



# 2024 Annual Report

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG  
1 August 1932 – 4 February 2024

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this publication contains images of a person who has passed.



Australian Government  
Department of Health  
and Aged Care

Lowitja Institute receives funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

### Annual Report 2024

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photographer: Leanne King



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

### Who we are

Lowitja Institute is Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health research institute, named in honour of its namesake and co-patron, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. We work 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.



## Our patrons



### **Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG**

The late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG (1 August 1932 – 4 February 2024), a Yankunytjatjara woman, was arguably our nation's most recognised Aboriginal woman.

Dr O'Donoghue forged a distinguished career of advocacy and achievement for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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.

In March 1990, Dr O'Donoghue was appointed the inaugural Chairperson of ATSIC – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission – and won universal admiration for her leadership, tenacity, and integrity. In 1992, Dr O'Donoghue was the first Aboriginal person to address the United Nations General Assembly, during the launch of the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Peoples.

In 2010, Dr O'Donoghue gifted her name and patronage to Lowitja Institute, having been the inaugural Chair of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (1996–2003), which preceded it. Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue died at the age of 91 on 4 February 2024 and her legacy lives on through Lowitja Institute and the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation.



### **Pat Anderson AO**

Pat Anderson AO is an Alyawarre woman who grew up on a camp outside Darwin in the 1950s and has, since, led national efforts to achieve justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as key health organisations including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

With an extensive career spanning community development, service delivery, policy formation, and research ethics, Ms Anderson was instrumental in the founding and development of Lowitja Institute. She was its chair for almost two decades, and is now co-patron, alongside its namesake, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG.

Ms Anderson was Co-Chair of the Prime Minister's Referendum Council that released its final report in 2017. In partnership with Professor Megan Davis and Noel Pearson, Ms Anderson co-chaired the Uluru Dialogues that led to the Constitutional Convention, and the issuing of the Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017.

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Selwyn Button  
Chairperson  
Lowitja Institute

## Chairperson's message

**As I reflect on the year that has passed, I am immensely proud of what Lowitja Institute has achieved. There is no doubt that it has been a year of challenges, not just for the Institute but for the nation, and our peoples. Yet we have continued to uphold our values of leadership and reciprocity in health research.**

We walk in the footsteps of giants such as our very own co-patron, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. When she passed earlier this year, the outpouring of grief across the country was testament to how she touched so many Australians and we are honoured the Institute holds her name. On behalf of Lowitja Institute Board, we commit to honouring her memory and values of courage and integrity through Lowitja Institute and the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation, and our work to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and researchers in health research.

Dr O'Donoghue's legacy lives on under the guidance of former chair and co-patron Pat Anderson AO and her enduring advocacy for the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Like many of our organisational members, we embraced the campaign to enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament into the Australian Constitution, and I am proud of our leadership to support the First Nations Referendum Engagement Group. The referendum, in October 2023, while disappointing, was a demonstration of strength across all our nations and communities to uphold our rights as the First Peoples of this country.

The past 12 months also included a change of leadership. In March 2024, we thanked our former CEO Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed for her dedication and leadership over the past six years, steering us through the pandemic to become a community controlled organisation, and ensuring that 100 per cent of our research is now led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and communities.

In May 2024, we welcomed CEO Mr Paul Stewart, former deputy CEO, and we look forward to working with him to lead our new strategic direction to further strengthen the Institute's role to support community-led research, and influence health research policy reform for our communities.

In late 2023, we thanked Dr Ali Drummond, June Oscar AO, and Robert Skeen for their years of contribution to the Institute and health research sector. We also welcomed Dallas Leon and Jahna Ceda OAM.

Finally, I would like to thank Lowitja Institute management and staff for their dedication to deliver our strategic priorities. I also thank our Board members for their commitment over the past year. Under the new *Strategic Plan 2024–27*, we look forward to guiding the next four years to ensure the health and wellbeing of our communities is at the centre of all our work.



*We walk in the footsteps of giants such as our very own co-patron, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. When she passed earlier this year, the outpouring of grief across the country was testament to how she touched so many Australians and we are honoured the Institute holds her name.*

– Selwyn Button, Chairperson, Lowitja Institute



Paul Stewart  
CEO, Lowitja Institute

## Chief Executive Officer's message

It has certainly been a momentous year for Lowitja Institute. After the passing of a remarkable leader, our namesake, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, we continue as an Institute to uphold her legacy to support health research that is led by our people, for our people.

This annual report demonstrates our work as a national community controlled organisation to lead when we are called to action. In honour of our patrons and the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, I am proud of our support in the Voice campaign. The *Close the Gap Campaign Report 2024*, produced by Lowitja Institute, showcases the advocacy and leadership of our communities during the campaign, and the work doesn't stop as we strive to improve health outcomes for our peoples.

This year, we have awarded seven seeding grants to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to drive their own research in health, and build capability and capacity of local communities. In the past year we have supported 15 students to undertake a Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice.

Our external funding projects have gained momentum to further support Indigenous-led health research through our Targeted Translation Research Accelerator (TTRA) Program, a Medical Research Future Fund. We are also providing grants and scholarships to support research in HIV and viral hepatitis through Guiding Local Opportunities for Wellbeing (GLOWS) Grant Program 2024–26, supported by Gilead Sciences.



We continue our work to grow and enhance the capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce through courses, resources and tools, and scholarships. Our Membership Community has nearly doubled, and we are proud to provide multiple collaboration opportunities through events and networks.

Our publications have explored the establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Medical Research Ethics Committee (NAHREC) and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health, as well as the importance of Indigenous data governance. In addition, our very own *First Nations Health and Wellbeing: The Lowitja Journal*, led by Professor Catherine Chamberlain and her editorial team, has produced its first 14 articles.

We've also brought together national and state health ministers on Ngunnawal Country, Canberra to discuss health policy priorities and advocated for urgent action in response to climate and health at an international stage at the 28th United Nations Climate Conference (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

In March 2024, we welcomed the Australian Government's announcement of \$3.5 million of funding over three years to the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation. This will contribute towards Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation scholarships and education resources, in honour of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, to support and grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce at a national level.

We look forward to bringing together national and international leaders in Indigenous health research at our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference on Kurna Country, Adelaide in June 2025.

As we reflect on the past year, I am grateful for the support from our funders and donors. I would also like to thank our Board, members and staff for their ongoing commitment to supporting Indigenous-led research and building a sustainable future.

In closing, I want to thank Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed for her mentoring, leadership and commitment to the organisation. Her thought leadership has inspired and influenced our work to dismantle racism and as 2024 Victorian Australian of the Year, the energy she has given to our work has been an inspiration.



*We continue our work to grow and enhance the capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce through courses, resources and tools, and scholarships.*

– Paul Stewart, CEO, Lowitja Institute



# Honouring Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG

**1 August 1932 – 4 February 2024**

**With profound respect and admiration, Lowitja Institute honours the remarkable life of the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, our esteemed namesake and co-patron whose pioneering leadership laid the foundation for our very existence.**

A proud Yankunytjatjara woman, Dr O'Donoghue was a visionary, transformative leader and a courageous and fearless advocate for social justice, equity, and human rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Dr O'Donoghue, who passed away peacefully on 4 February 2024 at the age of 91, leaves behind an enduring legacy of wisdom and strength, a light that will guide the path for our Institute and continue to drive our purpose.

Lowitja Institute acknowledges the legacy our co-patron leaves in advocating for, and improving, the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's dedication to health and wellbeing began at a young age when she moved from domestic work to becoming the first Aboriginal trainee nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital in 1954. Dr O'Donoghue fought discrimination throughout her training yet despite the challenges, graduated to soon become Charge Sister at the hospital before going on to

become a prominent leader and advocate for the rights of Indigenous peoples on the national and global stage.

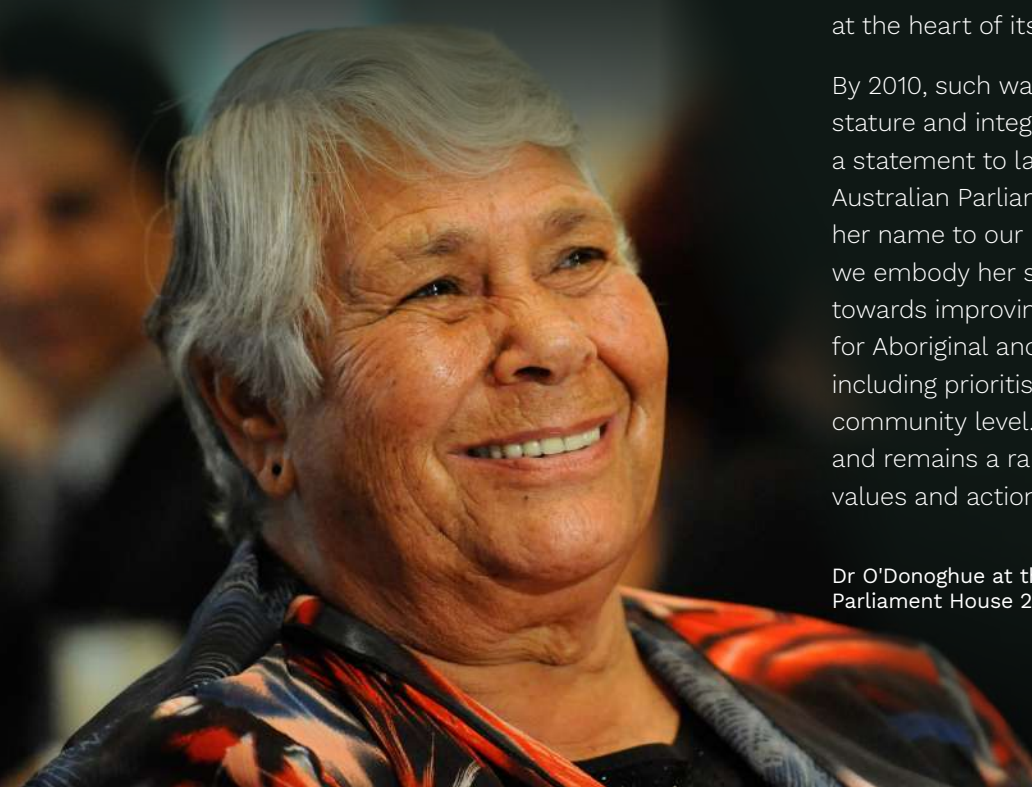
As the inaugural chair of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (1997–2003), Dr O'Donoghue worked with clear intention to reform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research through ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers were in the driving seat to influence better health outcomes.

Dr O'Donoghue's strong leadership of the CRC resulted in successful collaboration on research focusing on five priority areas: Indigenous education, health resources and service delivery, public health, communication and information, and biomedical.

Success was achieved through an approach that departed from the 'traditional' way research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health had been carried out. The new model brought together the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector and communities, researchers and practitioners to identify areas where research could be able to make a real, measurable and positive difference, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, leadership and ethics, and a commitment to workforce development, at the heart of its ethos.

By 2010, such was Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's stature and integrity that she was able to make a statement to launch Lowitja Institute in the Australian Parliament. Dr O'Donoghue bestowed her name to our Institute on the condition that we embody her spirit, energy and commitment towards improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including prioritisation of capacity building at the community level. Dr O'Donoghue's statement was and remains a rallying cry that is embedded in the values and actions of Lowitja Institute.

Dr O'Donoghue at the launch of Lowitja Institute, Parliament House 2010 – Lowitja Institute



*I've never been afraid to work with academics and doctors who are much more qualified than I am... as they're not qualified to chair meetings like I did and bring them together... I was accepted by the academics and the Aboriginal Board members, though I know they were pretty frightened at times about how I would react to certain things! But on the other hand, we got there. I wasn't going to give in.*

Interview with Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG  
16 March 2015



Dr O'Donoghue addressing United Nations General Assembly, Geneva 1992 – Lowitja O'Donoghue Collection

*'I expect you realise that, having named the Institute, The Lowitja Institute, that my spirit and energy will be embodied within it! And so it is important to me that the Institute reflects my values and my priorities,'* Dr O'Donoghue told the Parliament that day.

*'For me, this means the Institute will employ a courageous group of people. They will be committed to social justice and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people.'*

*'There will be a match between words and action. I want the Institute to achieve real, tangible and immediate outcomes. Not rarefied research that will never be applied.'*

Dr O'Donoghue's role as the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander independent chairperson of the CRC for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (CRCATH) was essential to the success of the Institute.

Dr O'Donoghue wanted to ensure unity between 'the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on the Board' by getting 'them to sit around the table' and talk about 'what was needed to improve the health of our people', and 'not where their next dollar was coming from'.

As part of her enduring love for the Institute, Dr O'Donoghue was committed to leading discussions for reform in research at a local and

national level. Her formidable reputation from her time as chair at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) meant she was able to open doors for the CRCATH, and ensure its success. She championed a national Aboriginal-led research agenda, and helped forge partnerships between government, universities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations. Lowitja Institute's co-patron and former chair, Pat Anderson AO, described her as an outstanding leader and visionary whose story is one of great courage, integrity and determination. She is immensely proud to have worked alongside Dr O'Donoghue for many years in establishing and growing Lowitja Institute.

*Lowitja was highly disciplined and hard working and wanted the best for herself and her people... She was a problem solver, she gave things labels, she identified problems, she solved the problems, she dealt with it... She contended with the most uncomfortable issues. You had to be brave to take on the lack of our civil rights back then, very brave. So she's the kind of leader who put her name to the CRC, she backed it all the way, she lent her reputation and credence to it and opened doors for people.*

– Professor Marcia Langton AO Interview,  
14 January 2015



Lowitja Institute co-patrons Dr O'Donoghue and Pat Anderson AO – Lowitja O'Donoghue Collection

*When Dr O'Donoghue entrusted her name to the Lowitja Institute, she 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, and be known for working fearlessly for change and improvement in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*

*Lowitja O'Donoghue was our first Chairperson... we decided that for [the CRCATH] to get any wings at all, we needed a Chair who had some status and some authority, a lot of both... We looked at each other – me, Stephanie and Johnny Liddle – and we delegated Johnny to have the initial conversation with [Lowitja] to see if she was interested or not. And to her credit she said yes, and the rest is history.*

– Pat Anderson AO Interview, 24 October 2014

*Your job is to work ceaselessly, with confidence in who we are, with our knowledge timeless and modern, our endless strength and resilience, our capacity for hard work, our wise heads, our wonderful talented young.*

– Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, *The future is in your hands*, 2016

Interviews featured in for *Changing the Narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research, Four Cooperative Research Centres and the Lowitja Institute: The story so far*, AIATSIS and The Lowitja Institute, August 2017.



2023-24

# This year's highlights

**3** research reports and discussion papers published

**88%** membership increase 

**383**  Lowitja Institute new members

**7** seeding grants awarded 100% with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lead researchers

**9** submissions to national and state level government inquiries and consultation processes

**3** member-informed capability seminars, in total **463** participants



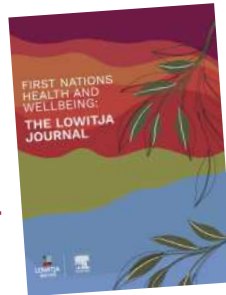
**6** scholarships awarded 

**589** total workforce development tools distributed, across 8 products

We contribute regularly to the work of **16 national committees, reference or advisory groups** focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy

**14** journal articles published by

**First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal**




Lowitja Institute participated in the 28th **United Nations Climate Conference (COP28)** in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Lowitja Institute:

- **27 events** – member events, Knowledge Translation (KT) roundtables, KT and Coffee forums, and KT summits
- sits on **6** national or state research project reference groups
- staff are **members of 6 Boards** in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- member of **10 national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coalitions**

## Lowitja Institute policy and advocacy work influence on national level policy

**17.7%** had **DIRECT** and **59.7%** had **POTENTIAL** 

**111** new participants in online learning courses

**\$3.5 million** of funding over 3 years contributed by the Australian Government to support the work of the **Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation**

## Priority 1

# Invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-driven best practice health research

Lowitja Institute's research is built on key priorities identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We aim to produce high-impact research, tools and resources that will have positive health outcomes for our peoples.

## Research Agenda

Lowitja Institute Research Agenda themes are developed through a collective process of bringing together a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders from the research, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control and health sectors, who are grounded in current and priority needs.

### 2024–26 RESEARCH AGENDA THEMES

1. Self-determination
2. Sovereignty
3. Cultural determinants
4. Racism

Lowitja Institute is committed to investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-driven health research that privileges Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Our investment upholds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights to sovereignty and self-determination throughout all stages of the research process and health research workforce.

## Seeding Grants 2023–24

The Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Seeding Grants program was redesigned to offer three separate funding streams which aim to support all levels of research readiness; from community controlled organisations that have never led research through to early career researchers partnering with communities to undertake a small research program.

### Successful seeding grant recipients

#### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SEEDING SYMPOSIUM

- Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good (DIYDG) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation
- Weenthunga Health Network Inc
- Tribal Warrior Aboriginal Corporation
- Coomealla Health Aboriginal Corporation

Held in February 2024 on the lands of Awabakal and Worimi peoples, this two-day symposium was a first of its kind, and provided a chance to come together and share experiences and knowledge of undertaking research in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research sector. The event brought together the expertise of Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy, Associate Professor Raglan Maddox, Associate Professor



Lisa Whop, Dr Alana Gall, and Dr Simone Sheriff. This symposium aimed to build on community priorities to develop a program of research for submission to the Lowitja Institute Major Research Grants in 2024.

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY SEEDING GRANT**

The Central Land Council (CLC) is an Aboriginal community controlled organisation with 90 elected Aboriginal delegates that represent communities in Central Australia, including Lajamanu community which, since 2021, has worked with the CLC and La Trobe University to create an approach for assessing wellbeing. Having defined the seven domains of a good life in Lajamanu, the community is now tracking change across these domains each year and will use the emerging findings to give voice to their interests and advocate for the life they envision for future generations.

This stream awards up to \$15,000 in funding over a maximum three-month term. It's designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations intending to subsequently apply for the Lowitja Institute Major Research Grant scheme.

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER PARTNERSHIP GRANT**

- Dr Simone Sheriff, Research Fellow, The University of Sydney
- Dr Shea Spierings, Research Fellow, Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, University of Queensland

Awarding up to \$50,000 in funding over a maximum of 12 months, this stream aims to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early career researchers the opportunity to explore and strengthen a community research priority to generate the evidence needed to develop a research proposal for a major grant scheme external to Lowitja Institute.



Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy with a participant at the Seeding Symposium.



Participants at the Seeding Symposium, Awabakal and Worimi Country, Newcastle.



Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart shares knowledge at the two-day Seeding Symposium.



## Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Evaluation Grant

This grant is designed for Victorian Aboriginal community controlled organisations as part of the Alcohol and Drug Research Innovation Agenda (ADRIA).

**Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Ltd** was the successful recipient in the Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Evaluation Grant for 2023.

### Lowitja Institute Major Research Grants

Our Major Research Grants are designed to support innovative and responsive community health and wellbeing research led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations. The grant period is two years and the maximum amount available per project is \$200,000.



Representatives from Major Research Grant 2022–24 recipients, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service.

Applications for the latest grant round were open from May to August 2024. During that period, our Research & Knowledge Translation team hosted two Q&A events regarding the scope of the grants and the application process which were led by Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy. Assessment for this round commenced in September 2024.

Our Research & Knowledge Translation team continue to support and work with the 16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations who are in receipt of a Lowitja Major Research Grant back in 2022.

## Distinguished Fellow – Professor Ian Anderson



Professor Ian Anderson was selected as the inaugural Lowitja Distinguished Fellow for 2023 and has been strengthening our partnerships within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research sector.

Following on from a 2016 collaboration between Lowitja Institute and *The Lancet*, which resulted in a study of Indigenous and Tribal people's health and social outcomes, Professor Anderson is currently exploring the opportunity of establishing a Lancet Commission on Global Indigenous Health. The aim of the commission would be to undertake a global codesign program that documents Indigenous and tribal people's health and social outcomes; gaps in the availability and quality of country level Indigenous administrative health and population data; and the requirements for ongoing monitoring of Indigenous and Tribal peoples' health and social outcomes including global governance and infrastructure.



*Lowitja Institute's Major Research Grants Program enables us to support and engage with a broad cross-section of the Aboriginal community controlled sector who are doing amazing work in the research space.*

– Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart





Editors gather on Wurundjeri Country, Melbourne to celebrate *The Lowitja Journal's* first volume.

## First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal

*First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal* focuses on primary research papers, systematic reviews, and informed short reports and community contributions on all aspects of the science, culture, philosophy and practice regarding health and wellbeing for First Nations communities.

The inaugural journal showcases First Nations leadership, self-determination and achievements in responding to COVID-19 and beyond. Articles in Volume 2 started to be published in May 2024.

In early 2024, senior editors and associate editors from Australia and abroad gathered in Naarm, Melbourne to celebrate the launch of the first volume. This milestone reflected over 18 months' collaborative efforts by Lowitja Institute, Elsevier, and our editorial team. The journal team has also delivered webinars to support Indigenous researchers with advice and expertise about research and publishing processes.



Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart and The Lowitja Journal Editor-in-Chief Professor Catherine Chamberlain.



## Articles published in *The Lowitja Journal* – Volume 1

TITLE	AUTHORS
Editorial: Time for a First Nations-led health and wellbeing research renaissance	Catherine Chamberlain and Janine Mohamed
Evaluation of an innovative Live Strong COVID-mitigating healthcare delivery for adults after starting dialysis in the Northern Territory: A qualitative study	Sara Zabeen, Anne-Marie Eades, Onika Paolucci, Richard Modderman, Clee Tonkin, Kerry Dole, Gwendoline Lowah, Kirsty Annesley, Jacqueline Kent, Emidio Coccetti, Anne Weldon, Matthias Jing, Deborah Roe, Rebecca Jarman, Anne-Marie Puruntatameri, Edna May Wittkopp, Wayne Alum, Tolbert Dharromanba Gaykamangu, and Jaquelyne T. Hughes
'Wellah planted a good seed': How an online health and wellbeing program supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during the COVID-19 pandemic	Stella Mulder, Laura Thompson, Sarah Sheridan, Lena Charles, Emily Munro-Harrison, Helen Kennedy, Ngaree Blow, Stephanie J. Brown, and Graham Gee
Stories of community strength: Reflecting on strong COVID-19 vaccination uptake among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	Brianna Poirier, Gustavo Soares, Madison Cachagee, Susan Hedges, Lisa Jamieson, and Joanne Hedges
Do it for yourself: Australia's first experience of universal eligibility for self-collection cervical screening increases access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women	Kristy Meiselbach, Claire Nightingale, Sandy Anderson, Amanda Ryan, Clare O'Reilly, Marion Saville, Lisa Whop, Margaret Kelaher, and Julia Brotherton
Research ACCORDing to whom? Developing a South Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Accord	Kim Morey, Christine Franks, Odette Pearson, Karen Glover, and Alex Brown
Is all that glitters gold? Assessing the quality and ethics of 'gold standard' randomised controlled trials conducted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings	Joanne Luke, Ebony Verbunt, Muriel Bamblett, Connie Salamone, Sarah Gafforini, Angela Zhang, David Thomas, Sandra Eades, Lina Gubhaju, Margaret Kelaher, and Amanda Jones
Researching Indigenous people living with a disability: The urgent need for an intersectional and decolonising approach (BlakAbility)	Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes
Tackling Indigenous Smoking: A brief commentary on the population health program's history	Tom Calma and Scott McLennan
'We know what our communities need': What the Indigenous health sector reveals about pandemic preparedness in urban Indigenous communities in Australia	Bronwyn Fredericks, Abraham Bradfield, James Ward, Shea Spierings, Sue McAvoy, Troy Combo, and Agnes Toth-Peter
Physiotherapy-led restorative care enabling improved frailty measures in adults after starting dialysis in Northern Territory of Australia: The 'Frailty-to-Fit' pilot study	Richard Modderman, Onika Paolucci, Sara Zabeen, Clee Tonkin, Anne-Marie Eades, Deborah Roe, Rebecca Jarman, Kerry Dole, Gwendoline Lowah, Emidio Coccetti, Anne Weldon, Jacqueline Kent, Kirsty Annesley, Matthias Jing, Margaret Purnell, Tolbert Dharromanba Gaykamangu, Wayne Alum, Edna May Wittkopp, Anne-Marie Puruntatameri, and Jaquelyne T. Hughes
Prioritising the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples receiving home-based aged care: An exploratory study	Odette Pearson, Jonathon Zagler, Matilda D'Antoine, Tina Brodie, Kate Smith, Aunty Martha Watts, Tameeka Ieremia, Graham Aitken, Alex Brown, and Adriana Parrella
Antenatal care assessing and addressing alcohol consumption during pregnancy: A qualitative study of Aboriginal women's experiences and strategies for culturally appropriate care in an Australian local health district	Katie Brett, Emma Doherty, Nerissa Riley, Aneata Nean, Melanie Kingsland, John Wiggers, Susan Thomas, Amy E. Anderson, Sophie Dilworth, and Kristy Crooks

## Indigenous excellence: research repository

Our Research & Knowledge Translation team identified the need for a research database that provides a central hub for access to peer-reviewed research produced by Lowitja Institute-funded projects and scholars. This year, we have developed a Lowitja Institute Research Repository – an online library that enables our sector and the wider health and wellbeing community to access the ongoing research led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and researchers funded by Lowitja Institute. The repository will be launched in late 2024.

## National ethics committee

In 2023, Lowitja Institute, in partnership with the University of Newcastle, was awarded just under \$3 million in federal funding to establish a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Medical Research Ethics Committee (NAHREC), which will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and governed.

The NAHREC initiative was led by Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy (pictured), Wiradjuri woman, and Lowitja Institute Strategic Research Advisor.

In 2024, Associate Professor Kennedy commenced the early scoping phase of the project in partnership with chief investigators, which includes preparing to publish our process for transparency. The NAHREC will be a community controlled NAHREC that accepts applications from researchers undertaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research with a national or multi-jurisdictional focus. This work has followed calls made by both the research sector and the Lowitja Institute Board for a NAHREC. We will undertake a consultation process with key stakeholders to progress this work further. For more details on the early scoping work conducted for NAHREC, see *Ethics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research: Discussion paper* by Associate Professor Kennedy and Dr Jamie Bryant (Research Fellow, University of Newcastle) on page 21.



Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy, University of Newcastle and Lowitja Institute.

## Priority 2

# Mobilise research knowledge for effective translation

## Advocacy in climate and health

### Call for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health

Lowitja Institute and leading climate and health organisations have been calling on the Australian Government to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership by funding a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health.

In November 2023, we released a position paper and business case for the establishment of this Coalition after extensive yarning sessions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country about the impacts of climate change on the health and wellbeing of communities. These outline the key priorities and concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and a blueprint for a Coalition as a vital mechanism to strengthen and create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the space, and for diverse voices to be heard.



Lowitja Institute leadership and other key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives also participated in a roundtable at Parliament House to share stories from communities and concerns with government representatives. These included Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Ged Kearney, Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy Jenny McAllister, Senator Dorinda Cox, Senator Jana Stewart, and the Ambassador for Global Health, Dr Lucas de Toca PSM. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives advocated at this roundtable for the establishment of the Coalition.

*Funding a Coalition empowered to work alongside government would enable bold action on climate change and health – action led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a deep knowledge of Country and holistic understanding of health.*

– Lowitja Institute Chair Selwyn Button



Above: Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, Assistant Ged Kearney and Senator Jana Stewart at the Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Ministerial Roundtable.

Left: Public health lecturer Francis Nona, with Associate Professor Veronica Matthews, and Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, attending the Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Ministerial Roundtable at Parliament House.



## Research and policy publications

### Attendance at COP28

In December 2023, Lowitja Institute representatives, including former CEO Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed and then-Deputy CEO Paul Stewart, travelled to the 28th United Nations Climate Conference (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. During the event, they advocated for urgent actions in response to the health issues caused by the changing and changed climate through the establishment of a Coalition on Climate and Health and for the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

*We were thankful for assistance with travel expenses provided by the Atlantic Institute and a COP28 Climate Conference Travel Support Program grant from the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.*

Recognising the urgent need to address the health risks associated with climate change, at COP28 the Department of Health and Aged Care launched Australia's first *National Health and Climate Strategy*, page 14 of which refers to Lowitja Institute's contribution to it:

*Consultation with First Nations peak bodies and organisations identified a governance gap at the intersection between the health of First Nations people and climate change. Lowitja Institute is leading work in this space and is in the process of engaging with First Nations representatives to identify the best models which will support First Nations people's leadership and self-determination in climate and health policy.*



Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed presenting at COP28 in Dubai.

### Campaigning for a Voice to Parliament

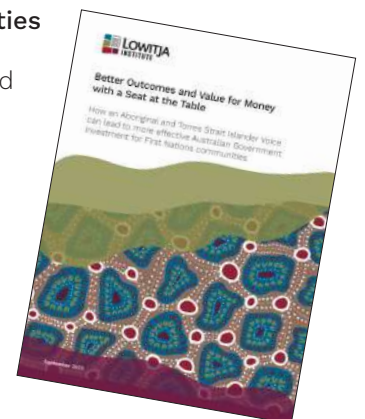
#### Vote from the Heart: Position Paper on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice

In the lead-up to the 14 October Referendum on establishing a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, Lowitja Institute published a policy position paper to make the case for why the Voice proposal aligned with our principles and priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights.

The paper examined the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* as a demonstration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination in policymaking that represents the collective will of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from many communities. It went on to explain how an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice would have helped to facilitate urgently needed progress on the implementation of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* and enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to enact the political determinants of our peoples' health and wellbeing.

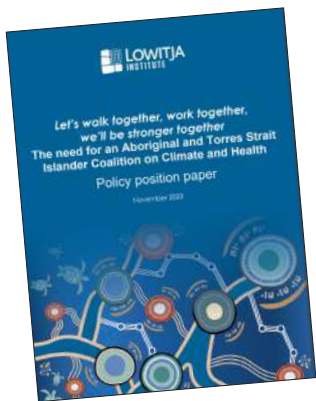
#### Better Outcomes and Value for Money with a Seat at the Table: how an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice can lead to more effective Australian Government investment for First Nations communities

This position paper bolstered our support of the Voice Referendum proposal by presenting a quantitative evidence base regarding the financial savings that could be achieved if government expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific initiatives was more effective.



The paper showed that government expenditure in respect of our peoples remains poorly targeted, is not designed by our communities, and mostly does not flow to our organisations. We also reiterated Productivity Commission findings that, while overall government expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is 6 per cent of total public expenditure, only 18 per cent of this is specifically *targeted* towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and an even smaller proportion takes the form of investment in our organisations. This is despite the evidence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations embody self-determination in action and achieve better outcomes for our communities – and despite all governments’ commitments to build and strengthen the community controlled sector under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

Accordingly, this paper set out how an independent Voice would have been a strong external mechanism by which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities could assess how investment is allocated and used — not only improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s wellbeing, but also government return on investment.



## Coalition on climate and health

**‘Let’s walk together, work together, we’ll be stronger together’: The need for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health**

This policy position paper outlines our recommendation for the Australian Government to fund the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health.

In making this recommendation, we drew on our 2023 community engagement, discussions with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, our previous work in climate and health, and the climate and health panel that Lowitja Institute hosted at our biannual conference

in 2023. We also considered the priority reforms outlined in the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, and the recommendations made via Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ voices and engagement in a 2023 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report.

## Data governance

**Taking Control of Our Data: A Discussion Paper on Indigenous Data Governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and Communities**



The international Indigenous Data Sovereignty (ID-SOV) movement is Indigenous-led and focuses on the rights of Indigenous people to govern the creation, collection, ownership, and application of their data. In Australia, this movement is led by the Maïam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective, a network of extraordinary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers who advocate for the rights of our peoples and our nations in relation to data.

Recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be in control of and self-determine their data needs and aspirations at the individual, community, and First Nations levels, Lowitja Institute commissioned this discussion paper from Maïam nayri Wingara to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to realise Indigenous Data Sovereignty by putting Indigenous Data Governance into practice.

The paper includes a structured, practical tool to guide our organisations through the processes involved in embedding Indigenous Data Governance at the community level. This was shaped around key priorities emerging from the 2nd National Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit in June 2023, sponsored by Lowitja Institute. This tool is a brand-new addition to the Indigenous Data Sovereignty literature in this country, and we are thrilled to share it with our sector and communities.

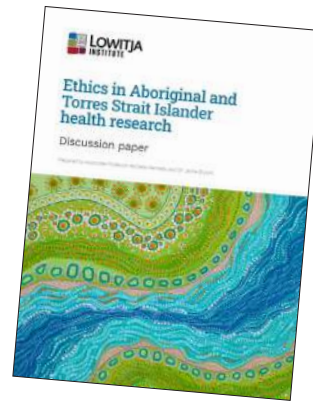
## Ethics in research

### Ethics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research: Discussion paper

Despite the existence of longstanding guidelines and a national commitment to uphold and promote ethical health research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there remains continued concern that current ethics approval processes do not fully uphold key values and principles, fail to adequately incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and input, and do not ensure adequate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices.

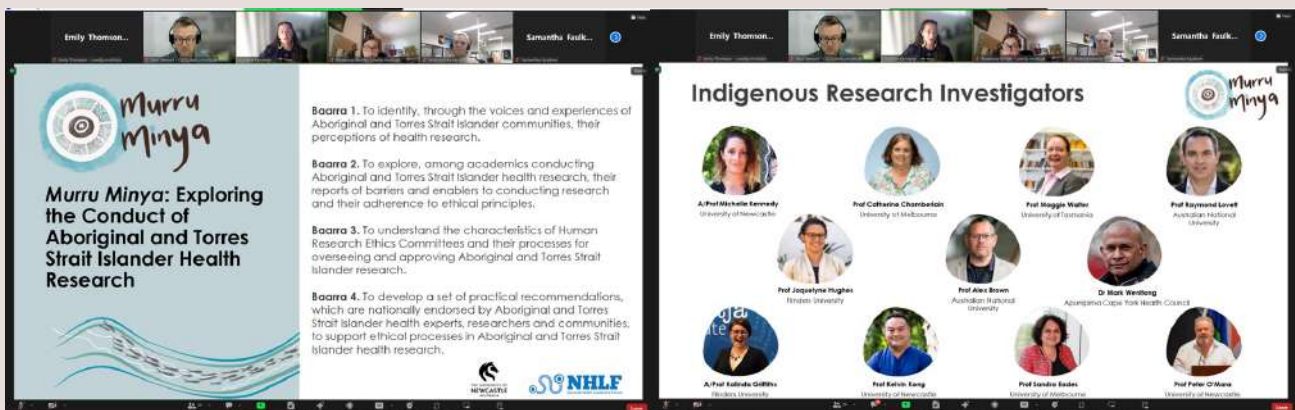
In response, in 2023 Lowitja Institute commissioned Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy (Wiradjuri woman and Assistant Dean Indigenous Strategy & Leadership at University of Newcastle) to develop a discussion paper with Dr Jamie Bryant (Research Fellow, University of Newcastle). The paper draws on Associate Professor Kennedy's work leading the Murru Minya study – a national study that aims to develop new knowledge about the implementation of ethical processes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

In developing the paper, Associate Professor Kennedy and Dr Bryant conducted a scoping review of academic and grey literature that aimed to identify key gaps in ethical processes and



practices for health research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to flag areas of reform needed to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research is conducted to the highest ethical and governance standards, with the greatest impact on improving health outcomes.

This paper's publication was followed, in June 2024, by a virtual Knowledge Translation roundtable in which Associate Professor Kennedy presented her key findings and recommendations, followed by a panel discussion with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research ethics leaders. Associate Professor Kennedy, Michael Larkin (co-chair of the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia's Ethics Committee), Abby-Rose Cox, and Slade Sibosado (from the Kimberley Aboriginal Health Research Alliance) yarned about their experiences of developing and implementing ethical research guidelines and principles in their respective regions.



Screenshots from the online roundtable on Ethics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

## Barriers to funding for community controlled

Lowitja Institute and Equity Economics: a discussion paper on the feasibility of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled research engagement and development strategy

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leadership in research is vital to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing outcomes. However, at present, funding does not always flow to areas that communities prioritise, and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations (ACCOs) are blocked from being able to access research funding and conduct research.

Despite the impressive growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, the barriers to accessing research funding and capability building within ACCOs was a gap that Lowitja Institute wanted to investigate. Lowitja Institute worked with Equity Economics on a feasibility study to explore potential avenues to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled research, including the potential for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled research engagement and development strategy. This was written up in a discussion paper.

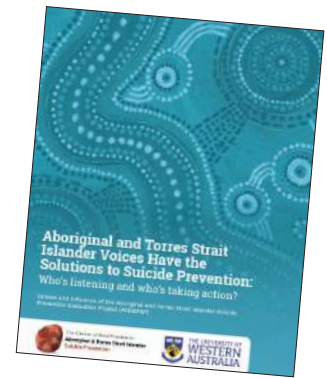
Lowitja Institute will take this work forward in 2024 and commence implementation planning for the discussion paper's key recommendations.

## Suicide prevention

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voices Have the Solutions to Suicide Prevention: Who's listening and who's taking action?

In May 2024, we published a scoping review that evaluates the extent to which *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP)* report findings, recommendations, and resources have been taken up and/or influenced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention activity across Australia, particularly among PHNs.

Authored by Jessica Knight, Kim Mulholland, Ee Pin Chang and Roz Walker (Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, University of Western Australia), the review formally evaluates the uptake and influence of ATSISPEP findings, recommendations, and resources to inform PHN commissioning and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention activities across Australia.



## Published journal articles

Abimbola, S. Namchee Lo, S., Paul Stewart, P., Crabb, B., Mohamed, J., Evans, H., Patel, A., Fisher, J. & Anderson, I. (2023). Enshrining a First Nations Voice to Australian Parliament will advance global health equity. *The Lancet*, vol. 11, no.12: doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(23)00466-7

Bone, A., Kaur, P., Capon, A., Kwang-wen Lin, V., Tu'itahi, S., Bowen, K., Watts, N., Fisher, J., Stewart, P, Evans, H., & Namchee Lo, So. (2023) Advancing the Australian global health community's commitment to climate change and global health. *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 219, no. 11, 533-534: 10.5694/mja2.52166

Matthews, V., Vine, K., Atkinson, A. R., Longman, J., Lee, G. W., Vardoulakis, S., & Mohamed, J. (2023). Justice, culture, and relationships: Australian Indigenous prescription for planetary health. *Science*, vol. 381, no. 6658, 636-641: science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adh9949



## Knowledge translation through online events

### KT and Coffee webinar: Community-led Knowledge Translation

In November 2023, our Research & Knowledge Translation team hosted a KT & Coffee webinar that focused on community driven research priorities for health and wellbeing, and featured panellists including Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy (pictured), Father Leslie Baird, Professor Jack Beetson, and Aunty Eunice Yu.



The slide features the Lowitja Institute logo and a circular diagram titled "Knowledge Translation Ecosystem". The diagram is divided into four quadrants: "CONFERENCE PHASE" (top), "MILESTONE PHASE" (bottom), "KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION PHASE" (left), and "COMMUNITY PHASE" (right). Arrows indicate a clockwise cycle between these phases. A central hub is labeled "The Cycle".

**Lowitja Institute's approach to knowledge translation**

The Lowitja Institute knowledge translation activities begin with research questions that are developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. Our Research and Knowledge Translation team implement this through our research funding and scholarship opportunities that all include additional funding for Knowledge Translation.

[https://www.lowitja.org.au/cms\\_docs/328552\\_knowledge-translation.pdf](https://www.lowitja.org.au/cms_docs/328552_knowledge-translation.pdf)

Michelle Kennedy (Wiradjuri)

### Lowitja Journal webinars

In October 2023, the editorial team for *First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal* held a webinar about the peer-review process in which guest Zoë Mullan, Editor-in-Chief of open access journal, *The Lancet Global Health*, presented on how the peer-review system works, reasons to review, and how to claim recognition.

During May 2024, the team hosted a webinar entitled **'Reducing barriers in research and writing'**. During this session, Alison Elliott (Family Therapist, Workforce Development Trainer and Team Leader, First Nations Team, La Trobe University) shared her personal experience of

growth and confidence through spoken word in research and publication writing. This webinar series forms part of the *Journal's* ongoing commitment to creating educational opportunities for potential authors, reviewers and editors.



Alison Elliott guest presenting at *The Lowitja Journal* webinar held in May 2024.

## Innovative research products and services

Lowitja Learning is a space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people to learn, connect, collaborate, and grow, building capability in health research for the benefit of our community. Our online courses are designed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. They're also highly valuable for non-Indigenous people working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and research sectors.

This year the Workforce team expanded our course offerings to include three newly designed self-paced online courses that exemplify knowledge translation into practical application:

### Indigenous Data Sovereignty online course

The rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations to protect, govern, and retain control of our own data, and determine its use in ways that respect our cultural values, knowledge systems and self-determination is critical. This course promotes a deeper understanding of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and enables researchers, in different contexts, to confidently use Lowitja Institute's 'Indigenous Data Sovereignty Readiness Assessment and Evaluation Toolkit' in their own setting. Contributing author: Dr Kalinda Griffiths

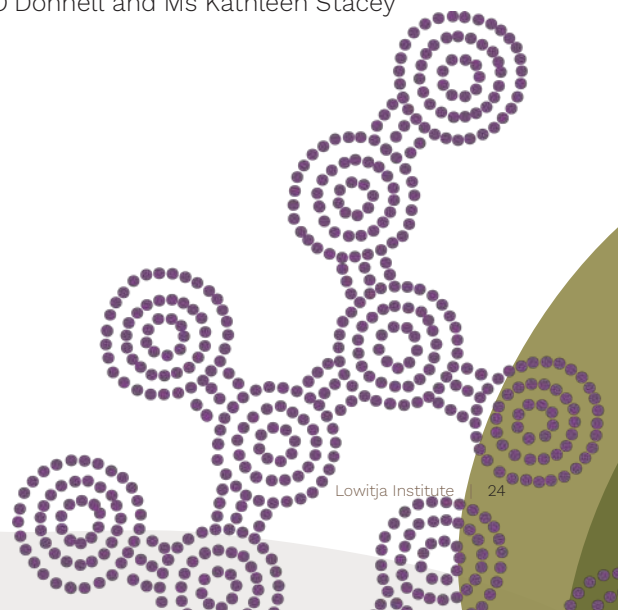


### Community Data Literacy: Foundations online course

Data literacy has become increasingly important in the digital age, where vast amounts of data are generated and used in various fields such as business, science, healthcare, and government. In this context, it is crucial that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people possess the skills to analyse our own data. This course is for Indigenous researchers who wish to learn about the importance of adopting a strengths-based approach to storytelling through statistics, while also taking ownership of data. Contributing author: Professor Ray Lovett

### Introduction to Ethics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research online course

Research ethics encompasses the principles and guidelines that govern the responsible conduct of a research project. When conducting research with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, research ethics ensures that the rights of the participants are respected and that their cultural values, beliefs, and traditions are honoured. This course promotes the respect of the core ethical values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in research settings. It aims to give researchers a deeper understanding of the importance and implications of ethical research as well as the keys to apply the research ethics principles to their own research projects. This course draws upon material from Lowitja Institute's accredited course, the Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice. It is designed to be completed as a self-paced, introductory online course. It does not replace the learning that forms part of the Certificate IV. Contributing authors: Dr Kim O'Donnell and Ms Kathleen Stacey



## Cultural Safety Audit Tools for Organisations and Individuals

Lowitja Institute's Cultural Safety Audit Tools were launched at our Knowledge Translation Summit in May 2023. Since then, interest in the Tools has grown exponentially. Thirty-three Cultural Safety Audit Tools for Individuals have been purchased and 49 health and research organisations nationally have purchased the Cultural Safety Audit Tool for Organisations.

The Cultural Safety Audit Tool for Organisations has been designed primarily for health services and research or education institutions to

undertake a critical self-assessment across their entire organisation, assessing the commitment to and level of development in embedding cultural safety in areas including governance, policy and workforce. People using the Cultural Safety Audit Tool for Individuals closely examine their self-awareness, cultural safety understanding, behaviours and practices.

Anti-racism and cultural safety in workplaces, health services and institutions require a leadership-driven commitment to organisational cultural change that is monitored and evaluated.



*Anti-racism and cultural safety in workplaces, health services and institutions require a leadership-driven commitment to organisational cultural change that is monitored and evaluated.*

## Priority 3

# Enhance the capability of the health research workforce

## Supporting efforts to eliminate HIV and viral hepatitis

The Guiding Local Opportunities for Wellbeing (GLOWS) Grant Program 2024–26 offers scholarships and research grants to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and their partners for work relating to HIV and viral hepatitis over the next three years. In partnership with Gilead Sciences, Lowitja Institute aims to further increase health equity, address disparities that continue to drive disease transmission, and work towards elimination of HIV and viral hepatitis in our communities.



### GLOWS Grant Program 2024–26

Five different grant types are offered. These include large and medium research grants focused on providing opportunities for research and community programs aimed at addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs. The program also

includes incubator, seeding or demonstration grants, scholarships, and education grants. Funding tiers range from \$800,000 over two years, to seeding grants and scholarships of \$30,000 and \$25,000.

## Members Community

Our Members Community is at the heart of all we do. As a community controlled, member-based organisation we are deeply invested in ensuring our Members are notified in real-time of upcoming events, scholarships, grants, seminars, courses, product information, and Member events through our Members Portal.

Over the past year we saw an outstanding 88 per cent increase in membership overall, exceeding our goal of 20 per cent annual member growth. Our Board endorsed 383 new members, taking our total membership to 819 individuals and organisations.

In welcoming new Members to Lowitja Institute Members Community, we have recently digitalised our Member Welcome Pack to reduce our environmental impact. Each new Member now receives a digitalised certificate, and a range of digital Member assets, plus access to exclusive Member benefits.

To keep our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members connected, we deliver culturally safe, bi-monthly, online Yarning Circles. We also share latest news and Members Community highlights through our monthly e-newsletter, the Members Community Grapevine.

Member event held on Garramilla Country, Darwin, in April 2024. Photo: CJ Media Instagram @cjm.media



## Health and Wellbeing Scholarships

Six students were awarded a 2024 Lowitja Institute Health and Wellbeing Scholarship, contributing to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership of health research by providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop their skills.

A Lowitja Institute Certificate IV and Graduate Certificate Scholarship (valued up to \$15,000) has been awarded to **Adrienne Lipscomb** (VIC), who is undertaking Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Trauma and Recovery Practice, University of Wollongong.

The following five students will receive a Lowitja Institute Higher Degree Research Top-Up Scholarship (valued up to \$10,000 per annum for a maximum duration of three years):

- **Elizabeth Bourke** (NSW), Flinders University, College of Medicine and Public Health
- **Justin Wilkey** (VIC), University of Melbourne, Faculty of Education
- **Khwanruethai Ngampromwongse** (QLD), The University of Queensland, Faculty of Medicine
- **Michelle Gissara** (VIC), RMIT University, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies
- **Karina Maxwell** (QLD), The University of Queensland, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work.



*Scholarships are a key component of Lowitja Institute's activity is to grow the talent based in our communities by creating pathways into the health research sector*

– Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart

# Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation

The late Dr O'Donoghue entrusted the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation to carry forward her vision to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to create change through self-determined pathways that provide equality, empowerment, voice and action.

With support from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), the Foundation has established a scholarship program, event partnerships, education resources and continues to build an incredible archive resource from Dr O'Donoghue's collection of historic memorabilia.

In March 2024, Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP, announced, at the Close the Gap Campaign Report 2024 launch at Parliament House, the Albanese Government would contribute \$3.5 million of funding over three years to support the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and leaders.

On 1 August 2023, the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia, hosted a small gathering at Government House Adelaide to recognise Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's 91st birthday, and to celebrate the first anniversary of the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation.



Deb Edwards, Senior Project Officer with Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia at Government House on Kaurna Country, Adelaide.



Minister Linda Burney announced the ongoing funding for the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation in March 2024 at the Close the Gap Report launch on Ngunnawal Country, Canberra, ACT.

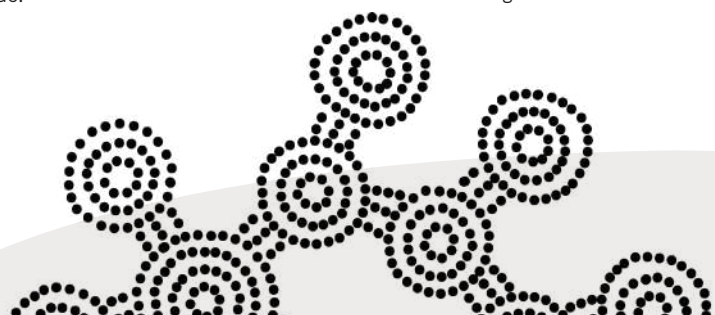
The joint funding from NIAA and Department of Health and Aged Care will contribute towards the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation scholarships program to support and grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce at a national level. The funding will support the Foundation to increase the number of scholarships offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in nursing, public sector and leadership.

Work currently being undertaken on a suite of education resources, is aimed at primary and secondary school levels Year 4 to 10, in line with Australian Curriculum Version 9 and the Professional Standards for Teachers.

The Foundation was a proud presenting partner, with the Don Dunstan Foundation, of the annual Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration for the second consecutive year. Professor Tom Calma AO delivered his Oration, 'Looking Back to Look Forward – lessons from the past to influence actions of the future' in honour of his friend and former colleague, Dr O'Donoghue.



Professor Tom Calma AO, pictured with Lowitja Institute co-patron Pat Anderson AO, delivered this year's Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration. Photos: Jo-Anna Robinson



## Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice

In August 2023, the first cohort of 15 students from New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia began the course, with 11 students continuing. Our Workforce team collaborates with the Aboriginal Health College, Little Bay, NSW (AH&MRC) in the delivery of the Cert IV, engaging a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and evaluation experts to support the delivery.

The Cert IV qualification empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by facilitating pathways into research, ensuring that students gain meaningful and respected credentials that strengthen their current and future research endeavours, while opening doors for further higher education opportunities in the research field.

## Capability seminars

In October 2023, we conducted a comprehensive survey of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members Community to inform the planning of future Members events and capability seminars and ensure we respond directly to our Members' voices. As a result of the survey findings, we delivered three learning seminars, on the topics of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance, Indigenous Research Methodologies, and Research and Advocacy for Policy Change, as well as three Members events.

*I think just conceptually understanding advocacy and seeking how projects do this. We do this, but we do not speak explicitly about advocacy.*

– seminar participant

## Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance

In January 2024, the 'Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance' webinar was delivered by Executive Members of Maïam Ngyri Wingara Collective, Dr Cassandra Sendra-Price and Dr Jacob Prehn. Dr Price shared how data collection needs to have direct benefits to the community and improve lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while Dr Prehn spoke on some great initiatives across the Indigenous data landscape, how more systemic change is needed, and the importance of taking a strengths-based approach when collecting data. The webinar included the launch of Lowitja Institute's discussion paper, *Taking Control of our Data: A Discussion Paper on Indigenous Data Governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and Communities*. Four-hundred and thirteen people attended and the webinar recording was made available through our Members Portal.

*It has challenged my understanding of Indigenous Data Governance. It should be mandatory across all levels of education. A thought-provoking webinar, thank you!*

– webinar participant

## Research and Advocacy for Policy Change

In May 2024, we hosted an online capability seminar by Lowitja Institute's Executive Manager Policy & Consulting, Rosemary Smith, alongside Policy team staff Jessica Szwarcbord and Emily Thomson. During the workshop participants learned about the history of policy development in Australia, setting a policy agenda, the Lowitja Institute approach, effective advocacy planning, and a case study on climate and health. Eighteen Members attended and the recording of the seminar was made available through our Members Portal.

## Indigenous Research Methodologies

In February 2024, we hosted a two-day, in-person capability seminar on Wurundjeri Country, Melbourne that was delivered by Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson and attended by 32 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members. During the workshop, Distinguished Professor Moreton-Robinson guided participants consideration of the history of Western methodologies and how Indigenous methodologies differ in conceptualisation and application, and why research is not easy work and considered the challenges faced by Indigenous researchers in their quest to provide research that matters to and is directed by community.

## Members Community events

In September 2023, we hosted an online event to hold a culturally safe space to check-in on the wellbeing of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members in relation to their experiences in the lead-up to the Voice Referendum held October 2023. Ten members attended and deeply appreciated Lowitja Institute holding space for this important reflection time.

In February 2024, more than 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members, Member

organisations and invited guests gathered on Wurundjeri Country, Melbourne to share a meal and connect. Members valued the opportunity to network with Lowitja Institute CEO and staff, Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson, and spend time together.

In April 2024, over 40 Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual and organisation members came together to network over dinner at a local Indigenous-owned restaurant on Garramilla Country, Darwin. In welcoming our guests, Paul Stewart shared his sentiments of the value of our Members Community events. This gathering connected us with individual members and member organisations including Danila Dilba, IAHA, AMSANT, and Tiwi Education and Training.

In June 2023, we hosted an online event to warmly welcome all new individual and organisation members who were introduced to our dedicated team and received valuable advice on our products, tools, courses, and exclusive Members Community benefits. Additionally, a comprehensive demonstration was provided on accessing and navigating our Members Portal. Thirty-two members participated in this interactive event. Participants said they enjoyed meeting other members in the breakout session, navigating the portal and resources and tools, and taking a deeper dive into the training resources.



April 2024 Member event held on Garramilla Country, Darwin. Photo credit: CJ Media Instagram @cjm.media



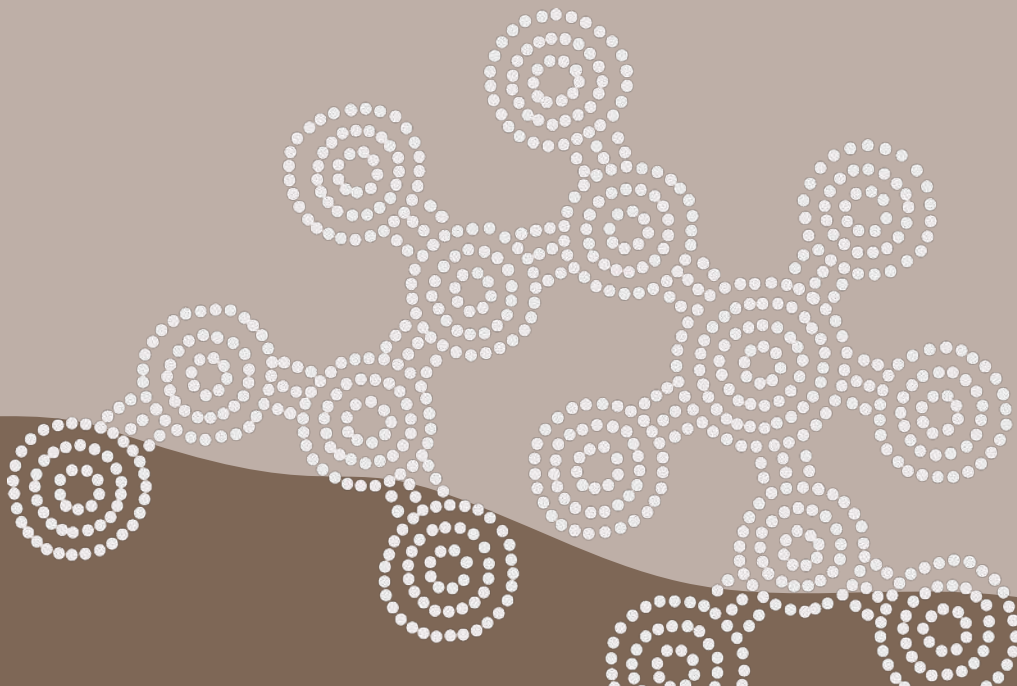


The Indigenous Research Methodologies seminar was held during February 2024 on Wurundjeri Country, Melbourne.

”

*I can't pick one [highlight], but I will say this: came into this event on the fence about continuing a career in research. The passion, stories, knowledge and love shared by Distinguished Professor Aileen, the dedicated organising team and the participants has reaffirmed my drive to continue fighting the good fight.*

– workshop participant



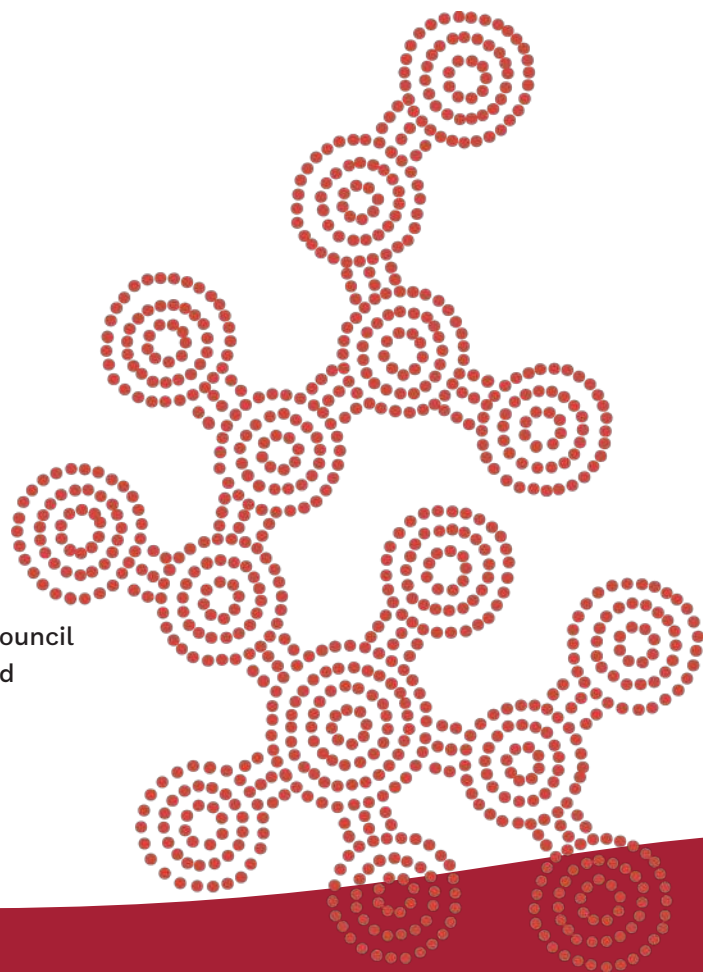
## OCHRe network (our Collaborations in Health Research)

Funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), OCHRe is a national network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers that comprises four operational hubs, each driving innovation and excellence in their fields. Lowitja Institute leads the OWL (Our Wisdom Leading) Hub.

Activity over the past year included:

- OWL Hub member, Professor Pat Dudgeon, led the delivery of a series of integral consultation workshops titled 'Let's yarn about our world of Indigenous Knowledge Systems', to foster dialogue and understanding around Indigenous Knowledge Systems among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. One workshop was delivered in-person at the OCHRe Convocation in April 2024 on Turrbul and Jagera Country. These workshops offered meaningful platforms for participants to share their unique perspectives and experiences. This collaborative initiative will contribute to guiding the development of an OCHRe Indigenous Knowledges Framework to further strengthen our ability to honour and preserve Indigenous wisdom within the broader academic and societal contexts.
- OWL Hub support of Lowitja Institute's Cert IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice has contributed significantly towards 11 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students nearing completion of their qualification. The Cert IV directly aligns to OWL Hub's core work of building a skilled workforce capable of conducting research that addresses community needs and priorities. This initiative has the potential to create lasting positive impacts on health, education, and social outcomes within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Dr Kim O'Donnell's teaching methods that respect and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and learning, along with her own extensive experience in research, has allowed for peer-to-peer learning to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

**Funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), OCHRe is a national network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers**





Design by Samantha Campbell of Coolamon Creative.

## Priority 4

# Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sectors and government

## Sector and government leadership roles

Our leadership roles extend across the health and health research sectors and are inclusive of the social and cultural determinants of health. Lowitja Institute is a member of 10 national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coalitions. These include:

- We continue to be active members of the National Health Leadership Forum (NHLF), comprised of leaders from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. In this forum, we work alongside other peaks to inform the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care to delivery on their work under the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031*, and the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021-2031*.
- Member, Coalition of Peaks, comprised of a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations which work on collective advocacy. Along with our membership of the Coalition of Peaks, we are also members of the Closing the Gap Joint Working Group and Partnership Working Group in which we work alongside other peaks and state and territory governments to discuss implementation of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

- Member, Partnership for Justice in Health, which seeks to redress the ongoing inequity and racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the nexus between the health and justice systems.
- Member, Close the Gap Campaign Alliance.
- Member, Closing the Gap Data and Reporting Working Group.
- Member, HEAL Observatory Committee.
- Member, the OWL Network.
- Member, the OCHRe national network.

## LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH POLICY

We also engage and contribute regularly to the work of 16 national committees, reference or advisory groups focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy. This includes forums such as the National Mental Health Commission Advisory Committee, the NSW Aboriginal Health Plan Advisory Committee, the Voice Referendum Engagement Group, and the Chief Medical Officer Advisory Group.

Other relevant forums include:

- Member, Genomics Advisory Group, Commonwealth Department of Health
- Member, SA Health Continuity of Care Protocol Program Testing Steering Committee and Whole of System Working Group
- Member, Health Infonet Advisory Board.

Lowitja Institute staff are members of six Boards in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.



## LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH RESEARCH

Lowitja Institute sits on six national and state research project reference groups, including:

- Member, Medical Research Future Fund: Indigenous Health Expert Advisory Committee
- Member, Targeted Translation Research Accelerator Needs Assessment, Indigenous Advisory Group
- Member, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute Aboriginal Reference Group
- Member, QIMR Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee, Australian Pharmacogenomics Diversity Project
- Member, VACCHO Targeted Translation Research Accelerator Research Governance Committee
- Gilead GLOWS Grant Program – Collaborative Working Group.

## Connecting with ACCHOs

Lowitja Institute leaders attended and presented at multiple ACCH sector affiliate events across the year. We hosted exhibition booths at several of these.

### Highlights:

In October 2023, we exhibited at the NACCHO Members' Conference on Whadjuk Nyoongar Country, Boorloo, Perth. During the conference, Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed chaired a Maternal Child Health Workshop where attendees heard from ACCHOs delivering maternal and child health services about what is working well and what isn't working well and what further support is needed to help meet the needs of the sector.



Lowitja Institute staff at the NACCHO Members Conference on Nyoongar Country, Perth, October 2023 (from left: Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, Emma Donegan, and Felicity Collis).

During the same month, Lowitja Institute’s then-Deputy CEO Paul Stewart facilitated an expert panel held as part of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Victorian Department of Health event to launch the Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical & Wellbeing Research Accord (‘marra ngarrgoo, marra goorri’).

The event included a keynote address from Victorian Health Minister, The Hon. Mary-Ann Thomas, and the panel featured Professor Brendan Crabb AC, Director and CEO, Burnet Institute; Dr Jill Gallagher AO, CEO, VACCHO; Lisa Thorpe, CEO, Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre; Professor Karen Adams, Director, Gukwonderuk Indigenous Health Unit, Monash University; and Dr Megan Astle, Executive Director of Health and Medical Research, Department of Health.



Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart facilitating at the VACCHO and Department of Health event to launch the Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical & Wellbeing Research Accord (‘marra ngarrgoo, marra goorri’).

## Parliamentary and government engagement

Over the past year, Lowitja Institute undertook state-based and national Ministerial engagement, led by Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed as our CEO (from July 2023 – March 2024) and Paul Stewart as Interim CEO (March – June 2024).

These engagements included:

- Hon Linda Burney MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians
- Hon Malarndirri McCarthy MP, Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Health
- Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care
- Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care
- Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education
- Senator Jana Stewart, Senator for Victoria
- Hon Ben Carroll MP, Deputy Premier of Victoria, Minister for Education and Minister for Medical Research
- Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP, Victorian Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services
- Ms Sheena Watt MP, Member of the Legislative Council of Victoria for Northern Metropolitan Region, Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Action
- Ms Chris Couzens MP, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria for Geelong, Parliamentary Secretary for First Peoples
- Hon Chris Picton MP, South Australian Minister for Health and Wellbeing

- Senator Dorinda Cox, Senator for WA
- Hon Jenny McAllister, Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy.

In August 2023, Adjunct Professor Mohamed attended the Northern Territory Primary Health Care Workforce Summit in Alice Springs. Jointly hosted by Assistant Minister McCarthy and Assistant Minister Ged Kearney, this summit brought together key health sector stakeholders – including a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders – from across the Northern Territory and nationally.

In March 2024, parliamentarians from across the Australian Government, Opposition and Greens Party attended the *Close the Gap Campaign Report* launch, including: Minister Burney, Minister Butler, Assistant Minister Kearney, the Hon Emma McBride MP (Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention), Senator Kerryne Liddle (Liberal Senator for South Australia), and Senator Dorinda Cox (Greens Senator for Western Australia).

Lowitja Institute teams met several times throughout 2023–24 with the Department of Health and Aged Care – including its Secretary, Mr Blair Comley PSM – and with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

As members of the National Health Leadership Forum, Lowitja Institute was also invited to participate in a process of co-designing the newly established First Nations Health Governance Group. This Group has been established by the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) to provide leadership over national health initiatives for our peoples, including the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031* and the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework 2021–2031*.



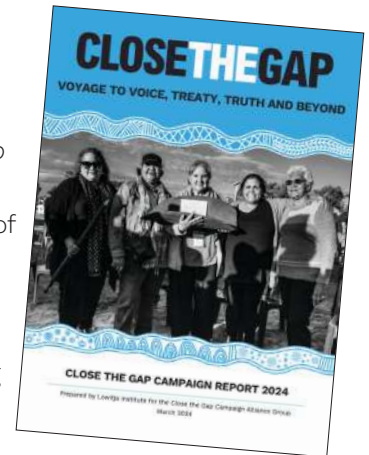
**In March 2024 parliamentarians from across the Australian Government, Opposition and Greens Party attended the *Close the Gap Campaign Report* launch**

Other engagement with Australian Government agencies included:

- providing extensive input to the Productivity Commission on a range of matters relating to the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. This included participating in virtual and face-to-face meetings with the Commissioners leading the first three-yearly Review of the National Agreement; providing written submissions to that Review process; and advising on amendments and new additions to the Closing the Gap Data Dashboard through both written feedback and virtual meetings.
- collaboration with Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of Industry, Science and Resources on COP28. This included preliminary meetings regarding COP28 attendance, engaging with DCCEEW representatives to link up with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, and participating in speaking events at COP28, hosted by DCCEEW. Lowitja Institute also engaged with DoHAC on the National Health and Climate Strategy via meetings with the responsible DoHAC team, participation in a Ministerial roundtable hosted by Assistant Minister Kearney, a submission to the consultation process for the Strategy, participating in the launch of the Strategy at COP28, and ongoing engagement after the Strategy was published.
- engagement with DCCEEW on the National Climate Risk Assessment and National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy. This included attending a National Climate Risk Assessment prioritisation workshop and attending consultation sessions. Lowitja Institute also engaged in consultations regarding the new National Water Agreement.

## Lowitja Institute calls on governments to hasten action to close the gap

Prepared by Lowitja Institute for the Close the Gap Campaign, the *Close the Gap Campaign Report 2024* was released in Canberra ahead of National Close the Gap Day. The report delivers a set of recommendations providing a pathway 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.

The launch on Ngunnawal Country, Canberra in March 2024, provided an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders, campaign members, and Parliamentarians to reflect on the year that has been, and to refocus on the tasks ahead in the pursuit of our wellbeing, sovereignty, and self-determination. Speakers included representatives of the campaign and organisations profiled in the report.



Attending the Close the Gap Campaign Report 2024 launch: (from left) Hon Mark Butler MP, Hon Linda Burney MP, Close the Gap Campaign co-chair Karl Briscoe, Lowitja Institute Board Chair Selwyn Button, and Hon Ged Kearney MP.



## Health Ministers' Roundtable on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Lowitja Institute facilitated the second biennial Health Ministers' Roundtable on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, which took place in March 2023 on Ngunnawal Country, Canberra, and was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. This was the second time we had been engaged by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Collaboration Group to coordinate this major national forum for discussion of current and future

health policies, strategies, and reforms aimed at addressing inequities in the health systems and improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The roundtable brought together health ministers and departmental leaders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health sector leaders (including the National Health Leadership Forum, NACCHO and its Affiliates), and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health experts from every jurisdiction in Australia. Attendees heard from experts and leaders in subjects ranging from the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, to cultural safety and anti-racism, to the *National Health Reform Agreement*.



## Lowitja Consulting projects

### **New South Wales Aboriginal Health Plan Refresh**

Lowitja Consulting was engaged by the Centre for Aboriginal Health (within the NSW Ministry of Health) to support the development of a new statewide Aboriginal Health Plan. Led by a partnership between the Centre for Aboriginal Health and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, this process also received guidance from an Aboriginal Health Plan Advisory Committee that comprised senior leaders from Aboriginal community controlled health services and Local Health Districts across New South Wales, Aboriginal specialist leaders from within the Ministry of Health, and representation from Stolen Generations and Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ community organisations.

Lowitja Consulting's work on the new Aboriginal Health Plan involved analysing the results of an extensive consultation process with Aboriginal people and organisations across New South Wales, as well as relevant national and state-level strategies and Local Health District plans targeted at Aboriginal health, to develop a detailed set of nine priority reform areas and strategic directions that were iteratively tested and refined with the Advisory Committee. With the support of *beyond...* Kathleen Stacey & Associates and SB & Associates Consultancies, we also undertook a process of mapping priority domains of action between these documents to maximise alignment of the new Aboriginal Health Plan and support effective coordination of activities in the implementation phase.

### **Targeted Translation Research Accelerator Program – Supporting Round 3 Grantees**

Following our work on the Targeted Translation Research Accelerator (TTRA) Program for Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease in 2022–23, which saw Lowitja Consulting partner with MTPConnect to complete a Needs Assessment and Prioritisation process for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific Round 3 of the TTRA Program, we are now supporting the successful grant applicants throughout the course of their funding agreements.

Round 3 of the TTRA program (a Medical Research Future Fund initiative that aims to develop or progress innovations in preventative, diagnostic, therapeutic and/or disease management care for diabetes and cardiovascular disease) resulted in \$5.9 million in grant funding being awarded to six projects, many of which are led by or undertaken in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations. Our role at Lowitja Consulting is to provide mentorship, capability building, project management support, and knowledge translation guidance to the six research teams to ensure their research findings are of greatest benefit to our communities' health and wellbeing.

### **SA Health Child and Maternity Continuity of Care Protocols Program**

We worked with SA Health to contribute to the co-design of an implementation strategy for the Child and Maternity Continuity of Care Protocols Program. The aim of this project is to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal children aged 0–4 years, and of mothers of Aboriginal babies, by improving the performance of the South Australian health system and focusing on continuity of care. Lowitja Consulting's main contributions to this project include representation and leadership within relevant working groups, as well as providing expert advice in relation to Indigenous Data Sovereignty and the approach to testing.

### **SA Education – Aboriginal Governance Analysis**

Lowitja Consulting worked with the SA Department for Education to conduct a review of the Aboriginal governance arrangement over the SA Aboriginal Education Strategy. This saw Lowitja engaging with representatives from across the Department as well as members of the external Aboriginal advisory Committee to understand the effectiveness and adequacy of the Aboriginal governance arrangements over the strategy.

## Referendum on a Voice

During 2023, Lowitja Institute supported the establishment of a constitutionally enshrined federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, as described in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, as well as full implementation of the Uluru Statement: Voice, Treaty, Truth. We also encouraged states and territories to implement the Uluru Statement in their jurisdictions.

In the lead-up to the 14 October Referendum on changing the Australian Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, Lowitja Institute publicly endorsed the 'Yes' campaign. Our leaders and staff collaborated with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled and broader health sectors to promote the potential benefits of a Yes vote, which aligned with Lowitja Institute's principles and priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health, wellbeing, and human rights.

Highlights of this work included:

- **Reports:** We published two position papers: one which made the case for why the Voice proposal aligned with our principles and priorities, and the other presenting a quantitative evidence base regarding the financial savings that could be achieved if government expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific initiatives was more effective.
- **Webinars:** Lowitja Institute hosted an online event, 'Why a Voice matters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health', featuring the expert insights of Pat Anderson AO, Dr Mark Wenitong, Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, Selwyn Button, and Tarneen Onus Browne. Adjunct Professor Mohamed also featured as a panellist in a CroakeyLIVE webinar on #VoiceForHealth.
- **Media engagement:** Our leadership engaged with media outlets including major newspapers, prime-time television and radio broadcasts. Adjunct Professor Mohamed appeared in a Yes campaign video directed by Warwick Thornton, Paul Stewart appeared on ABC News and ABC Radio to speak about the Voice and health equity, and Selwyn Button spoke to national and regional outlets following the release of our report *Better Outcomes and Value for Money with a Seat at the Table*.
- **Sector support:** We supported the First Nations Referendum Engagement Group, helping to ensure community voices were heard. Lowitja Institute representatives also worked to galvanise support for a Yes vote through attendance at campaign launches, rallies, media conferences, and concerts. We joined 125 leading health and medical organisations to sign an open Letter to the Australian public, explaining how a Voice to Parliament would improve health outcomes.
- **Resources:** We created and shared resources containing information about the Referendum as well as guidance to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' social and emotional wellbeing.



Lowitja Institute staff Deb Edwards (left) and Sonia Waters met up with our co-patron Pat Anderson AO on Kurna Country in Adelaide, at the announcement of the Referendum.



Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed joined Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on stage during the Now & Forever concert held on Yorta Yorta Woka Country, Shepparton.



Lowitja Institute's Deborah Edwards and Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed joined Hon Linda Burney MP at the Yes campaign rally for South Australian health workers held on Kaurna Country, Adelaide.

*The three proposed reforms – Voice, Treaty, Truth – are well-considered solutions to the inequality and disadvantage caused by colonisation in this country. More importantly, they are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander solutions.*

*To see real improvements in outcomes, our peoples need to be at the centre of decision-making. Government at its highest levels needs to hear our voices, understand our priorities and take our advice.*

– Selwyn Button, Lowitja Institute Chairperson



# Communications overview

**6,407**

**mentions** in regional, national and international media



**250**  
published

media, interviews, articles and opinion editorials

**23**



**formal presentations,** including keynote speeches and conference presentations



**Supported the First Nations Referendum Engagement Group** on communications and policy work in the lead up to the **referendum** on an **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice**

Website attracted

**145,148**  
sessions

**91,000 total new users** at an average of **91% new users** of all users



**11** editions of **The Doris eBulletin** distributed fortnightly

**7.7% increase in subscribers**



**11**

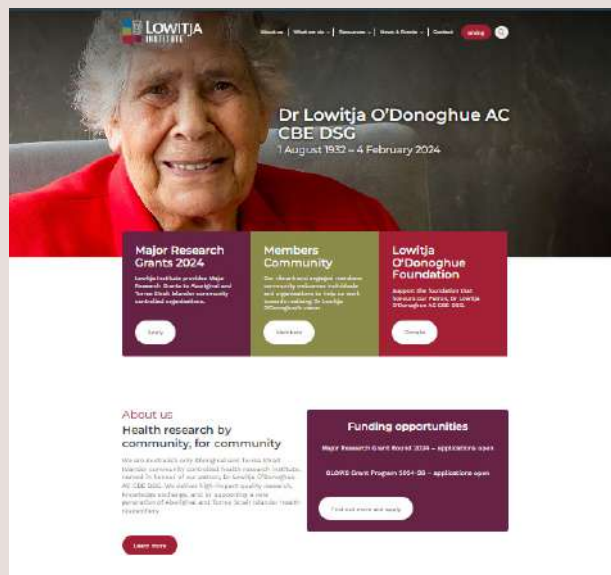
media releases

	OUTREACH	INTERACTIONS	POSTS	FOLLOWERS
<b>LinkedIn</b>		15,793	173	9,669
<b>Facebook</b>		4,102	242	2,787
<b>Instagram</b>		8,025	170	2,959
<b>X</b>		9,542	448	16,272

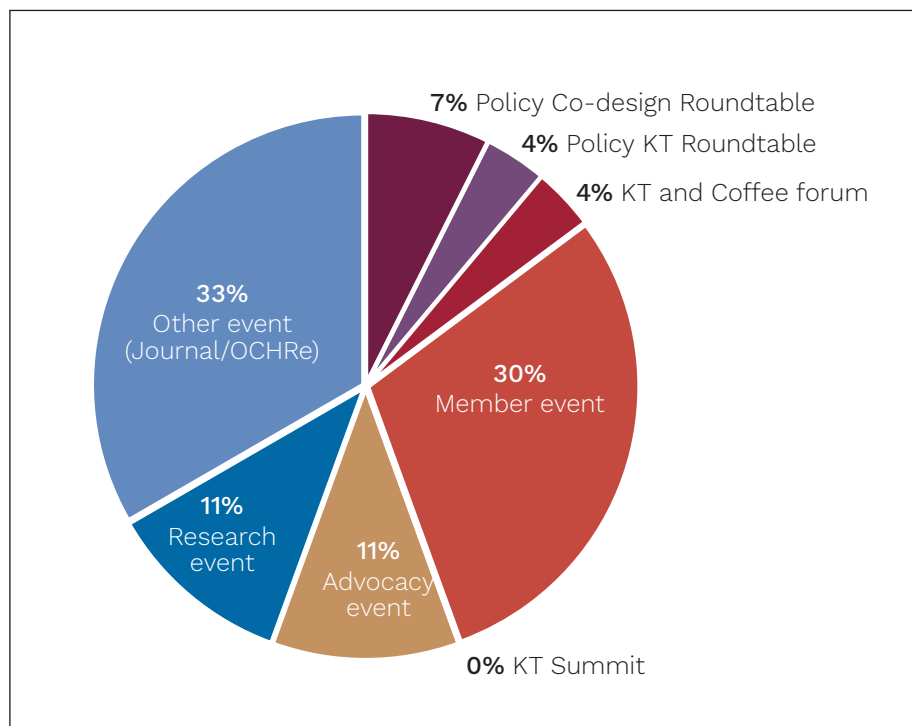
## Lowitja Institute website

In the past year our website attracted **145,148** sessions and **91,000** total new users at an average of **91%** new users of all users. High engagement was reported in the months of August to October 2023 (Referendum), and February to March 2024 (Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue’s passing).

An improved and updated Lowitja Institute website was launched in mid-December 2023 that includes the Lowitja O’Donoghue Foundation. The site highlights research grant, membership and donation opportunities, and showcases our work in policy, advocacy and research with past and present projects and publications, as well as the latest news and events.



## Lowitja Institute events per type: 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024



## Media outreach

We engage with the media through media releases that can shape the narrative about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and health research, inviting the media into deeper engagement with us.

### Here is a selection of this work and the media coverage achieved over 2023–24:

‘Lowitja Institute calls on Australians to vote ‘Yes’ to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice’ 30 August 2023

‘Governments’ inadequate commitment to their Closing the Gap responsibilities is holding back progress’ 27 July 2023

‘Lowitja Institute supports the Statement for our People and Country in response to 14 October Referendum’ 22 October 2023

‘Congratulations to Lowitja Institute CEO named 2024 Australian of the Year for Victoria’ 15 November 2023

‘Urgent call on the Australian Government to commit to a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health’ 29 January 2024

‘Honouring the legacy of Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG’ 4 February 2024

‘Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed steps down as Lowitja Institute CEO’ 29 February 2024

‘Lowitja Institute calls on governments to hasten action to close the gap’ 20 March 2024

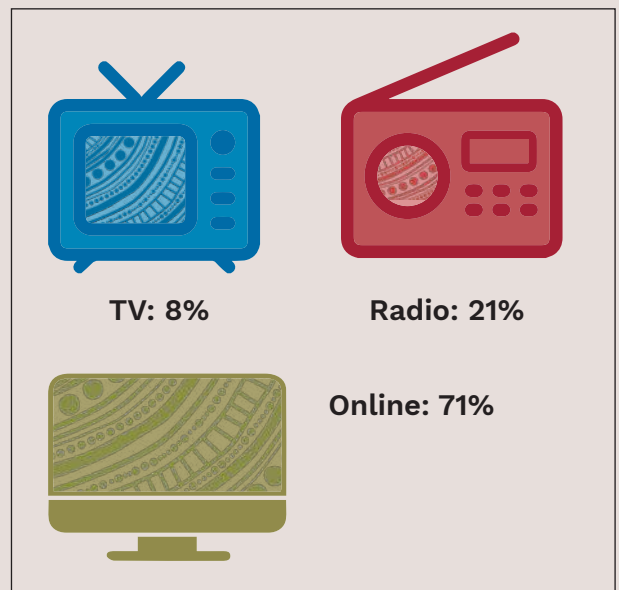
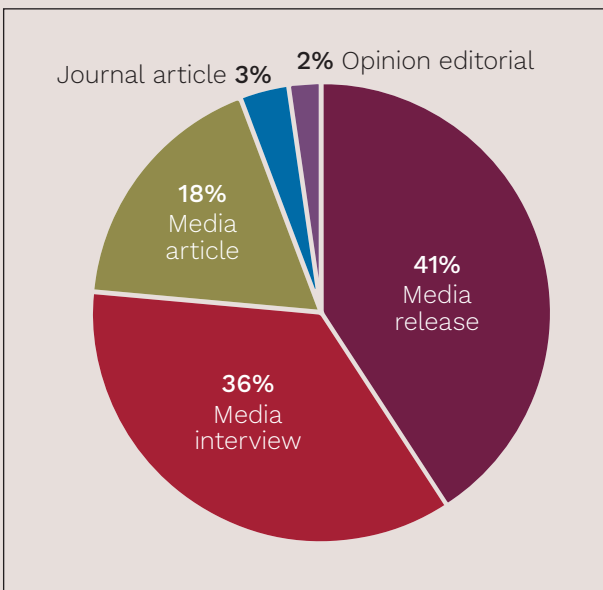
‘Ongoing support for the Lowitja O’Donoghue Foundation’ 20 March 2024

‘Lowitja Institute welcomes Paul Stewart as new chief executive officer’ 28 May 2024



Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed winning Victorian Australian of the Year, Australian of the Year Awards 2024, 8 January 2024.

### Category of media: July 2023 – June 2024



## Media articles and interviews

Our 250 instances of media engagement, which extend across different mediums, translates into articles that we initiate, are invited to write, or we are quoted within, as well as media interviews. Of these 250 media items, 41 per cent were articles in response to our media release and 36 per cent included interviews with our media spokespeople. We also produced five articles in peer-reviewed journals, and three opinion editorial pieces. A large majority of our media coverage was generated from the Voice campaign and at the time of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's passing as there was an outpouring of tributes and media coverage for our co-patron. Lowitja Institute also received 6,407 mentions across all national, regional and international media outlets.

Examples include:





- Panel discussing the Referendum's impact on the mental health of First nations people, featuring Selwyn Button, ABC TV *The Drum*, 25 September 2023
- 'Australia spends less on Indigenous affairs than you think: study', *Australian Financial Review*, quotes Selwyn Button, 28 September 2023
- 'The Voice, an opportunity to transform colonial narratives and support cultural determinants of health', Croakey Health Media, featuring Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, 6 October 2023
- 'Birthing on country success stories prove how important it is for Aboriginal mothers to have a voice', Op Ed, Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, *The Guardian*, 10 October 2023
- 'Medical experts and Indigenous health organisations unite behind Yes vote', quotes Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, *National Indigenous Times*, 11 October 2023
- 'How would the Voice make a difference for health? Let us count the ways' quotes Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, Croakey Health Media, 11 October 2023
- 'Post-referendum: The Government and First Nations leaders seek a new path to address Indigenous disadvantage prime minister', featuring Selwyn Button, ABC TV *The Drum*, 16 October 2023
- Indigenous healthcare pioneer Janine Mohamed takes out top honour as Victoria's 2024 Australian of the Year', ABC News, 14 November 2023
- 'Aboriginal health has driven Janine for decades. Now she's received one of the country's highest honours', quotes Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, SBS NITV, 17 November 2023
- 'The National Health and Climate Strategy could be transformational, if these concerns are addressed', quotes Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, Croakey Health Media, 7 December 2023
- 'Calls for Australian Government to support Indigenous Climate and Health alliance', quotes Selwyn Button, National Indigenous Times, 30 January 2024
- 'A reformer who carried torch for all', opinion editorial Professor Marcia Langton, *The Australian*, 5 February 2024
- 'Under Lowitja O'Donoghue, our greatest leader of the modern era, Indigenous affairs made real progress', opinion editorial Noel Pearson, *The Guardian*, 5 February 2024
- 'Lowitja Institute urges governments to hasten action to Close the Gap' quotes Selwyn Button, *National Indigenous Times*, 20 March 2024


Lowitja Institute received 6,407 mentions across all national, regional and international media outlets

## Social media

Our social media presence across the past year has increased extensively, with particularly notable spikes recorded during the final weeks of referendum for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, former Lowitja Institute CEO, Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed winning the Victorian of the Year Award and being nominated for Australian of the Year, and following the passing of our patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG.


Our engaged online community has increased across all platforms, with **9,669 LinkedIn** followers (a 78.8% increase on last year), in addition to, **2,959 Instagram** followers (19.7% increase), **2,787 Facebook** followers (7.3% increase) and **16,272 followers** (1% increase).

	OUTREACH	FOLLOWERS	% INCREASE FROM LAST YEAR
	LinkedIn	9,669	78.8%
	Instagram	2,959	69.9%
	Facebook	2,787	7.3%
	X	16,272	1%



*Let's walk together, work together, we'll be stronger together: The need for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health*

Position paper  
November 2023




Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and living in **South Australia or Victoria?** 

We would like to hear your voices on your experiences of climate change and how it has impacted on your community.

Join our virtual roundtables on **Friday 4 August 2023**  Register via EventBrite



#voteYES

**LOWITJA INSTITUTE SUPPORTS THE VOICE**




**KT & Coffee Webinar Series**

Community-led Knowledge Translation

**22 November 2023**  
11am – 12:30pm (AEDT)

Hosted by **Felicity Collis** in discussion with expert panellists






Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy    Father Leslie Baird    Professor Jack Beelson    Aunty Eunice Yu



## Sponsored events

In addition to sponsoring awards, Lowitja Institute has sponsored a range of both national and international events. We are often directly involved at these events as keynote speakers, session presenters and/or having stalls in the 'marketplace' to share and promote our work and resources.

- Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Conference
- NAATSIHWP Professional Development Symposium
- NACCHO
- IAHA
- CATSINaM
- AIDA
- Gladys Elphick Awards
- Gynburra Festival
- AH&MRC Indigenous Health Summit
- World Indigenous Cancer Conference
- AIATSIS Summit



AIATSIS Summit, June 2024: (from left) Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart, Lowitja Institute Board member Suzanne Andrews, Social Justice Commissioner Kate Kiss, and Ambassador for First Nations People Justin Mohamed.



Lowitja Institute staff Jo Cackett and Krystal McGregor at the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association 2023 Conference on Nipaluna Country, Hobart.



Congratulations to Wardliparingga Research Fellow Dr Tina Brodie for winning the Indigenous Research Award (sponsored by Lowitja Institute) at the 2023 IAHA National Conference. Tina (pictured right) was presented the award by our Board member Suzanne Andrews.



Lowitja Institute staff at the NACCHO Members Conference in Perth in October 2023: (from left) Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, Emma Donegan, and Felicity Collis.



Lowitja Institute's Belinda Griffiths at our booth during the NAATSIHWP Professional Development Symposium on Kaurra Country, Adelaide.



Lowitja Institute staff Belinda Griffiths and Sonia Waters attending the January 2024 Gynburra Festival on Narungga Country at Point Pearce on the Yorke Peninsula, South Australia.

## Speeches and presentations

Delivery of keynote speeches and other presentations is a crucial element to Lowitja Institute's public-facing activity. Our leadership have presented on a diverse range of topics and in various contexts over the past year. Highlights from the total 23 presentations include the following events:

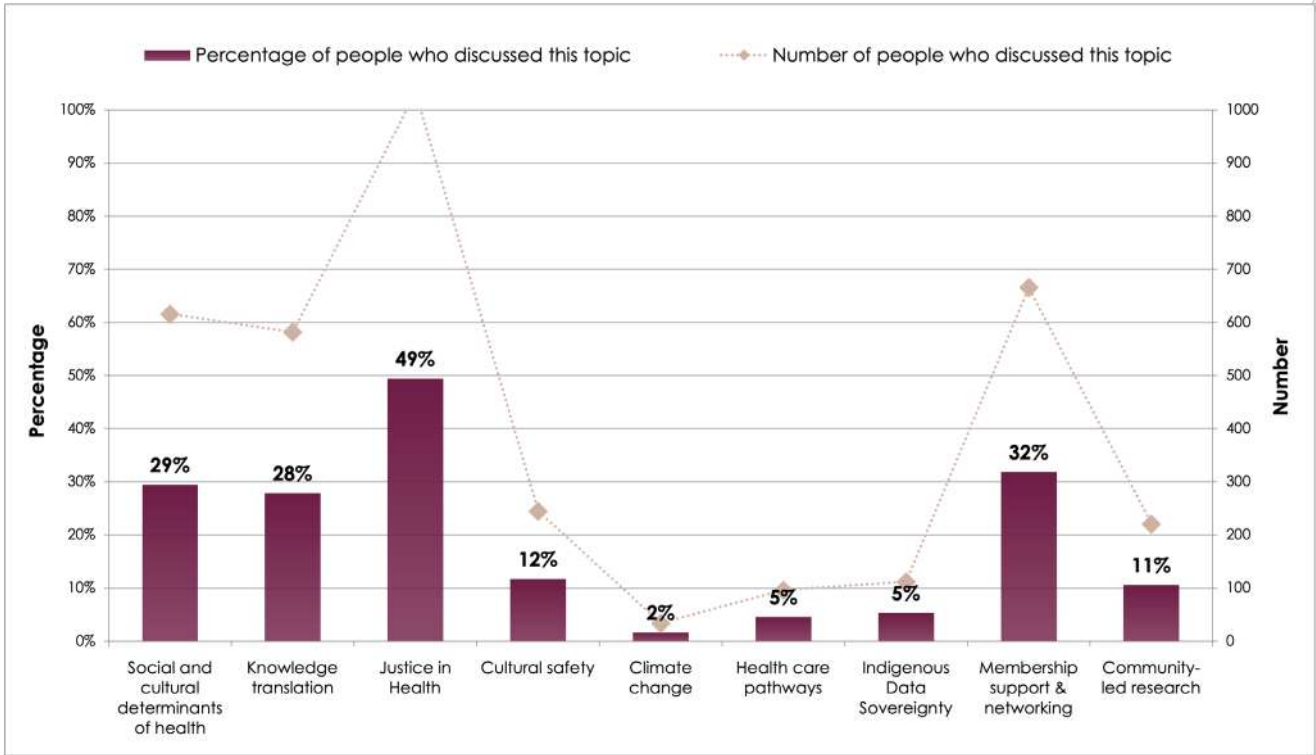
- Indigenous Peoples Conference – HIV and Hepatitis Health Equity (July 2023)
- Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia Annual Conference presentation: 'I've got nerves and I suffer from racism – on the subject of Surviving and Thriving' (August 2023)
- ANU Planetary Health Equity Hothouse presentation: Extension thwarted? The nexus between change, social equity and health (September 2023)
- Beyond Undetectable Symposium (October 2023)
- Ignite APA Conference – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health plenary (October 2023)
- Transforming Australian, First Nations and Pacific Islands health responses to climate change through action at the nexus of research, policy, and partnerships, COP28 (December 2023)
- Climate Change and First Nations Health, COP28 (December 2023)
- Empowering communities for wellbeing and disaster resilience, Monash University at COP28 (December 2023)
- International Women's Day Breakfast 2024 plenary – 'Facing Uncomfortable Truths', hosted by The Royal Women's Hospital (March 2024)
- AH&MRC Indigenous Health Summit panel: Tackling the Climate Crisis with Indigenous Knowledge – Making Australia more resilient to the climate crisis by prioritising cultural knowledge and understanding (March 2024)



Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed addresses the International Women's Day Breakfast hosted by The Royal Women's Hospital in March 2024.



Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed gave a keynote speech at the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia Annual Conference.



Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed spoke about meaningful translation of First Nations research at the Beyond Undetectable Symposium.



Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart ABC interview on the Voice and health outcomes.

# Governance and financial review

## Lowitja Institute Board

As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation, Lowitja Institute has an all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board.

### Chairperson



**Mr Selwyn Button**, is an experienced senior executive who has led large health, education and governance organisations across the government, private, and not-for-profit sectors.

Currently Selwyn is a partner at PwC Indigenous Consulting (PIC), Chairperson of Lowitja Institute, and a committed member of numerous boards including the Australia Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, and Queensland Rugby.

A Gunggari man from south-west Queensland, Selwyn was raised in Cherbourg and for many years has led policy, service delivery and legislative reforms to support improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Prior to his PwC role, Selwyn was the first ever Indigenous person

to hold the role of national Registrar, Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, in which he regulated and supported more than 3,000 organisations, the top 500 of which generate around \$2 billion annually.

He has also served as Assistant Director-General for Indigenous Education in Queensland and chief executive officer of the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council. Selwyn is a former primary school teacher and Queensland police officer who holds a Master of Public Administration and a Bachelor of Education.

Selwyn was a Wolfensohn Scholar at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and is an active member of the Harvard Club of Australia.

As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation, Lowitja Institute has an all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board.

## Directors



### Mr Craig Ritchie

An Aboriginal man of the Dhunghutti and Biripi nations, Craig is an independent advisor and researcher, and until August 2023 was the Chief Executive Officer at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).



### Dr Suzanne Andrews

An Aboriginal woman from the Jaru, Bunuba people of Western Australia's North Kimberley region, Suzanne is Chief Executive of Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service.



### Ms Deb Butler

A Jawoyn woman, born and raised in Katherine Northern Territory (NT), Deb is the Acting Executive Director Strategic Services at the Northern Territory Department of Families, Housing and Communities.



### Ms Jahna Cedar OAM

A Nyiyaparli woman from the Pilbara region of Western Australia, and current Executive Director at IPS Management Consultants, Jahna has worked for over 20 years advocating for equal rights and reconciliation of Indigenous people and has represented Indigenous Australia at the UN in New York on three occasions.



### Mr Dallas Leon

A Kalkadoon and Waanyi man, Dallas has worked in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander field for over 20 years. He has held a number of roles across government and non-government, including working as an Aboriginal health worker, a senior health manager, and on various state-based and national projects.



### Ms June Oscar AO

A Bunuba woman from Fitzroy Crossing and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner (2017–24).

*End of term  
14 December 2023*



### Mr Robert Skeen

Robert has traditional ties to the Gubbi Gubbi of the Queensland Sunshine Coast, Mununjarli of South East Queensland, and Waanyi of North West Queensland, and is the General Manager of Health Reforms at Queensland Aboriginal & Islander Health Council (QAIHC).

*Resigned 6 December 2023*

# Strategic Plan: 2024–27

Our strategic plan drives our work to uphold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research and knowledge translation, and to build capabilities in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. Through this, we are also committed to investing in a strong and sustainable future as a national community controlled organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

## **PRIORITY 1**

**INVEST IN BEST PRACTICE  
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES  
STRAIT ISLANDER-LED  
AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN  
RESEARCH**

### *OBJECTIVE 1*

To increase best practice Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and community-driven research that reflects the priority needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## **PRIORITY 2**

**ENGAGE IN AND  
FACILITATE KNOWLEDGE  
TRANSLATION FOR  
POSITIVE IMPACT**

### *OBJECTIVE 2*

To improve our knowledge translation impact across health policy and practice.

## **PRIORITY 3**

**SUPPORT A GROWING AND  
CAPABLE ABORIGINAL  
AND TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER HEALTH  
RESEARCH WORKFORCE**

### *OBJECTIVE 3a*

To enhance the capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.

### *OBJECTIVE 3b*

To enhance the knowledge and skills of non-Indigenous people in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce.

## **PRIORITY 4**

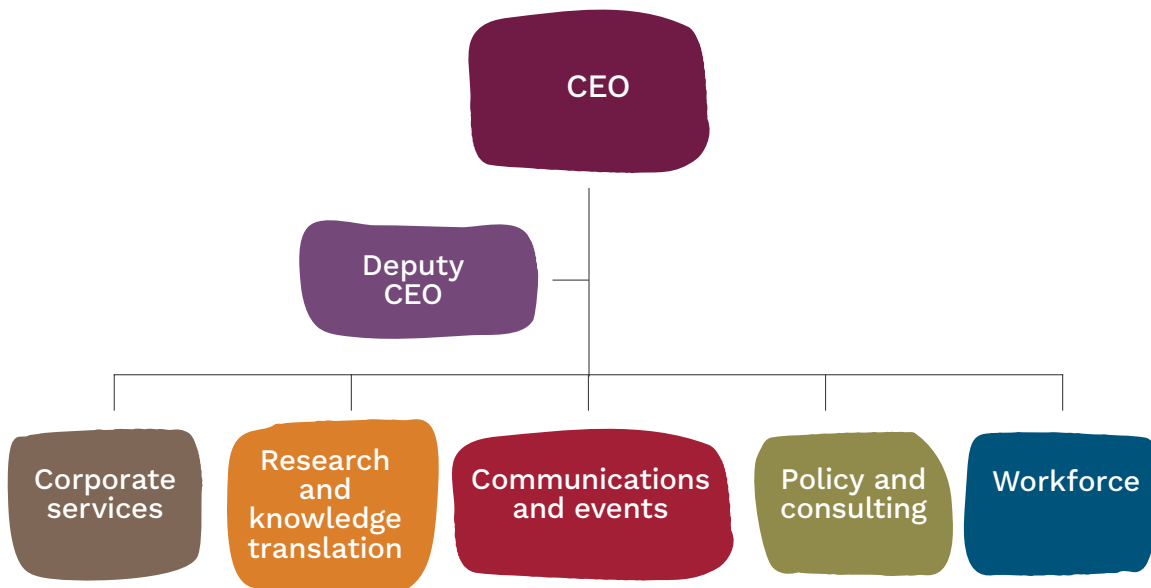
**CREATE A STRONG AND  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

### *OBJECTIVE 4*

To create a perpetual funding base for Lowitja Institute.

## LOWITJA INSTITUTE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Our organisational structure has continued to work well in supporting the broad range of work we undertake across our five priorities.



# Annual report for financial year ended 30 June 2024

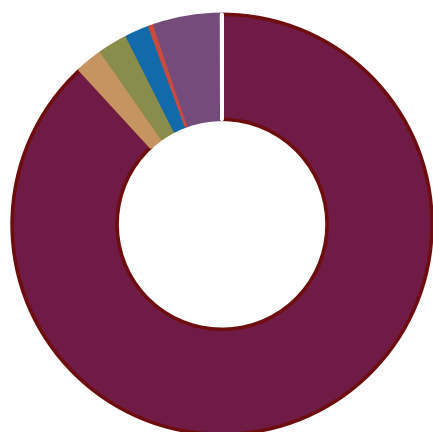
Lowitja Institute completed the 2023–24 financial year with a \$907,635 surplus compared to \$474,419 for the previous year. Sixty-one per cent of the result in connection with income from Lowitja Institute's consultancy division, 16% due to Lowitja Institute's Commercial division with the balance from donations and investments. All other income reported has been contracted and matched against expenditure in line with applicable revenue recognition standards.

## Income

Totalled \$9.47m

\$7.34m funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care to support the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples through high impact quality research and knowledge translation. \$1.1m funded by other Commonwealth and state government departments with the balance from philanthropic, external organisations, consulting, donations and interest income.

Lowitja Institute 2023–24 Income

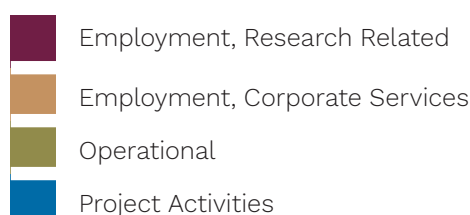
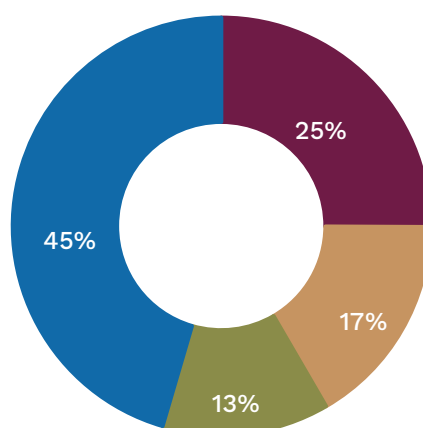


## Expenditure

Totalled \$8.57m

Research related activities represented 71 per cent of expenditure and Corporate Services 29 per cent. Project activity expenditure totalled \$3.89m, \$1.89m directly related to Research Project Grants, Seeding Grants and Scholarships, with the remaining across projects to progress the Lowitja Institute's research agenda. \$3.56m was spent on human capital and operational expenditure was \$1.10m.

Lowitja Institute 2023–24 Expenditure





## ASSETS

**Totalled \$9.4m**

Cash and cash equivalents of \$8.6m, trade and other receivables \$0.53m, \$0.26m non-current assets, which includes fixed and right-of-use assets.

## LIABILITIES

**Totalled \$7.02m**

Income held in advance \$5.55m, trade and other current liabilities \$1.02m, employee entitlement provisions \$0.31m and lease liability of \$0.13m in connection with Lowitja Institute's leased premises.

### Financial Position at 30 June 2024

