

MEDIA RELEASE – 11 December 2024

Lowitja Institute welcomes Craig Ritchie as new Board chairperson

Lowitja Institute, Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health research institute, welcomes Craig Ritchie as the new chairperson of the Lowitja Institute Board of Directors.

A Dhunghutti man with connections to the Biripi and Gringai nations, Mr Ritchie is an independent advisor and researcher who until August 2023 was the chief executive officer at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

Chief Executive Officer Paul Stewart congratulated Mr Ritchie on his new appointment.

'Craig brings enormous experience and expertise to the Lowitja Institute. He has made a substantial contribution to the effectiveness of the Lowitja Institute Board and to our work generally; and he is well-positioned to continue those efforts in the role of chairperson,' Mr Stewart said.

'On behalf of all Lowitja Institute staff, we look forward to furthering the strong professional relationship we have formed with Craig, working together to deliver ongoing positive impacts to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.'

Mr Ritchie has served on the Lowitja Institute Board with distinction since 14 December 2018, and has extensive experience in the community health sector, including as former chief executive officer of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

Prior to joining AIATSIS in 2016, Mr Ritchie worked in other senior roles in the Department of Education and Training in roles heading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education, higher education access and participation for people from low-SES backgrounds, and international student mobility, as well as founding director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in the ACT Government.

'I want to thank former chair Selwyn Button for his leadership over the past few years, and I look forward to working with the CEO and team to advance the Institute's new strategic plan to ensure the health and wellbeing of our peoples is at the centre of research, with our community organisations and researchers in the driving seat,' Mr Ritchie said.

Mr Stewart also acknowledged the enormous contribution of outgoing chair Mr Button, a Gungarri man from south-west Queensland, who has served on the Lowitja Institute Board since July 2013, and as chair for the past three years.

'A wholehearted thank you to Selwyn for all his hard work and vital leadership of our Board through an important and sometimes challenging period for the Institute and the Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander health research sector. Lowitja Institute wishes Selwyn every success in his role as Indigenous Policy Evaluation Commissioner with the Productivity Commission.'

– Paul Stewart, Chief Executive Officer

At the Lowitja Institute Annual General Meeting (AGM) our members also endorsed the appointment of Michael Graham, a proud Dja Dja Wurrung and Wiradjuri man, as an incoming Board director. Michael has worked in the community controlled sector for the past 20 years and is the chief executive officer at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS).

[Visit our website](#) for further biographical details of the Lowitja Institute Board of Directors.

For more information or to request an interview with a Lowitja Institute representative, please contact 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.