

MEDIA RELEASE – 14 October 2024

One year on: Governments must prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community voices in health

Lowitja Institute calls on all governments to privilege community voices as we mark the one-year anniversary since the referendum to enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in the Australian Constitution.

CEO Paul Stewart commends the support of 6.2 million Australians that voted Yes to a representative Voice to the Australian Parliament and Executive Government. And acknowledges the hard work and commitment from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations in supporting the Yes campaign.

'While last year's referendum result was not the outcome we were hoping for, I am proud of Lowitja Institute's work to support the Yes campaign,' Mr Stewart said.

'We continue to call on all governments to progress the objectives of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* by advancing Voice, Treaty and Truth mechanisms in all jurisdictions and privilege Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in policy decision-making at all levels.

'Our patrons, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG and Ms Pat Anderson AO dedicated many years to advocating for greater recognition of our peoples.

'Ms Anderson worked tirelessly alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to establish the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, and we continue to walk beside her to ensure justice, equality and self-determination for our First Peoples in Australia.'

In March 2024, Lowitja Institute published the [Close the Gap Campaign Report 2024 – Voyage to Voice, Treaty, Truth and Beyond](#) on behalf of the Close the Gap Campaign, delivering a set of recommendations towards achieving the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap's* goals.

Key among these is a call to implement the four Priority Reforms in all jurisdictions, which would include addressing recommendations of the Productivity Commission's 2024 [Closing the Gap review](#).

'One year on after the referendum, the Close the Gap targets still continue to tell a bleak story for our peoples' health and wellbeing.

'Supporting the great work of community controlled organisations with Aboriginal-led research is crucial for us to genuinely close the gap in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

'We call on all Australians to commit to implementing the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* through shared understanding and truth-telling, so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can lead healthy, happy lives now, and into the future.' – Paul Stewart, CEO Lowitja Institute

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For more information or to arrange an interview with Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart, please contact Jo Cackett on 0474 727 506 or communications@lowitja.org.au.

ABOUT LOWITJA INSTITUTE

Lowitja Institute is Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health research institute, named in honour of its patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. It is working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by facilitating high-impact quality research, tools, resources and knowledge exchange, and supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.

Established in January 2010, the Lowitja Institute operates on key principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, a broader understanding of health that incorporates wellbeing, and the need for the work to have a clear and positive impact.

The history of the Lowitja Institute dates back to 1997 when the first Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was established. Since then, the Institute and the CRC organisations have led a substantial reform agenda in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research by working with communities, researchers and policymakers, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people setting the agenda and driving the outcomes.

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