australia 18 January 2024 – Gilead Sciences, the Lowitja Institute and The University of Queensland (UQ) Poche Centre for Indigenous Health today unveil the GLOWS Indigenous Health Grant Program, a new \$4.4M, 3-year initiative to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in their efforts toward elimination of HIV and viral hepatitis.

The Guiding Local Opportunities for Wellbeing (GLOWS) initiative will enable Indigenous-led solutions to be designed to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities affected by, or at risk of, HIV and viral hepatitis. The aim of the initiative is to increase health equity and address disparities that continue to drive disease transmission.

Director of the UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health Professor James Ward says, “For far too long, we as a nation have accepted disparity and inequity in the areas of HIV and viral hepatitis among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The time has come to change this discourse. We now have the science to start to dream of eliminating as well as drastically improve the lives of people living with HIV and viral hepatitis but where we often fail is in the implementation of science at a local level. That’s why this initiative is so important as it provides a mechanism that will enable communities to drive local evidenced-based solutions matched to local needs.”

Despite advancements in HIV and viral hepatitis, the rates of diagnosis are disproportionately higher in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities compared with the non-Indigenous population. In 2022 rates of hepatitis C notifications were seven times greater among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities compared with the non-Indigenous population (156.2 compared to 21.7 per 100,000).¹

Additionally, HIV notification rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was 1.3 times the rate for the non-Indigenous population (4.9 compared to 3.8 per 100,000).²

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples know well the impact of blood borne viruses, like HIV and viral hepatitis, on our peoples and our communities. We understand the needs of our communities and we know the solutions that work. In addressing the disparities that continue to drive disease transmission, it is vital that our communities are centred and that Indigenous-led solutions are prioritised,” said CEO of the Lowitja Institute, Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed.

“In delivering the GLOWS Indigenous Health Grant Program program, Lowitja Institute is committed to putting the science back into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community hands. Lowitja Institute works to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to grow their research ideas, and action community priorities through meaningful research projects. We are excited to hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations about how to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and improve the unacceptable health inequities in areas of HIV and viral hepatitis.”

The GLOWS Indigenous Health Grant Program represents Gilead Sciences’ largest ever commitment to health equity for Indigenous communities globally with a total of \$6M USD to be invested equally in Australia and Canada over three years (\$3M USD to each country).

“As a company deeply committed to health equity, Gilead recognises that Australia will not reach the UN targets for viral hepatitis and HIV unless significant investment and focus is made on priority populations. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are still experiencing significant inequities in access to prevention, treatment, care and health outcomes compared with non-Indigenous communities due to the continued impacts of colonisation in Australia. We also know truly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led and informed solutions are vital to making change here,” said Jaime McCoy, General Manager, Gilead Sciences Australia and New Zealand.

In year one of the program, **five different grant types will be** offered which will focus on large and medium projects: providing opportunities for research and community programs for community needs, incubator, seed or demonstration grants, scholarships and education grants. Funding tiers will range from AUD \$800,000 over two years, to seeding grants and scholarships of \$30,000 and \$25,000.

The first cohort of funded projects will be announced in March 2024. For more information about the program or to apply visit [lowitja.org.au/research/funding-opportunities](https://www.lowitja.org.au/research/funding-opportunities)

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Issued by WE Communications on behalf of Gilead Sciences Pty Ltd.

About the Lowitja Institute, UQ Poche Centre of Indigenous Health and Gilead Sciences Australia Partnership

Gilead Sciences Australia recognises that pursuing its purpose of making the world a healthier place goes beyond delivering innovative therapies. Improving health equity requires thoughtful listening and collaboration with community leaders and those with Lived Experience to develop actionable solutions that will drive change.

Lowitja Institute, UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health and Gilead Sciences Australia have been working together to develop the GLOWS Indigenous Health Grant Program since early 2023, however the idea was seeded in conversations long before. As part of that close collaboration Lowitja Institute and UQ Poche Centre have generously shared their guidance and expertise to ensure the program is directed at supporting the real needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and/or organisations across the country.

This work has culminated in the launch of the GLOWS Indigenous Health Grant Program, a three-year commitment to support culturally adapted solutions to improve HIV and viral hepatitis health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples. This program is part of a global Gilead Sciences initiative, pledging \$6M USD in funding over three years (\$3M USD to each country) to increase health equity in Indigenous communities in Australia and Canada.

About Gilead Sciences Corporate Giving Commitments

Gilead's funding commitment underscores the company's efforts to increase health equity. In 2023, Gilead for the second-year running was named the number one private philanthropic funder of HIV globally³ and works to end the HIV epidemic through robust community partnerships and philanthropy. In 2022 alone, the Gilead Foundation and Gilead Corporate Giving donated a combined nearly \$300 million globally. Other corporate giving programs include Zeroing In® the Gilead COMPASS Initiative® and RADIANT®.

For more than two decades, Gilead has worked to improve the lives of people living with viral hepatitis through community partnerships to support innovative programs that address the unmet needs of people affected by viral hepatitis around the world. In 2023 Gilead launched the expanded ALL4LIVER Grant, a grant program with the theme of 'Test. Link. Prioritize', designed to support innovative projects that drive testing, improve linkage to care and/or elevate viral hepatitis on the public health agenda. The ALL4LIVER Grant support initiatives around the world (excluding the United States) across hepatitis C, hepatitis B or hepatitis D.

About Gilead Sciences

Gilead Sciences, Inc. is a biopharmaceutical company that has pursued and achieved breakthroughs in medicine for more than three decades, with the goal of creating a healthier world for all people. The company is committed to advancing innovative medicines to prevent and treat life-threatening diseases, including HIV, viral hepatitis, COVID-19 and cancer. Gilead operates in more than 35 countries worldwide, with headquarters in Foster City, California.

Based in Melbourne, its affiliate, Gilead Sciences Pty Ltd employs over 120 people. www.gilead.com.au.

About the Lowitja Institute

Lowitja Institute is Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health research institute named in honor of its Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. It is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples through high impact quality research, knowledge exchange, and by

supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers. For more information, visit www.lowitja.org.au.

About UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health

UQ's Poche Centre for Indigenous Health is dedicated to providing national and international leadership in Indigenous health research and research workforce development. The Centre has a focus on improving life expectancy, transforming health inequities and injustices in Australia and other international settings. Guided by values of diversity, equity, and social justice, the Centre seeks to achieve excellence and impact in academic research for tangible improvements in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities.

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² National Indigenous Australians Agency. February 2023. 1.12 HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections. Available at: https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/1-12-hiv-aids-hepatitis-sex-transmissible-infect#:~:text=In%202016%E2%80%932018%2C%20there%20were,compared%20to%203.8%20per%20100%2C000.)). Accessed January 2024.

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