



2025 Annual Report

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Cover photo: Ngalea, Kokatha, Ngadjuri, and Narungga young woman Jakirah Waruyu Telfer performing a Greeting to Spirit of Place.
Dream Time Imaging.

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



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.

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Our patrons



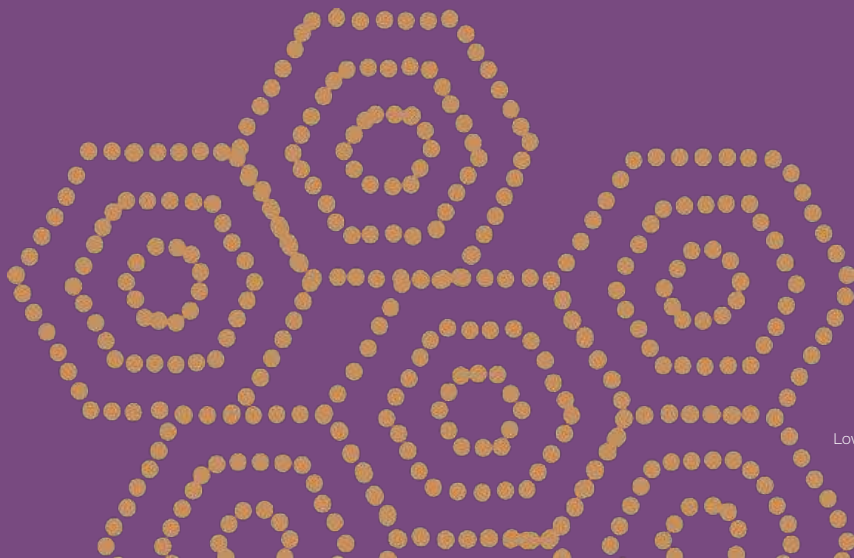
Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG

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 is known nationally and internationally as a powerful advocate for the rights, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Pat Anderson grew up in Parap Camp, a community on the outskirts of Darwin that was home to many other Aboriginal families. Pat has led national and international efforts to achieve justice for First Nations people as well as key health organisations including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory.

With an extensive career spanning community development, service delivery, policy formation, and research ethics, Pat was instrumental in the founding and development of Lowitja Institute. She was its chair for almost two decades, and is now Co-Patron, alongside our namesake, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue.

Pat Anderson was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2014 for distinguished service to the Indigenous community as a social justice advocate, particularly through promoting improved health, and educational and protection outcomes for children. She co-chaired the inquiry which resulted in the 2007 *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle: Little Children are Sacred* report on the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse.

Pat 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, Pat co-chaired the Uluru Dialogues that led to the Constitutional Convention, and the issuing of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* in 2017. In November 2022, Pat with Professor Megan Davis and Noel Pearson accepted the 2021-22 Sydney Peace Prize on behalf of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

Pat Anderson was honoured with a NAIDOC Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018, recognising a lifetime of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social justice advocacy.



Craig Ritchie
Chairperson,
Lowitja Institute

Chairperson's message

Wayikarr marrung

It is a profound honour to serve as Chairperson of Lowitja Institute, carrying forward the extraordinary legacy of our co-patrons the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG and Pat Anderson AO. Both women have shown us the path forward – Pat Anderson reminding us that she has 'dedicated [her] life to creating and nurturing understanding, compassion and honesty between people – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – and there is much still to be done.'¹ I want to also acknowledge Selwyn Button's steady leadership over recent years and congratulate him on his appointment as commissioner at the Productivity Commission.

This year has brought welcome additions to our governance. In December, the Board appointed Jahna Cedar OAM, a Nyiyaparli woman from the Pilbara region of Western Australia, as Deputy Chairperson and welcomed Michael Graham, a proud Dja Dja Wurrung and Wiradjuri man, as Director. We were further strengthened in May 2025 when Donisha Duff OAM joined our Board. Donisha descends from the Moa and Badu Islands in Torres Strait, and the Yadhagana and Wuthathi peoples of Cape York, Queensland.

Working closely with Chief Executive Officer Paul Stewart, we've made significant strides in keeping our people at the centre of health research whilst strengthening community organisations' vital role. This second year of our Strategic Plan 2024–27 has seen remarkable growth – we've expanded our research agenda, translated community-led

research into policy and practice, and continued building our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce. Importantly, we've done this whilst securing the governance foundations that will sustain us as a community controlled organisation well into the future.

Our expanding membership has enabled us to lead national and international conversations on climate and health, research ethics, co-design processes and cultural safety. As Pat Anderson has articulated: 'We need real change, because we, First Peoples, have something unique to offer this country. Our peoples have been here 65,000 years or more. Over these immeasurable periods we have developed a profound wisdom about this land and about what it means practically and spiritually to live here.'² Following the federal election, we were pleased to receive continued support from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

New partnerships have broadened our reach and strengthened our sustainability. As this Annual Report demonstrates, we've extended our influence as a national organisation through strategic consulting projects and collaborations, both here and internationally.

Everything we do honours our Co-Patron and namesake, Dr O'Donoghue – a Yankunytjatjara woman whose leadership transformed Australian society. Her words to the United Nations General Assembly in 1992 continue to guide our mission: 'We do not wish to conquer or oppress. Nor indeed do we wish to retaliate for two centuries of injustice. Rather we seek to create a new partnership based upon understanding, cooperation and goodwill. The past cannot be changed; our future is in our hands. We will empower ourselves.'³

Our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025 on Kurna Country, Adelaide, exemplified this spirit. Bringing together researchers, community representatives and health practitioners under the theme 'Strong, Fearless, Together', this three-day gathering showed what becomes possible when we share knowledge and expertise grounded in our ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Whilst we gather as a full community only every two years, Lowitja Institute's mission continues daily through our dedicated members and partners. On behalf of the Board, I extend heartfelt thanks to each of you.

I'm particularly grateful to our management team and staff who embody Dr O'Donoghue's courage in their work. Their commitment to achieving tangible outcomes advances our mission of social justice and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our work responds directly to Dr O'Donoghue's call to forge a more prosperous future. As we honour her remarkable legacy and continue the work Pat Anderson champions, I look forward with optimism to the year ahead as we continue to stand Strong, Fearless, Together.

Marrungbu

1. Anderson, P. (2021). "Because of her, we can – Pat Anderson." Reconciliation Australia. Available at: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/because-of-her-we-can-pat-anderson/> [Accessed 2025]
2. Ibid.
3. O'Donoghue, L. (1992). Address at the International Launch of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, United Nations General Assembly, New York, December 1992. In: Speeches from the Papers of Lowitja O'Donoghue, National Library of Australia. Available at: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3396359105> [Digitised collection available at: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-768368352>]



We need real change, because we, First Peoples, have something unique to offer this country.

– Pat Anderson, Lowitja Institute Co-Patron



Paul Stewart
CEO,
Lowitja Institute

Chief executive officer's message

As I review this year's Annual Report, I'm once again struck by the positive impacts Lowitja Institute continues to have on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This report's graphs and tables show more than just numbers – many represent powerful examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and excellence. Each of Lowitja Institute's funding grants and scholarships awarded to individuals, organisations or communities results in more grassroots stories of genuine and valuable outcomes.

Our participation in national committees, government consultations and reference groups is likewise driven by the promise to the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, our namesake and co-patron, to work with governments and guide effective decision-making 'in a way that is true to our cultures and that will therefore have the right outcomes'.

Dr O'Donoghue was a trailblazing Yankunytjatjara woman whose influence across health, politics and Indigenous advocacy was immense. In commemoration of Dr O'Donoghue's lifetime of achievements, the exhibition, LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy, opened on Kurna Country, Adelaide, in June 2025. The Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation received an incredible response to the exhibition, which was attended by more than 3,000 people during its seven-week run.

Coinciding with the LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy exhibition, we hosted the 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025 on Kurna Country, at the Adelaide Convention Centre in June. The theme, 'Strong, Fearless, Together', honoured Dr O'Donoghue's legacy. The three-day biennial event welcomed more than 1,300 attendees, featured over 230 presentations and included nearly 100 international representatives. Not only is it the largest Indigenous health and wellbeing conference in the Southern Hemisphere, but the overwhelmingly positive response to this year's event suggests it's also among the most significant on the global calendar. We look forward to reconvening for the 5th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference in 2027.

In December 2024, we welcomed Craig Ritchie as chairperson of Lowitja Institute's Board of Directors. A Dhunghutti man with connections to the Biripi and Gringai nations, Craig is an independent advisor and researcher who previously served as CEO of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). I acknowledge the enormous contribution of outgoing chair, Selwyn Button, a Gungarri man from south-west Queensland, who served on the Lowitja Institute Board from July 2013 and chaired for three years.

I'm equally appreciative of our team at Lowitja Institute, who work hard in supporting health research that is led by our people, for our people. In 2024–25, we funded nine Major Grants overseen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations. On an individual level,

we awarded three Lowitja Institute Health and Wellbeing Scholarships, and 19 Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation Nursing Scholarships, including one Enrolled Nursing Scholarship. Our Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice was completed by nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

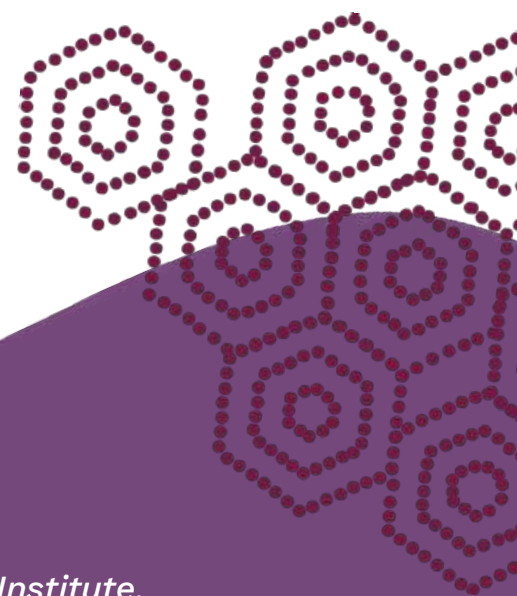
First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal, Lowitja Institute's international academic journal, has flourished this year. During 2024–25, 35 published articles from Indigenous academics around the globe were published across Volume Two (2024) and Volume Three (2025). This financial year has also seen Lowitja Institute publish three discussion papers, three position papers and two research reports.

I'm incredibly proud of what Lowitja Institute has achieved in 2024–25 and would like to express gratitude to all our members. Thank you for working with us, walking with us or taking an interest in the Institute's impact in advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.

ngun-godjin



I'm equally appreciative of our team at Lowitja Institute, who work hard in supporting health research that is led by our people, for our people. – Paul Stewart, CEO, Lowitja Institute



2024-25

This year's highlights

3 discussion papers and 3 position papers published

46% membership increase

375 
Lowitja Institute
new members

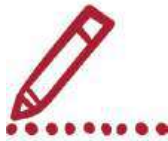
2 members' networking events in total
88 participants

10 submissions to national and state level government inquiries and consultation processes

1 member-informed capability seminars, in total **35** participants



First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal published



35 journal articles

26 scholarships awarded



(including 18 Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation Nursing Scholarships)

720 total workforce development tools distributed, across **3** products



We contribute regularly to the work of **11 national committees, reference or advisory groups** focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy

Lowitja Institute:

- **12 events** – member events, Knowledge Translation (KT) webinars, *The Lowitja Journal* webinars, and roundtables
- sits on **4** national or state research project reference groups
- staff are **members of 3 Boards** in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- member of **12 national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coalitions**

Lowitja Institute policy and advocacy work participated in **15** different consultation sessions with external stakeholders

8 had **DIRECT** and **7** had **POTENTIAL** influence on national level policy



90 people enrolled in online learning courses

400+ downloads of workforce development tools

2 research papers published

9 major research grants awarded

9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students successfully completed our **Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice**

13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PhD scholars awarded grants

to attend a **PhD Masterclass** and the Lowitja Institute conference on Kaurna Country, Adelaide, funded by OWL Hub, OCHRe Network

107 online learning bursaries provided to our members

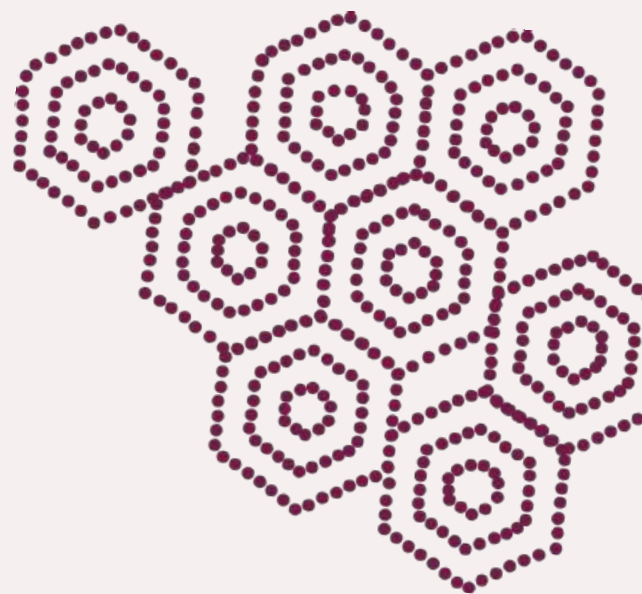


1 Knowledge Translation Roundtable



“ Our work responds directly to Dr O'Donoghue's call to forge a more prosperous future.

Craig Ritchie, Chairperson, Lowitja Institute



Our research program

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 controlled 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.

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.

Major Research Grant Round 2024

Nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations were announced as the recipients of Major Research Grant funding in December 2024.

This grant opportunity specifically supports innovative and responsive community research led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations to improve the health and wellbeing of our mobs.

As part of our commitment to Knowledge Translation, an additional \$20,000 grant is offered to all recipients of Lowitja Institute's Major Research Grant within 12 months of the commencement date, to support organisations to deliver on their vision and aspirations in relation to research impact. This grant assists in getting the right message to the right audience, to achieve impact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The following nine organisations were awarded a 2024 Major Research Grant:

ORGANISATION	PROJECT TITLE
First Nations Eye Health Alliance	Ngaaminya Project: A First Nations-led project mapping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community expectations of good eye health for children
Gorenang Moortabiin Aboriginal Engagement and Community Development (Aboriginal Corporation)	Maaman Waankiny Wur Walbriny (Men Talking and Healing)
Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service (IAMS)	Evaluating the pilot Healthy Deadly Kids Program designed by the IAMS
Kalwun Development Corporation	Actioning Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consent and data sharing priorities to guide community controlled health service best practice
Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation	Prevention, early detection and management of iron deficiency in children under 5 years at an ACCHO in Far-West NSW
National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC)	Understanding and Resisting School Exclusion through the Education Justice Lab
South Australian Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation	Exploring the health and wellbeing needs of Stolen Generations and their descendants in South Australia
Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA)	Understanding how Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs) are enacting new statutory authority in child welfare decision making: An initial process evaluation of the Community Protecting Boorais Program
Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation	Mob caring for Mob: Establishing educational pathways to midwifery for Aboriginal women to support the upscaling of Birthing on Country services

Historically, research has been done on us and not by us, so we fund community controlled organisations to do research that's important to them. All our research projects are 100 per cent funded for the Aboriginal community controlled sector, and all are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. – Paul Stewart, CEO, Lowitja Institute



Above and below: Kalwun Development Corporation received a 2024 Major Research Grant to help support its Indigenous Data Sovereignty project.



Wagga Wagga-based Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation received a 2022 Major Research Grant for its Yalbilinya miya (learn together) breastfeeding program.

Supporting grant recipients

On 3 April, our Research and Knowledge Translation team hosted an Ethics Requirements webinar that was targeted at supporting organisational recipients in our 2024 Major Research Grants Round. The webinar included an overview of ethical requirements for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; ethics requirements, timeframes and processes specifically relating to the Major Research Grant funding ethics milestone; and tips for developing comprehensive ethics applications.



2022 recipients featured in promotional video

Ahead of our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference, we produced a promotional video that showcased the importance of the Major Research Grant program. This production highlighted two of our 2022 recipient organisations: Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation and the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives.



Watch the video <https://www.youtube.com/@LowitjaInstitute/videos>

Seeding Grants 2025

To support the opening of applications for the 2025 Seeding Grant round, we organised two online Q&A sessions to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers considering submitting an application for funding. These free sessions, taking place in July 2025, would provide details of the 2025 round, including information on application opening and closing dates, and support mechanisms.

Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Seeding Grants include two separate funding streams that support all levels of research readiness, from community controlled organisations that have never led research through to experienced researchers partnering with communities to undertake a small research program. The 2025 Seeding Grant round opened for applications in August 2025, across two streams: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Grant and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Seeding Symposium.

GLOWS Research Grants

Lowitja Institute awarded recipients from the first round within the Guiding Local Opportunities for Wellbeing (GLOWS) Grant Program 2024–26. Delivered in partnership with Gilead Sciences, this program aims to further increase health equity, address disparities that continue to drive disease transmission, and work towards elimination of HIV and viral hepatitis in all of our communities.

Large Research Grant

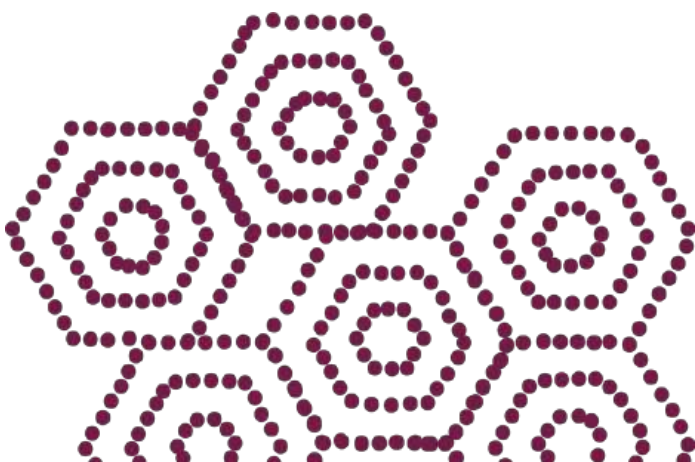
Our first Large Research Grant recipients were the **Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS)** and **University of Queensland** for their project 'Exploring transformative potential of community controlled outreach model to eliminate hepatitis C in south-east Queensland', and the University of Queensland for its project 'System-wide redesign of HIV/viral hepatitis models of care with ACCHOs'.

Medium Research Grant

Our first Medium Research Grant recipient was **Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS)**, an ACCO servicing people in the Yilli Rreung (greater Darwin) region of the Northern Territory. This project, entitled 'Improving the hepatitis B cascade of care in the urban Top End of the Northern Territory', is a partnership between DDHS and **Menzies School of Health Research**. It is founded on strong First Nations leadership and participation. The overall focus of the project is to decrease viral hepatitis-related mortality in First Nations peoples by implementing national strategies and filling important knowledge gaps that currently impede the implementation of these strategies.

National Gathering Grant

The first two recipients of a National Gathering Grant were the **Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)** and the **Anwernekenhe National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIV/AIDS Alliance**, in partnership with **Health Equity Matters**. This two-day gathering was an opportunity to come together and share experiences and knowledge of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with HIV/viral hepatitis and research into HIV/viral hepatitis.



First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal

First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal is Lowitja Institute’s official journal, a publication dedicated to expanding access to First Nations research. All accepted manuscripts must include substantive contributions by First Nations authors and focus on the health and wellbeing of First Nations communities.

Since launching its first volume in 2023, *The Lowitja Journal* has seen strong growth in submissions. In the 2024–25 financial year, 35 articles were published across Volume 2 (2024) and Volume 3 (2025). Accepted articles are published on a rolling basis, with an annual volume compiled at the end of the calendar year.

The Lowitja Journal editorial team expanded in 2024–25, with Professor Waikaremoana Waitoki (University of Waikato) joining Professor Catherine Chamberlain as Co-Editor-In-Chief. The team currently includes six senior editors and 32 associate editors based in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.

To support prospective authors, reviewers and editors, topical quarterly webinars are promoted through Lowitja Institute’s communications channels (see page 55). Recordings are made available on Lowitja Institute’s YouTube channel.

The Lowitja Journal received strong exposure at Lowitja Institute’s 4th International Indigenous

Health and Wellbeing Conference on Kurna Country, Adelaide, in June 2025. A *Lowitja Journal* workshop included an editorial panel discussion, tips for authors, and a Q&A session with the audience.

Volume 3 of *The Lowitja Journal* includes a special section, ‘In solidarity: advancing Indigenous Rights and self-determination to improve health and wellbeing’, aligned with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). Accepted articles focus on successes achieved and challenges faced in the push for self-determination. Based on positive feedback, *The Lowitja Journal*’s future volumes will include further special sections showcasing designated topics.

Most downloaded article

‘Resisting the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: A scoping review to determine the cultural responsiveness of diversion programs’ (Authors: Lorelle Holland, Claudia Lee, Maree Toombs, Andrew Smirnov, and Natasha Reid)



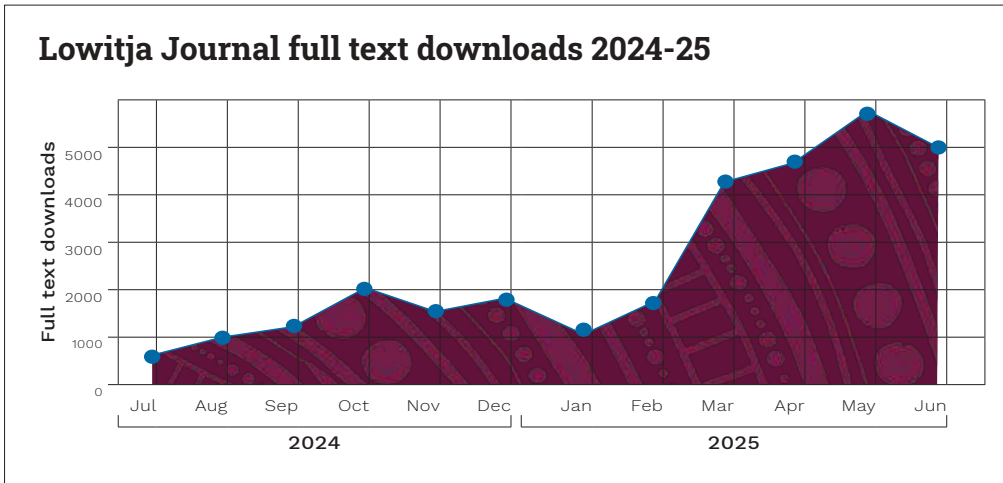
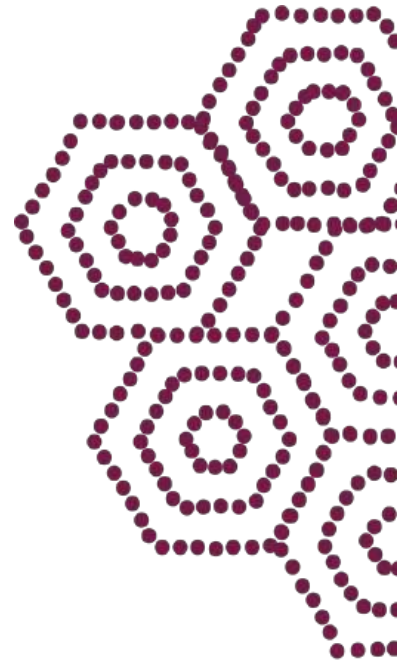
Top five countries for downloads (2024–25)

- Australia
- Aotearoa New Zealand
- United States
- Canada
- United Kingdom

*Content downloaded in over 60 countries



The Lowitja Journal editorial team gathered in-person during our conference on Kurna Country, Adelaide.



Lowitja Journal webinars

The *Lowitja Journal* webinar series resumed in October 2024, when our team hosted the event, 'How to strengthen research involving Indigenous peoples', which attracted 80 participants. This featured **Associate Professor Tania Huria** and **Distinguished Professor Suetonia Green** from the University of Otago. They worked through the CONSIDER statement, a global guideline for strengthening reporting of health research involving Indigenous peoples, and provided examples for how to enact the statement's best practice guidelines in your own research programs.



(L-to-R) Associate Professor Tania Huria and Distinguished Professor Suetonia Green.

Our subsequent February 2025 webinar, 'Building a Strong Foundation: Key Concepts in Statistics and Epidemiology for Early Career Researchers', attracted 26 participants and featured **Dr Sungwon Chang**, Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Biostatistics) and Senior Lecturer, University of Technology Sydney, who explored key statistical concepts in research and their role in health and wellbeing studies.

Our April 16 webinar on 'Ethical publishing practices – why they are needed to advance Indigenous health' attracted 62 participants to hear from **Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy** and **Felicity Collis** (University of Newcastle) with **Associate Professor Raglan Maddox** (Australian National University). They identified and addressed historical and contemporary unethical publishing practices and provided practical steps individual researchers and research teams can make to upholding ethical publishing practices.

Indigenous excellence: research repository

Our Research and Knowledge Translation team identified the need for a research database providing a central hub for access to peer-reviewed research produced by Lowitja Institute-funded projects and scholars. We have been developing 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.

This institutional research repository (supported by the Monash Health Library) – linked from our website – tracks the research outputs of Lowitja Institute employees, funded researchers and scholars, as well as showcases community-led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.



The repository holds information on Lowitja research outputs.



It contains community-led research supported by the Lowitja Institute.



It includes research outputs that either reference publications by the Lowitja Institute or utilise our research tools.



It collects the research publications from Lowitja supported scholars.

4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025: outcomes and impact



4TH INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS HEALTH AND WELLBEING CONFERENCE 2025

16-19 June 2025 | Kurna Country, Adelaide, SA



**STRONG
FEARLESS
TOGETHER**

lowitjaconference.org.au

Ngarrindjeri/Kurna Elder Uncle Moogy Sumner AM provided a Welcome to Country.



Honouring our co-patron, Yankunytjatjara woman, the late Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG, our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference brought mob together from 16–19 June 2025 on Karna Country, Adelaide, South Australia.

More than 1,370 delegates, leaders, researchers and experts in health and wellbeing gathered together from 11 countries, representing all Australian states and territories to share knowledge and come together as Indigenous peoples. The conference provided a platform for 230 presentations including keynote speakers, panels, presentations, and workshops, and displayed 80 research posters. This four-day event provided space for connection to culture and celebrating our strengths in health research.

The theme ‘Strong, Fearless, Together’ was embedded throughout the program with thematic streams of Sovereignty and Self-Determination, Leadership and Workforce, Country and Climate, and Knowledges, Methodologies and Traditions.

Hearing from Indigenous voices throughout the program, there was a strong emphasis on showcasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research, community controlled health innovations, and intergenerational knowledge exchange.



International keynote speakers and panellists included **Distinguished Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith**, globally recognised scholar known for her work on decolonising research; **Professor Sheryl Lightfoot**, international expert in Indigenous rights and global politics; **Professor Rauna Kuokkanen**, researcher on comparative Indigenous politics and law, Indigenous feminism and gender, Arctic governance, and settler colonialism in the Nordic countries; **Hinekaa Mako**, cultural leader and climate strategist from Aotearoa New Zealand, weaving ancestral knowledge into action; and **Mike Smith**, senior climate advisor and advocate from Aotearoa New Zealand involved in landmark climate litigation.



Keynote speakers (L-to-R): Professor Sheryl Lightfoot, Professor Rauna Kuokkanen, and Donnella Mills.

Australian keynote speakers and panellists included Lowitja Institute Co-Patron **Pat Anderson AO**, lifelong advocate for the rights, health, and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; **Professor Ian Anderson**, Indigenous policy and global health reform leader; **The Hon Mark Butler MP**, Minister for Health and Ageing; **Commissioner Selwyn Button**, co-leader of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stream of work at the Productivity Commission; **Joshua Creamer**, barrister specialising in human rights class actions and native title; **Associate Professor Kalinda Griffiths**, epidemiologist and data governance

expert; **Donnella Mills**, legal professional and strong advocate for justice and community controlled health; **Ambassador Justin Mohamed**, Australia's inaugural Ambassador for First Nations People; **Dr Selina Namchee Lo**, global and international health leader; **Francis Nona**, researcher focusing on the health impacts of climate change; **Johnnell Parker** and **Coreen Parker**, community advocates working to protect Country and culture in the Pilbara; **Dr Alicia Veasey**, health systems leader focused on self-determination in healthcare reform; and **Professor Yin Paradies**, researcher and lecturer in race relations at Deakin University.



The Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Ageing.



(L-to-R): Distinguished Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Dr Alicia Veasey, and Professor Yin Paradies on panel discussion – Racism and health.

L-to-R: MC Dan Bouchier, alongside panellists Coreen Parker, Johnnell Parker, Francis Nona, Hinekaa Mako, and Mike Smith on panel discussion – Enhancing resilience to climate change and protecting Country and culture.



|| *As the largest Indigenous health research conference in the Southern Hemisphere, our conference provides an incredible platform for sharing transformational research grounded in our ways of knowing, being, and doing.* – Paul Stewart, CEO, Lowitja Institute

‘Every day was an inspiration, seeing deadly black researchers leading the way for our next generation of researchers has been amazing. I presented as a new early researcher and felt very supported by everyone that attended our session.’ – conference delegate

The conference, with **Dan Bouchier** as MC, began in honour of its Co-Patron, the late **Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG**, remembering her profound body of work and the legacy she leaves behind. Our Co-Patron **Pat Anderson AO** recounted her memories of Dr O’Donoghue in a video address, ‘When asked why she did what she did, she would always answer, “Because of the love of my people”.

We heard about the importance of centring the next generation, our children, our future leaders – a sentiment echoed in the keynote of Sámi Ohcejohka/Utsjoki **Professor Rauna Kuokkanen** on Thursday morning.

As noted by Ambassador for First Nations People, Gooreng Gooreng man **Justin Mohamed** in his keynote, ‘Our young ones are running programs, speaking languages and telling stories that were once nearly silenced’.

Throughout the conference delegates were reminded of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia to stay true to that. As **Joshua Creamer**, barrister and Waanyi and Kalkadoon man, highlighted on the final day of the conference – it is a long game. Change takes time, and the work we do here in Australia resonates within First Nations communities around the world.

Professor Sheryl Lightfoot, hailing from Anishinaabe, Lake Superior Band, Canada, noted, ‘This is not just a health conference – it is a gathering on Indigenous terms ... this gathering is a place of power’.

The conference concluded with a powerful speech and poem from **Distinguished Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith** from Aotearoa New Zealand (*Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou, Tuhourangi*).

Conference in numbers

1,377 Delegates

89
Overseas
attendees

11
Countries
represented

17
Sponsors

29
Exhibitors

232
Presentations

5
Panels

80
Posters

475
Abstracts
submitted

17 First Nations
stalls

Sponsorship

The conference was very well supported by the sector, resulting in 17 sponsorships.



Social and cultural program

The conference opened with a Welcome to Country given by Ngarrindjeri/Kaurna Elder **Uncle Moogy Sumner AM** along with a cultural sharing from Tal-kin-jeri dancers before the official proceedings on day one. Uncle Moogy shared a smoking ceremony as delegates arrived at the Adelaide Convention Centre; followed by a powerful Greeting to Spirit of Place by Ngalea, Kokatha, Ngadjuri, and Narungga young woman **Jakirah Waruyu Telfer**.

Throughout the three days, our vibrant First Nations Marketplace showcased a range of incredible First Nations artisans, creators, and businesses across 17 stalls. Delegates took the opportunity to browse, connect and support community-owned enterprises and while taking home something special from Kaurna Country, Adelaide. Delegates were also invited to slow down, have a yarn, and be creative, through spending time in the dedicated Our Space wellbeing room.

Our social events featured a stellar line-up of First Nations artists performing across three evenings. These included singer-songwriter **Emily Wurramara**; former AFL player **Marlon**, local band **Sound Factory**, and – as a special guest – rapper **Briggs**.



(Clockwise from left): Marlon, Tal-kin-jeri Dancers, Uncle Moogy Sumner AM, Our Space.

Media

The conference attracted a variety of media coverage across print, online, television and radio. Outlets that attended or covered the conference included: Australian Physiotherapy Association, Bumma Bippera Media, Croakey Health, *Indigenous Business News*, the *National Indigenous Times*, the National Indigenous Radio Service, and SBS/NITV.

Media spokespeople included: Professor Rauna Kuokkanen, Professor Sheryl Lightfoot, Professor Ian Anderson, Ambassador Justin Mohamed, Donnella Mills, Francis Nona, Paul Stewart, Michael Newman, Dr Mark Wenitong, and Janaya Pender.



Keynote speaker Professor Rauna Kuokkanen being interviewed by NITV's Marcellus Enalanga.



PhD Conference Grant recipients.



Summer May Finlay talks with Paul Stewart, CEO of Lowitja Foundation, at #Lowitja2025

Croakey Health Media
547 subscribers

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Croakey Health Media's Dr Summer May Finlay spoke with our CEO Paul Stewart.

(L-to-R): Briggs, Jakirah Waruyu Telfer.





(L-to-R): Dr Aunty Mary Graham and Uncle Patrick Dodson.

Conference Gala Dinner

Lowitja Institute Awards

Lowitja Institute honoured outstanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research achievement at our conference.

DR LOWITJA O'DONOGHUE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Dr Aunty Mary Graham is a Kombumerri and Wakka Wakka woman acknowledged as one of Australia's leading Aboriginal philosophers and educators. Aunty Mary has strong ties to the University of Queensland, lecturing on Aboriginal history, politics and comparative philosophy. Aunty Mary played pivotal roles in establishing SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, and the Australian BlackCard cultural competency program. She has served as a commissioner, regional councillor and ethics council member in various national bodies.

An accomplished writer and researcher, Aunty Mary co-founded Future Dreaming Australia to foster Indigenous and cross-cultural ecological knowledge. In 2023, the University of Queensland recognised Aunty Mary with an Honorary Doctorate for her lifelong commitment to scholarship and community.

Uncle Patrick Dodson is a Yawuru Elder from Broome, one of Australia's most respected Indigenous leaders. Patrick's public roles have seen him tirelessly advocating for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As Central Land Council director in the 1980s, he successfully negotiated for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park's return to Traditional Owners. As founding chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1991, he earned the moniker 'Father of Australian reconciliation'. Other roles have included Commissioner of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Director of the Kimberley Land Council, and Western Australian Labor Senator between 2019 and 2024. At the forefront of Indigenous issues for more than 40 years, Patrick has a heart as big as his famed beard and a legacy that casts a longer shadow than his Akubra.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RESEARCH LEADERSHIP AWARD

Associate Professor Lisa Whop is a Wagadagam Gumulgal woman from the Torres Strait Islands, epidemiologist, Associate Research Director and Senior Fellow at Yardhura Walani – the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research, at the Australian National University, specialising in cancer screening and prevention.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENT AWARD

Mr Stephen Harfield is a Narungga and Ngarrindjeri man from South Australia, a PhD candidate and Senior Research Fellow with the University of Queensland Poche Centre for Indigenous Health. Stephen is an epidemiologist and public health researcher.

TARRN-DOON-NONIN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH RESEARCH PROJECT AWARD

Marninwarntikura Women’s Resource Centre provides families a place for inspiration, positive change and leadership. The centre supports Fitzroy Valley families by providing mentoring, advocacy, and access to culturally responsive services.

Below (L-to-R): Associate Professor Lisa Whop; Stephen Harfield; Jadnah Davies, Emma Bear, Sue Thomas and Tess Bell from Marninwarntikura Women’s Resource Centre.

PAT ANDERSON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RESEARCHER AWARD



(L-to-R): Dr Ali Drummond and Associate Professor Graham Gee.

Associate Professor Graham Gee is an Aboriginal Chinese man, born on Larrakia Country. Graham is a clinical psychologist and worked at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) in Naarm for 11 years before taking up a position as Senior Research Fellow in the Intergenerational Health group at Murdoch Children’s Research Institute in 2019. Graham’s clinical and academic work has centred around trauma and healing, making significant contributions to informing policy and practice.

Dr Ali Drummond’s people are the Meriam and Erubam people of Zenadh Kes and the Wuthathi people of Cape York Peninsula. Ali was a Director of Lowitja Institute for close to a decade before being appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM), Australia’s peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives. At CATSINaM, Ali co-leads a Lowitja Institute-funded research project titled ‘The Ume Project: Telling the story of the Torres Model of Care’.



‘A highlight for me was attending the sessions on climate change and infrastructure – I didn’t expect to find it so engaging, but I really valued learning how people are working with communities to feed their experiences and knowledge back to government. It showed me the importance of making sure community voices shape the response to climate impacts.’

– conference delegate

‘The conference, for me, is a culturally safe learning environment and the presence and diversity made me feel proud of all the work that is going on Australia-wide. The whole week has made me realise we have a lot of work to do and to keep on improving services, so we can make our communities bigger, healthier, and connected to our cultural practices.’

– conference delegate

‘A highlight of attending the Lowitja Conference was the rich cultural knowledge exchange with other Indigenous attendees. The presentations were powerful and deeply impactful – it was an incredible experience. I’ve returned to Broome with a wealth of insight and inspiration.’ – conference delegate

“Stand strong” she whispers us into this space of remembering, honouring and celebrating.

'Stand Strong Be Fearless Work Together' – poem by Professor Tuhiwai Smith



Distinguished Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

Emily Wurramara





Lowitja Institute staff photo during the 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference.



Knowledge translation into policy and practice

Policy and research publications

Cultural Safety in Australia: discussion paper

Published in August 2024, this discussion paper highlights the critical need to improve access to quality healthcare, addressing the social determinants of health, and elevating the importance of the cultural determinants of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The paper was the culmination of three phases of work that began in 2010 when the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) initiated a project to create national cultural safety training standards, known as the NACCHO Cultural Safety Training (CST) Standards initiative.

This discussion paper's purpose is to propose recommended and nationally consistent standards, set a platform for the accreditation of workplace-based cultural safety training, and propose further action that can lead to cultural safety being embedded and measured at individual and institutional levels in practice and policy across health and human services.

The paper reflects on the evolution of cultural safety and national cultural safety standards in Australia and shares key learnings from peak community controlled organisations central to these processes.

Following publication, we hosted a virtual Knowledge Translation Roundtable, on 13 September 2024, during which Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed and Kathleen Stacey presented their key findings and recommendations, followed by a panel discussion also featuring co-author Professor Catherine Chamberlain. The event held space for participants to discuss the establishment of national cultural training standards and how we assess their impact, and why measuring cultural safety is important.

Authors: Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, Kathleen Stacey, Professor Catherine Chamberlain, and Professor Naomi Priest



CULTURAL SAFETY ROUNDTABLE



WHY CULTURAL SAFETY?

OVERVIEW of the PAPER

CULTURE is a DETERMINANT of HEALTH

RACISM is DETRIMENTAL to HEALTH

TRAUMA is INTERGENERATIONAL

CULTURALLY SAFE HEALTH CARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT

IMPACTS of COLONISATION

WHITE PRIVILEGE NOT WELL RECOGNISED and UNDERSTOOD

TRAINING STANDARDS

QUALITY

delivery of

TRAINING

Self reflection

CULTURAL SAFETY - IT'S IMPORTANT!

reflect local context



Co-design? consultation

IT STARTS WITH TRUTH-TELLING



ACCOUNTABILITY

Have those HARD CONVERSATIONS

TRANSPARENCY

DISCOMFORT creates CHANGE

PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY



MEASURE CHANGE

FIRST NATIONS LED & DRIVEN

CONSISTENCY in training Standards

ADDRESS RACISM

QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE evidence

DATA COLLECTION

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Self determination

Principals of Readiness

Measuring change

National Benchmarking

SYSTEMIC IMPACTS NOT WELL UNDERSTOOD

Virtual Graphic recording by: Samantha Campbell @coolamoncreative on Aṁṁṁ Land

Indigenous-led Rights-based Approaches to Climate Litigation: discussion paper

Published in June 2025, our *Indigenous-led Rights-based Approaches to Climate Litigation* discussion paper examines the intersection between Indigenous rights, human rights, environmental rights, and climate action.

This scoping review sought to investigate how international human rights frameworks, rights-based approaches, and Indigenous nation building can support climate change efforts while also respecting Indigenous rights and climate justice. The paper argues that a more in-depth analysis of rights-based climate litigation is required. Especially given the inequitable impacts of climate change on Indigenous peoples globally, and the potential structural barriers such as ongoing colonisation that tend to affect government responsiveness and responsibility, there is a compelling need to understand how climate litigations may be used strategically. In the review, we seek to synthesise existing literature on how Indigenous peoples globally are drawing on national and international law to take a human rights-based approach to climate change litigation.

More broadly, the report aims to analyse Indigenous-led climate litigation and to consider implications, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Australian legal context.

During our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025, we hosted the panel session, 'Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change and Protecting Country and Culture', featuring the wise voices of Francis Nona; Coreen Parker and Johnnell Parker (Banjima Native Title Aboriginal Corporation), and climate activists from Aotearoa New Zealand: Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Kahu Elder Mike Smith and Hinekaa Mako (*Taranaki Whānui, Whanganui nui tonu*). The panellists reflected on how wide-ranging impacts of climate change affect the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities and how we might seek concrete actions from governments and the private sector.

Authors: Francis Nona (*Dhoeybaw clan*), Associate Professor Veronica Matthews (*Quandamooka*), Associate Professor Nina Lansbury, Kristina Vine, and Lillian Ireland (*Melukerdee*)



Devon Bunce, Digital Storytellers

Co-design Versus Faux-design of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy: A Critical Review

Published in June 2025, this paper critically reviews current approaches to co-designing and *faux-designing* health policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A co-design approach that centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges, values, and practices offers a policy development solution that more effectively addresses prevailing systemic discrimination and inequities. However, while co-design terminology is increasing in Australian health policymaking, many cases apply only tokenistic or superficial co-design practices.

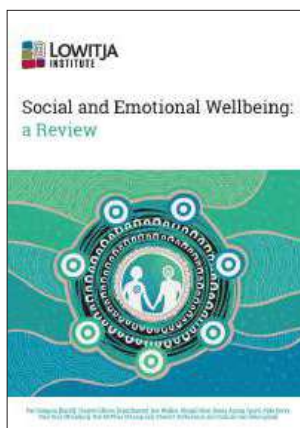
The paper provides an overview of key concepts, principles and benefits of the co-design methodology; highlights concerns with contemporary practices; and outlines critical issues to address to achieve effective co-designed health policies. Case studies are included to illustrate aspects of best practice.

We subsequently arranged a Roundtable to focus on this position paper. The July 2025 event would pose questions to representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations around the future of co-design practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and what support is required to build the capability of the community controlled sector to lead co-design processes.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing: a Review

In February 2025, we published a literature review in conjunction with the University of Western Australia. This paper provides an overview of the expanded literature on social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) since the publication of the SEWB model in 2014. It highlights efforts to develop and strengthen these shared understandings through the effective application of SEWB research and policies.

This paper maintains the course set by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge holders who have advocated for a holistic, culturally grounded conceptualisation of health and wellbeing, as well as the originators of the SEWB model and those that have continued its development and evolution. It supports efforts to further operationalise and translate the SEWB model into those spaces and settings that are integral to improving individual and collective SEWB outcomes, through service provision, policymaking, and individual practices and approaches to supporting and strengthening SEWB.



Authors: Professor Pat Dudgeon (*Bardi*), Dr Chontel Gibson (*Gamilaraay*), Associate Professor Roz Walker, Abigail Bray, Rama Agung-Igusti, Dr Kate Derry, Professor Paul Gray (*Wiradjuri*), Rob McPhee, Associate Professor Stewart Sutherland (*Wiradjuri*), and Associate Professor Graham Gee (*Aboriginal*)



Authors: Dr Tamara Butler (*Undumbi*); Associate Professor Kate Anderson, Dr Oliver Black (*Anaiwan*), Dr Alana Gall (*Pakana, Truwulway*), Khwanruethai Ngampromwongse (*Thai, Wiradjuri, Ngemba-Wayilwan*), Rebecca Murray (*Kamilaroi, Wailwan*); Dr Louise Mitchell; Ms Kate Wilkinson, Dr Christina Heris, and Associate Professor Lisa Whop (*Gumulgal, Wagadagam*)

Keeping research on track? Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Accounts of Ethical Conduct in Health and Medical Research: discussion paper

This discussion paper reports on an evaluation of ethical practices and systems in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and medical research. Led by Felicity Collis (*Gomeroi*) and Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy (*Wiradjuri*), this work upholds Indigenous methodologies and methods to offer truth-telling and calls to action from Aboriginal communities to improve the implementation and conduct of culturally safe, respectful, and beneficial research to improve the health and wellbeing of First Peoples.

The paper was prepared in partnership with the Aboriginal communities who have invested their time and expert knowledges to the continual advocacy and collective drive towards improved outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The project’s aim was to privilege Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community voices, experiences, and subsequent impacts, of health and medical research practices. As such, this work highlights community-led solutions on the ways in which the system of research should be transformed to appropriately uphold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights in research.

The findings contribute to a broader body of research examining the implementation of ethical guidelines and practices from the *Murru Minya* project.

During our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025, Felicity and Michelle led the panel session ‘My mob is my ethics’: community calls to action on their rights to best practice ethical research. This panel also featured Ashley Councillor (Pilbara Aboriginal Health Alliance); June Councillor (Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation); Dot Bagshaw (Edith Cowan University); Jackie Oakley (Wungening Aboriginal Corporation); and Aunty Mary Kyle, Kayleen Jackson, and Sheanah Ludwick (Gurriny Yealamucka Health Services Aboriginal Corporation). These panellists explored how health and medical research are being operationalised in communities, as well as their calls to action on how research systems can transform into the future to safeguard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights in research.



Authors: Felicity Collis (*Gomeroi*) and Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy (*Wiradjuri*)



Devon Bunce, Digital Storytellers

Other publications

Further to the publication of the *Cultural Safety in Australia* discussion paper, the policy brief, *Embedding cultural safety: National cultural Safety Training Standards and organisational action for cultural safety* was published in August 2024.

In April 2025, ahead of the 2025 Federal Election, Lowitja Institute also published a position paper detailing a series of key election priorities and calling on the incoming Australian Government to prioritise health equity and take action to ensure better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Published journal articles

Collis, F., Booth, K., Bryant, J., & Kennedy, M. 2025, 'Beyond ethical guidelines: upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ethical governance in health and medical research. A scoping review', *Medical Journal of Australia* 2025; vol. 222, No. 2: S42-S48. doi: 10.5694/mja2.52564

Newton, B. J., Chiswell, K., Parker, C., Tong, N., & Common, S. 2025, 'Playing the Game: How Aboriginal Families Navigate Child Protection Systems to Restore Their Children Home From Out-Of-Home Care', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 27 May

Conference panel, 'My mob is my ethics': community calls to action on their rights to best practice ethical research. (L-to-R): Associate Professor Michelle Kennedy, Aunty Dotty Bagshaw (Wungenging Aboriginal Corporation), Felicity Collis, Aunty Mary Kyle (Gurriny Yealamucka) and Sheanah Ludwick (Gurriny Yealamucka).



To read our policy papers, please visit [Lowitja Library](#)

Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation

The Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation was established on 1 August 2022 in honour of Yankunytjatjara woman, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, a trailblazing leader whose extraordinary lifetime of work reshaped Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

The Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation deeply appreciates the support of our donors for their generous financial and in-kind contributions.

Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation Nursing Scholarships

Our nursing scholarships are jointly funded by National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. The scholarship program offers three targeted streams to support aspiring and current nurses in advancing their qualifications:

- Enrolled Nursing Scholarship
- Registered Nursing Scholarship
- Postgraduate/Higher Degree Nursing Scholarship (or related discipline course)

The 2025 scholarship round attracted strong national interest, with 18 scholarships awarded: 14 Undergraduate and 4 Postgraduate/Higher Degree. Recipients are located in Newcastle, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Townsville, Canberra, Adelaide, Broome, Ipswich, the Torres Strait Islands, and Arnhem Land.

Inaugural Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation scholar

The Foundation was proud to award its inaugural Enrolled Nursing Scholarship, supported by Aspen Medical Foundation, to Kurna, Ngarrindjeri and Mirning woman, Emma Scarce. Emma has since successfully graduated with a Diploma of Nursing and is now building her career in nursing. Aspen Medical Foundation will provide an additional scholarship in 2025.

'I'm so proud of myself and excited to enter the healthcare sector. I feel really proud to be leading the way for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare workers just as Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue did. My long-range goals are to work with Aboriginal women and babies and I can't wait to continue my studies.' – Emma Scarce, 2024



Emma Scarce, inaugural Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation scholar.

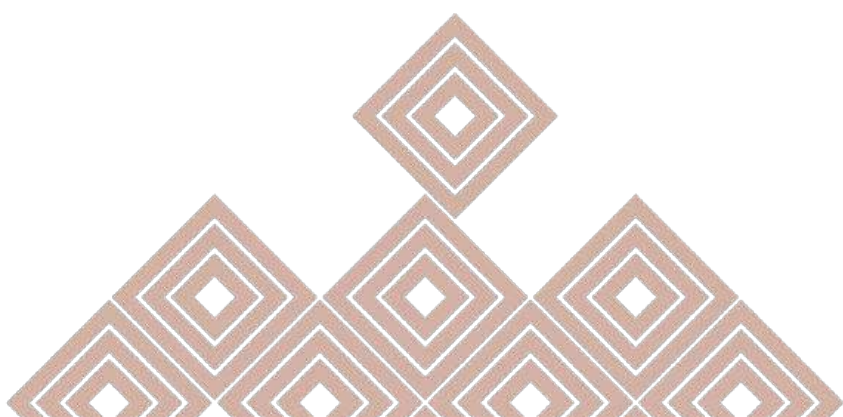


UNDERGRADUATE NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS

Miss Cruze Connors	Bachelor of Nursing, Bachelor of Behavioural Science	Queensland University of Technology
Miss Marteenah Haji Noor	Bachelor of Nursing	CQUniversity
Miss Laura Horsburgh	Bachelor of Nursing	Griffith University
Miss Sarah Hummel	Bachelor of Nursing	Monash University
Mr Zane Kendall	Bachelor of Nursing	Deakin University
Mrs Ella Kathleen Nappaljarri Fitz	Bachelor of Midwifery	Flinders University
Miss Sharna Phillips	Bachelor of Nursing	Charles Darwin University
Mrs Patricia Rose	Bachelor of Nursing Science	James Cook University
Mr Kobe Sabatino See Kee	Bachelor of Nursing (Advanced Studies)	University of Sydney
Miss Chelsea Stone-Heat	Bachelor of Nursing	Australian Catholic University
Miss Kaylah Turnbull	Bachelor of Nursing	Australian Catholic University
Ms Keitha Virdi	Bachelor of Nursing	Charles Darwin University
Mrs Pamela Wasaga	Bachelor of Nursing Science	James Cook University
Mr Travis Williams	Bachelor of Nursing, Bachelor of Paramedicine	Australian Catholic University

POSTGRADUATE/HIGHER DEGREE SCHOLARSHIPS

Mrs Jessica Bennett	Doctor of Aboriginal Health Studies	University of Newcastle, School of Medicine and Public Health
Mr Kaiwarr Clancy	Master of Public Health	University of Sydney, Faculty of Medicine and Health
Mrs Lauren Navarrette	Master of Public Health	Flinders University, College of Medicine and Public Health
Miss Breanna Solomon	Master of Indigenous Business and Leadership	Monash University



LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy

From 4 June to 25 July 2025, an exhibition LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy celebrated the remarkable life and enduring impact of the late Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG. Held at the Kerry Packer Civic Gallery, University of South Australia, the exhibition traced her journey from childhood through her trailblazing career in health, Aboriginal affairs, and national leadership.

Presented by The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre in partnership with the Lowitja O’Donoghue Foundation and Lowitja Institute, with support from the Australian and South Australian governments, Adelaide Airport, and The Healing Foundation, the exhibition was officially opened by Her Excellency the Hon Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia, and the Hon Peter Malinauskas MP, Premier of South Australia.

‘It is the greatest honour and privilege to access the personal collection of historic memorabilia and archives belonging to my aunt. As curator of LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy, the wealth of incredible material to choose from for this inaugural exhibition, demonstrates the depth and richness of her extraordinary life.’

– Deb Edwards, Exhibition Curator and Head of Lowitja O’Donoghue Foundation

Curated by Dr O’Donoghue’s niece Deb Edwards and great-niece Ruby Edwards, the exhibition showcased landmark speeches, personal memorabilia, cultural and political artefacts, photographs, and historic records. Themes included the Stolen Generations, Nursing and Health, Aboriginal Affairs, ATSIC, Significant Achievements, Family, and Indigenous Peoples.

With more than 3,000 visitors and 10 group tours, the exhibition was well attended. It is no surprise that visitors responded with overwhelming positivity to the exhibition, recognising it as



The late Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG L-to-R: charge sister at Royal Adelaide Hospital; addressing UN General Assembly 1992; Dr O’Donoghue 2020.

a positive resource for the recognition of Aboriginal excellence, and that stories such as Dr O'Donoghue's must be told in our national galleries, libraries, and museums.



The Hon Peter Malinauskas MP, Premier of South Australia, viewing the exhibition.



Attending the opening night of the exhibition were (L-to-R): Rod Buntzen; Her Excellency the Hon Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia; Deb Edwards, curator and Head of Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation; Jacinta Thompson, Executive Director & Events and Exhibition Producer, The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre; and the Hon Kyam Maher MLC, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Attorney-General of South Australia.

'This exhibition is the first of its kind, a powerful testament to the unparalleled legacy of the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue – a visionary and transformative leader whose long-lasting impact resonates across the nation and beyond.'

– Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart

ANU opens cultural centre in honour of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG

On 19 March 2025, the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra officially opened the Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre, honouring the extraordinary life and enduring legacy of our Co-Patron the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. The event



Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's niece and Head of the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation, Deb Edwards, addressing attendees at the event.

was attended by Her Excellency the Hon Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia, and marked a significant milestone in ANU's building renaming initiative – the third building to be named in honour of a woman.

Dr O'Donoghue was the first Aboriginal person to be honoured with the naming of a building at ANU, and in 1995, she also became the first Aboriginal recipient of an honorary doctorate (Law) from the university.



Distinguished guests at the building renaming included our co-patron Pat Anderson AO and Professor Tom Calma AO.

Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre

Lowitja O'Donoghue

Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration

Lowitja Institute and the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation once again proudly partnered with the Don Dunstan Foundation to present the annual Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration during National Reconciliation Week on Kaurna Country, Adelaide. This year's event also marked the signing of a new Presenting Partnership Agreement with the Don Dunstan Foundation, reflecting our shared commitment to truth-telling and justice.

The 2025 Oration was delivered by Romlie Mokak, *Honouring Lowitja – For the Love of Our People*. The address reflected on Dr O'Donoghue's guiding principle of love for her people and its enduring relevance to contemporary policymaking. Eighteen years on from Dr O'Donoghue's inaugural address, the Oration continues to shine a light on the critical issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and carries forward her legacy of social justice and equality.



(L-to-R): Lowitja Institute Chairperson Craig Ritchie, CEO Paul Stewart, Romlie Mokak, Michael Newman, Deb Edwards, Sonia Waters, Emma Donegan, and Deborah Anderson.

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Health

In September 2024, the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue was honoured through the establishment of a new award recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander South Australians delivering exceptional care to advance health outcomes.

Announced at the SA Health Aboriginal Workforce Network (SHAWN) Forum, the award was introduced by the Hon Chris Picton MP, Minister for Health and Wellbeing, with Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation's Deb Edwards addressing the event.

This award celebrates Dr O'Donoghue's legacy by recognising individuals and initiatives within SA Health that reflect her lifelong commitment to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and strengthening the workforce.



Deb Edwards with Hon Chris Picton, Minister for Health and Wellbeing, South Australia, at the SHAWN Forum.

Strengthening our research workforce

Scholarships

Lowitja Institute Health and Wellbeing Scholarships

Three students were awarded a 2025 Lowitja Institute 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.

2025 Lowitja Institute Higher Degree Research Top-Up Scholarship

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

- **Ms Jacinta Mackay**, PhD, Ngarruwan Ngadju, School of Medical, Indigenous and Health Sciences, University of Wollongong
- **Ms Lana Draper**, PhD, Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health, School of Medical, Indigenous and Health Sciences, University of Wollongong
- **Miss Amanda Sibosado**, PhD, University of Queensland, Faculty of Medicine, UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health

GLOWS Scholarships

Focusing on increasing health equity and addressing disparities driving transmission of HIV and viral hepatitis within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, our GLOWS Undergraduate and Postgraduate Scholarships provide financial support to assist students to undertake studies towards their entry into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce. The following students received a 2024 GLOWS Scholarship:

- **Ms Jasmine Armstrong**, Bachelor of Biomedical Science, University of Queensland
- **Mr Ethan Jones**, Bachelor of Pre-Medicine, Science and Health, University of Wollongong
- **Mr Aidan Kampers**, Master of Public Health, University of Wollongong
- **Ms Jackie Watson**, Master Public Health, specialisation in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing, and Master of Health Leadership and Management, University of New South Wales
- **Mr Charles Fisher**, Doctor of Medicine, Western Sydney University

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

This year nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates successfully completed Lowitja Institute's accredited Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice. Throughout this course the students gained experience using Indigenous research methodologies, applying thematic data analysis, planning and implementing ethical practices in research, and working in culturally safe ways with community to co-design research that matters to our mob.

A key component of the course was the students' collective research project titled 'Learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences of the Australian 2023 Referendum'. The students presented the findings of their research at the 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference on Kurna Country, Adelaide, in June 2025.



Certificate IV students, presenters and staff at AHMRC, Gadigal Country. Back row (L-to-R): Samantha Simmons, Kera Ritchie, Vickey Hill, Lachlan Walker, Nicki Turner, Belinda Cashman, Dr Kim O'Donnell, and Sonia Waters. Front row (L-to-R): Elisha Clements-Anderson, Seaneen Wallace, Lorraine Tutton, and Dr Kevin Dolman.

This year was the first time that the newly re-developed and re-accredited course was delivered. Dr Kim O'Donnell was the lead teacher and facilitator of the course, and Dr O'Donnell created a culturally safe and inspiring learning environment. AHMRC Training was our course delivery partner and the OCHRe Network provided funding for program delivery.

Capability seminars

On 25 and 26 March 2025, in partnership with the Indigenous Futures Centre, we held a two-day Indigenous Research Methodologies workshop for 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PhD candidates, graduates, and early-career researchers on Kurna Country, Adelaide, presented by Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson.

Distinguished Professor Moreton-Robinson offered astute insights for the Indigenous early-career researchers attending from across Australia and the Pacific on topics including the Origins and Disciplines of Methodology, Indigenous Standpoint Theory, and an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint. Participants ended the workshop engaging in an activity to develop their own Indigenous Methodology.



Participants at the Indigenous Research Methodologies workshop held in partnership with Indigenous Futures Centre.

Innovative research products and services

Our online courses are designed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. These courses are also highly valuable for non-Indigenous people working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and research sectors. This year 90 participants enrolled in our online courses.

Online courses offered by Lowitja Institute:

- Introduction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research
- Introduction to Evaluation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Contexts
- Introduction to Indigenous Knowledge Translation
- Community Data Literacy: Foundations
- Introduction to Ethics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Course uptake and feedback

Since launching in 2022, 324 people have enrolled in Lowitja Institute's online learning. The short online courses are valued by members and the wider research community alike: **83 per cent** of participants are Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people. The courses have been particularly popular for those with fewer than two years' experience in research (65 per cent of participants). After almost three years in the market, this year we completed a consolidated analysis of the uptake and engagement with our short online courses: **85 per cent** of course participants completed a feedback survey that forms part of each course.

The average completion rate for Lowitja Institute's online courses is **63 per cent**, which is outstanding when compared with averages reported across non-accredited online learning globally, sitting at between **5** and **15 per cent**.

Our tools and resources reached a wide audience.

- The Pathways to Research Toolkit was downloaded **375** times and over **200** hard copies distributed
- The Health Journey Mapping Toolkit was downloaded **39** times
- The Indigenous Data Sovereignty Readiness Assessment and Evaluation Toolkit was downloaded **56** times
- **6** Tools for Culturally Safe Evaluation were sold
- **3** Cultural Safety Audit Tools for Individuals were sold, along with **40** for Organisations

This year we also delivered a pilot program, Allyship and Cultural Safety Training, to 23 participants.

92%

of survey respondents would **recommend the course** to others

94%

of survey respondents state the **course was relevant** to their work

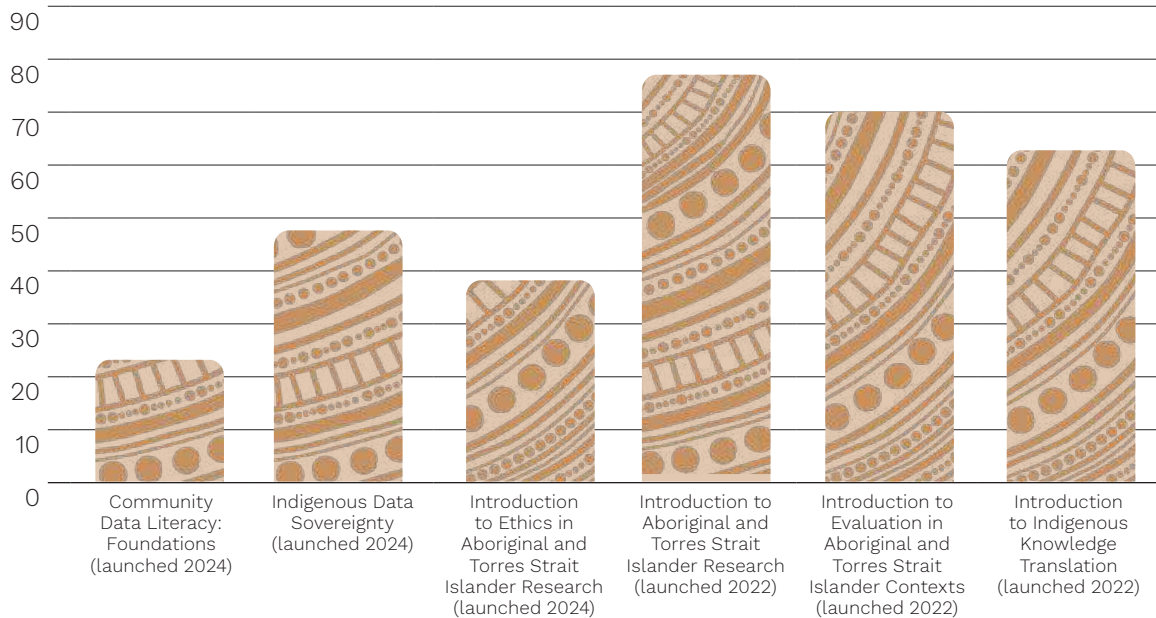
97%

of survey respondents feel **more confident in their understanding of the topic**

90%

of survey respondents feel **more confident in their skills**

Participants enrolled in online learning since launch



Comments from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants include:

‘The course should be made mandatory to anyone undertaking research for First Nations peoples.’

‘Honestly, this is an amazing course. I don’t have suggestions on improvement. Well done, Lowitja!’

‘I believe that the course is very comprehensive and gives you a sound understanding of how to conduct research with the Aboriginal community.’

Members Community

As an Aboriginal community controlled member-based organisation, our Members Community is at the heart of all we do. In 2024/25 we increased our membership from 819 to **1,194 individuals and organisations**, which represents a **46 per cent increase**.

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, and we do this through our dedicated Members Portal.

Events this year have included online Yarning Circles and in-person events on Whadjuk Noongar Country in Perth and on Kurna Country in Adelaide.

On 5 September 2024, we hosted a member event on Whadjuk Nyoongar Country, Perth, Western Australia, following the NAATSIHWP Conference. The event was attended by 12 members and received positive feedback. Several members expressed appreciation, with one stating,

'We had no idea that these events existed, and there should be more', and another, *'Loved how intimate it was to be able to have conversations and meeting everyone'*.

Lowitja Institute members attended the Lowitja Institute Legacy Hour members event at the inaugural LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy exhibition. (L-to-R): Kera Ritchie, Robert Palm, Dr Kim O'Donnell, Stephen Harfield, and Lorraine Tutton.



On 25 March 2025, we held a member event at the University of Adelaide, providing an opportunity for 48 Lowitja Institute members to yarn and network. The evening included a special presentation by The Unbound Collective, honouring Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson for her impact in their work and research. Comprising of Ali Gumillya Baker, Simone Ulalka Tur, Faye Rosas Blanch, and Natalie Harkin, The Unbound Collective is a group of activist-led creative arts practitioners and scholars based at Flinders University. Their individual and collective work centres on ethical practice and responsibility, using memory and storytelling to critically engage with colonial sites of power and knowledge production, such as universities, galleries, libraries, archives, and museums.



Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson (centre) with members of The Unbound Collective at Lowitja Institute's March 2025 member event.

One member of Lowitja Institute's Members Community shared that they valued 'listening to Distinguished Professor speak, and the network opportunities' the event provided.

In conjunction with the 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025 on Kurna Country, Adelaide, Lowitja Institute was honoured to welcome members and guests from across the nation, and around the world, to a special members event, Legacy Hour at the inaugural LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy exhibition. Together, we celebrated the extraordinary leadership and legacy of the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. Guests heard rare and powerful insights into the life and legacy of Dr O'Donoghue from Deb Edwards, Head of the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation, curator, and niece of Dr O'Donoghue.



Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson at Lowitja Institute's March 2025 member event.



Leadership and advocacy of our work

Parliamentary and government engagement

Over the past year, Lowitja Institute undertook a range of ministerial engagements at the state and Australian Government level, led by our CEO Paul Stewart.

These engagements included:

- Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care
- Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care
- Senator Jana Stewart, Senator for Victoria
- Attorney General of South Australia and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, and Special Minister of State in South Australia, Kyam Maher MLC
- Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia

Lowitja Institute is a member of the Expert Advisory Group on Health and Climate convened by NACCHO and the Department of Health and Aged Care, providing advice and advocacy around how we can build a climate-resilient health system and enhance its capacity to protect health and wellbeing from the impacts of climate change.

We participated in the roundtable held by the Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care in March 2025 on the progress on Implementation of Aged Care Royal Commission Recommendations.

We provided advice to the Productivity Commission on the reporting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data in the Report on Government Services in July 2024.

On 22 April 2025, Paul Stewart raised an intervention during the twenty-fourth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, at UN Headquarters, New York. This intervention called for action regarding increased Indigenous control and ownership of Indigenous health and population data, as outlined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Note: Department of Health and Aged Care became Department of Health, Disability and Ageing from 13 May 2025.

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:

- 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 on delivery on its 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*
- Coalition of Peaks, comprised of a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations that work on collective advocacy. Along with our membership of this Coalition, 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*

- 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
- Close the Gap Campaign Alliance
- Supporting Aboriginal Families to Stay Together from the Start (SAFeST Start) Coalition
- MRFF Indigenous Health Research Fund Expert Advisory Committee.

Leadership in Health Policy

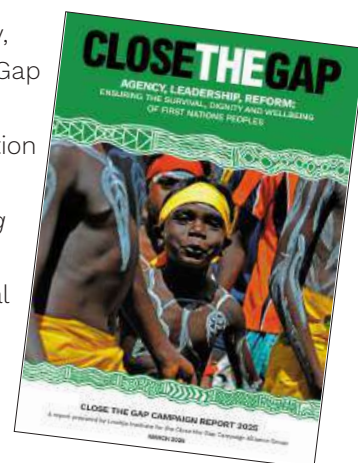
We also engage and contribute regularly to the work of 11 national committees, reference or advisory groups focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy. These include forums such as the Climate and Health Expert Advisory Group, convened by Department of Health and Aged Care to support the implementation of the *National Health and Climate Strategy*, and the First Nations Health Governance Group, convened by Department of Health and Aged Care, co-chaired by Blair Comley (Secretary of the Department of Health and Aged Care) and which will oversee the implementation of the Health Plan and the Priority Reforms to improve health outcomes.

Leadership in Health Research

Lowitja Institute sits on four national and state research project reference groups, including: the Targeted Translation Research Accelerator Needs Assessment, Indigenous Advisory Group and the VACCHO Targeted Translation Research Accelerator Research Governance Committee.

Lowitja Institute urges governments to take stronger action to close the gap

On National Close the Gap Day, 20 March 2025, the Close the Gap Campaign called on Australian governments to accelerate action to realise the objectives of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, with its four Priority Reform areas remaining a focal point of the *Close the Gap Campaign Report 2025*.



Prepared by Lowitja Institute, this First Nations-centred, strengths-based report promoted the themes Agency, Leadership, and Reform. It shared stories of the tireless work of communities who are achieving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It covered a year in review, highlighting some of the key issues and developments from the last 12 months. Alongside demonstrating the critical work of our communities and organisations, the report sent a clear message that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, leaders, organisations, and our allies will continue to hold governments to account for the limited progress towards meeting their commitments under the *National Agreement*.

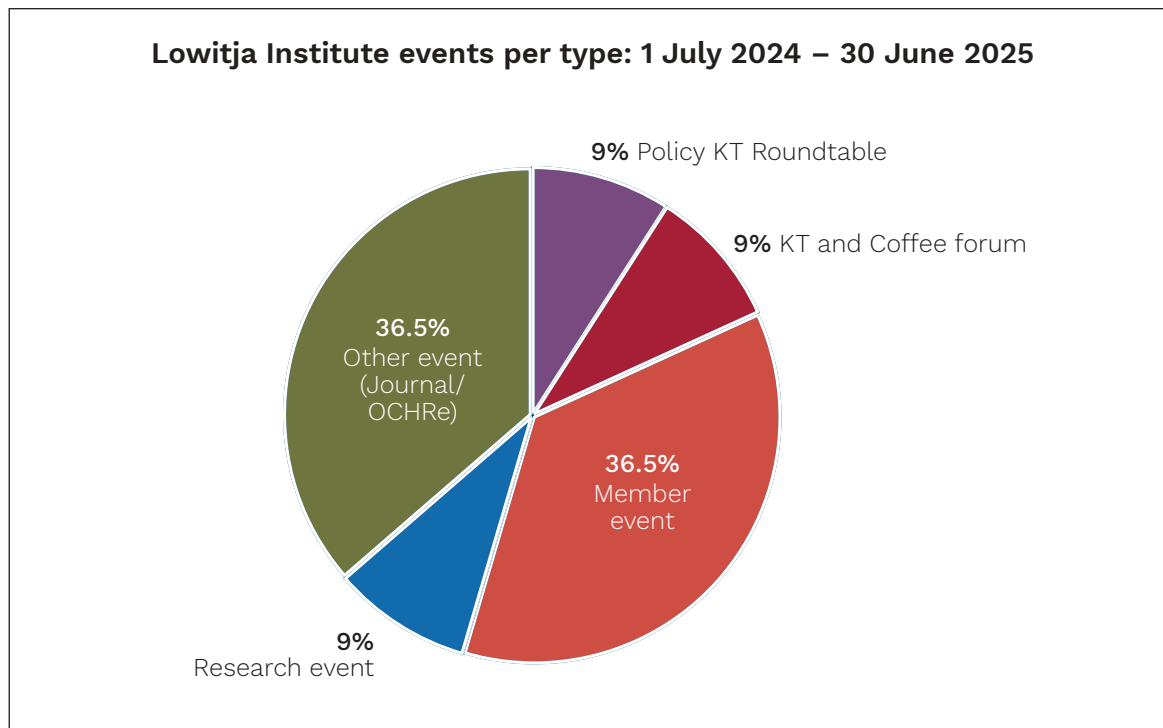
‘An ongoing push to strengthen and grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled sector is paramount to driving reform and delivering on the Priority Reforms set out in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.’

We encourage all governments to prioritise fostering meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples towards strengthening health, wellbeing and justice outcomes for our peoples.

– Paul Stewart, CEO, Lowitja Institute

Presence and engagement in the community sector

Lowitja Institute leaders and staff represented at multiple community controlled sector affiliate events across the year. We also sponsored and attended a range of broader conferences and community-based initiatives.



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.

- NAATSIHWP Professional Development Symposium
- NACCHO Members' Conference
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia National Conference
- CATSINaM National Conference 2024
- AIATSIS Summit
- PRIDoC 2024
- Remote Nursing & Midwifery Conference
- Global Indigenous Data Sovereignty Conference
- Community Question Time

Event highlights



CEO Paul Stewart and Workforce team members Lydia Agius and Folau Talbot attending the NAATSIHWP Symposium at the Perth Convention Centre, on Whadjuk Noongar Country, September 2024.



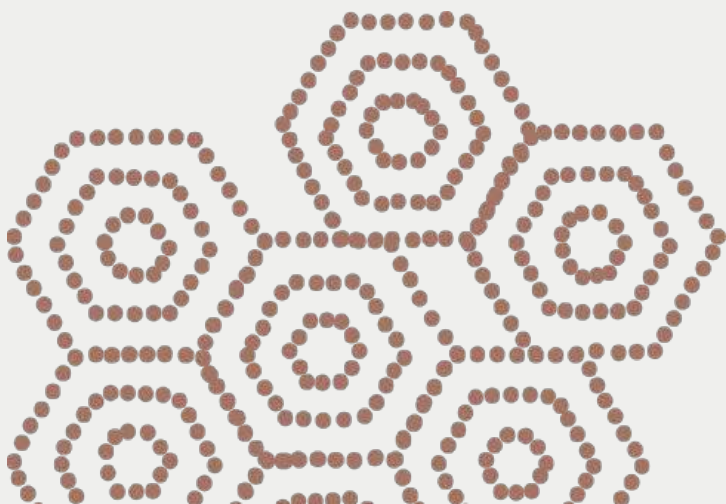
Following the September 2024 launch of the Indigenous Futures Centre (IFC) in Meanjin, our CEO Paul Stewart joined the IFC research and professional teams, along with representatives from organisational partners, at O'Reilly's Rainforest on the Gold Coast Hinterland. Paul is pictured above with Yugambeh Elder Uncle Ted Williams.



Lowitja Institute attended the Indigenous Allied Health National Conference, held on Kurna Country, Adelaide, in December 2024. (L-to-R): Deb Edwards, Ruby Edwards, Belinda Griffiths, Kristen Keating, and Sonia Waters.



We hosted a booth on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country for the 2024 NACCHO Members' Conference, December 2024. (L-to-R): Jannah Lott, Paul Stewart, Michael Newman, Shantelle Common, and Emma Donegan.



Transforming research through partnerships

Lowitja Institute partners with the Medical Journal of Australia to privilege Indigenous voices



In July 2024, the *Medical Journal of Australia* (MJA) published an issue that highlighted and recognised First Nations leadership and excellence in health and medical research. This inaugural collaboration between Lowitja Institute and the MJA coincided with NAIDOC Week, which in 2024 carried the theme ‘Keep the fire burning! Blak, loud and proud’.

The partnership was born out of the advocacy of Indigenous leaders, which included former Lowitja Institute CEO Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, who called for greater transparency of academic literature and the need for appropriate acknowledgement of our contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

‘This groundbreaking initiative strongly aligns with Lowitja Institute’s values in honour of our Co-Patron and namesake, the late Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG to champion research that is led by our people for our people,’ Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart said.

A Guest Editor team comprising seven Indigenous experts in public health and clinical medicine defined the scope and aims of the special issue, assessed and selected its content, determined its editorial requirements, and nominated peer reviewers, with the support of the MJA editorial team. The issue contained 12 articles, all led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.



(L-to-R): Elizabeth Zuccala, Odette Pearson, Paul Stewart, Michelle Kennedy, Janine Mohamed, Virginia Barbour, Maria Inacio, and Jaquelyne Hughes. Photos: Ben Searcy

This issue marks progress in addressing systems of knowledge that have excluded Indigenous peoples, priorities and perspectives.

More than 70 people attended the launch of the MJA publication on Kurna Country, Adelaide, which was followed by a workshop on ethical publishing practices where Guest Editors spoke of the importance of centring Indigenous knowledges.

Guest Editors: Jaquelyne Hughes, Michelle Kennedy, Kelvin Kong, Janine Mohamed, Odette Pearson, Paul Stewart, James Ward, Virginia Barbour, and Elizabeth Zuccala.



Lowitja Consulting

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 continuing to support 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 these 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. In addition, Lowitja Institute has co-facilitated a Community of Practice for awardees to provide the opportunity to share knowledge, experience, and challenges across projects to strengthen the research outcomes.

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. 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.

RESEARCH GRANTS

The GLOWS Large and Medium Research Grants, valued at \$800,000 and \$300,000, fund projects that align with one or more of the GLOWS Program funding priorities through an idea that addresses a clear aspiration and need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The GLOWS Seeding Research Grant (value up to \$30,000) aims to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations the opportunity to identify or explore research priorities within their community related to HIV and viral hepatitis infections, diagnosis, and treatment. The GLOWS National Gathering Grant (value up to \$150,000) is designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are working at or in partnership with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The aim of GLOWS Scholarship funding (value up to \$25,000, for one year) is to offer supplementary financial support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate and postgraduate students wanting to develop their skills and knowledge on how to increase health equity and address disparities that continue to drive the transmission of HIV/viral hepatitis within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through studies that would support their entry into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce.

Refer to GLOWS Scholarship recipients on page 38 and GLOWS Research Grant recipients on page 13.

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.

Safe Institutions Taskforce



(L-to-R): Professor Yin Paradies, topic lead for the Cultural Safety Framework, and Professor Pat Dudgeon, topic lead for the Indigenous Knowledges Framework.

The Safe Institutions Taskforce, co-chaired by Dr Tamara Mackean and Professor Yin Paradies, was established and held its inaugural meeting in August 2024. Comprised of eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research leaders from across the four OCHRe Hubs, the taskforce is guiding the development of two key national frameworks: an Indigenous Knowledges Framework, led by Professor Pat Dudgeon, and a Cultural Safety Framework, led by Professor Paradies. These frameworks will play a critical role in developing a culturally safe research ecosystem. This ecosystem is geared towards supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to thrive and lead within research institutions, universities

and community organisations. The development of these frameworks will be guided by existing relevant frameworks such as the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council.

The taskforce will provide recommendations to the OCHRe Cultural Community Council and Executive Group about how to advocate at the highest level for these two frameworks to be adopted by key agencies (universities, funding bodies, services, policy, and research institutes) to create a sustainable, culturally safe research ecosystem for Indigenous researchers.

Building research capability

In June 2025, nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students successfully completed the Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice supported by funding from the OWL Hub of the OCHRe Network. This nationally recognised qualification strengthens Indigenous-led research by embedding cultural integrity, ethical practice, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing. The course contributes directly to building a skilled and confident research workforce, grounded in community, identity, and self-determination.

OCHRe online learning bursaries

There were **107** online learning bursaries dispersed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of both Lowitja Institute and the OCHRe Network, providing access to Lowitja Institute's high-quality online learning short courses on topics including Indigenous Data Sovereignty, Ethics in Research, Data Literacy, Knowledge Translation, and Evaluation. Everyone who completed an online course said they would recommend it to others, and more than **90 per cent** of individuals who completed a course said they feel more confident in their skills and knowledge as a result.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PhD Conference Attendance Grants

Thirteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PhD students were awarded a PhD Conference Attendance Grant to participate in the PhD Masterclass titled 'Maximise Your Conference Experience: Impact and Engagement Strategies for Indigenous PhD Scholars workshop' – a prelude to our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025 on Kurna Country, Adelaide. The grants were funded by the OWL Hub of the OCHRe Network.

This event offered a unique opportunity for Indigenous PhD researchers to connect, learn, and prepare for a successful conference experience.

Participants engaged in peer-led conversations, shared their own research through brief presentations, and established networks that will support them throughout their academic and career journeys. The workshop was facilitated by the Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, funded by the Maali Hub of the OCHRe Network with support from Lowitja Institute.

Feedback from grant recipients included:

'The workshop was actually my [conference] highlight, as I met other PhD students who shared similar experiences and I was so motivated from this! It was great to just yarn, which there was limited opportunity to do in the conference.'

'I found it immensely valuable to hear others PhD and professional journeys, struggles and self-doubt included. I thought that the conference really exemplified the importance of balance, providing attendees with both academic inspiration and motivation, as well as opportunities for self-care.'

Grant recipient feedback

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PhD students engaging in the PhD Masterclass. Photo: Hannah Fagan



Elevating our voice

3,742

mentions in regional, national and international media



139

published

media, interviews, articles and opinion editorials



Website attracted

267,548

sessions

91,058 users



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



8 media releases

	OUTREACH	INTERACTIONS (monthly average)	POSTS	FOLLOWERS
LinkedIn		32,559	225	12,249
Facebook		14,811	250	3,024
Instagram		8,966	394	4,073

Lowitja Institute website

In the past year our website attracted 267,548 sessions from 91,058 users. High engagement was reported in late 2024, with the opening of scholarships rounds, and then in the lead-up to and during our conference held in June 2025.

From November 2024, the Lowitja Institute website included enhanced content to showcase our suite of scholarship opportunities, offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across health and wellbeing, nursing, and public health.

In 2025, we created digitally enhanced interactive screens to promote at the 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference in June. The screens encouraged delegates to explore research projects in a newly designed interactive map, generate interest in membership, showcase our new policy papers, and promote our learning resources.



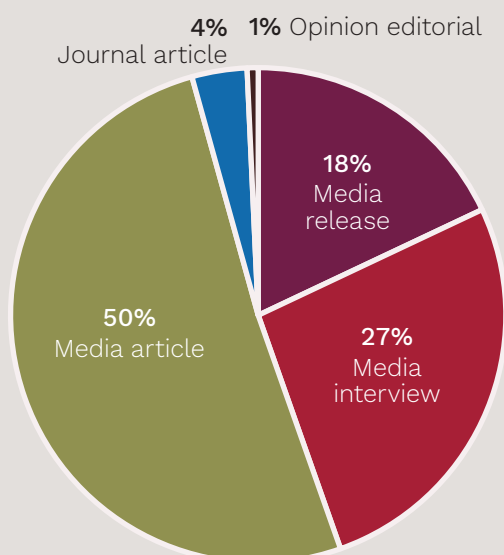
Media outreach

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 2024–25:

- Lowitja Institute celebrates Blak excellence in health research, 20 June 2025
- Researchers and leaders gather for International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference, 17 June 2025
- Lowitja Institute urges government commitment to working in genuine partnership for Closing the Gap, 1 May 2025
- Lowitja Institute urges governments to take stronger action to close the gap, 20 March 2025
- LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy, 4 February 2025
- One year on: Governments must prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community voices in health, 14 October 2024
- Lowitja O’Donoghue Foundation celebrates second anniversary, 1 August 2024
- Lowitja Institute partners with the Medical Journal of Australia to privilege Indigenous voices, 1 July 2024

Category of media: July 2024 – June 2025



Media articles and interviews

Our 139 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 **139 media items**, 18 per cent were articles in response to our media releases and 26 per cent included interviews with our media spokespeople. We also produced two articles in peer-reviewed journals. A large amount of media coverage was generated from our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference, while the LOWITJA – A Life of Leadership and Legacy exhibition, and Indigenous editorship of a *Medical Journal of Australia* special issue also attracted substantial interest.

Lowitja Institute received 3,742 mentions across all national, regional and international media outlets.

Examples include:

- Walking together in wellness, where collective rights enable Indigenous Peoples to thrive, Croakey Health Media, 23 June 2025
- Health services face legal risk over poor quality care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, Croakey Health Media, 18 June 2025
- How Indigenous peoples are leading the way in climate litigation: new paper, Croakey Health Media, 17 June 2025

- Exhibition honours Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue’s life of leadership, *Koori Mail*, 4 June 2025
- Call for urgent action on Indigenous Closing the Gap, *The Australian*, 28 May 2025
- Uluru Dialogue co-chairs say Closing the Gap is failing by design, *National Indigenous Times*, 26 May 2025
- Affirming our power and enduring love as First Peoples: the Lowitja O’Donoghue Oration 2025, Croakey Health Media, 20 May 2025
- New Indigenous-led research shows significant benefit of including cultural medicines in mainstream healthcare, *National Indigenous Times*, 16 April 2025
- ANU in drive to rename buildings after women, *Canberra Times*, 19 March
- New exhibition shares the life and legacy of Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue, ABC TV News Breakfast, 5 February 2025
- One year after Voice referendum, there is strong resolve and determination to keep pushing for change, Croakey Health Media, 11 October 2024
- Cultural safety must be ‘hard-wired’ in our health care systems, *InSight+*, 8 October 2024
- Centring Indigenous voices in health research, ABC Radio National, 13 July 2024

Type of media: July 2024 – June 2025



TV: 4%



Radio: 18%






Online: 71%

Social media




Our social media presence increased extensively throughout the 2024–25 financial year, with a particularly notable spike recorded during the month of June, either side of our 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025. Throughout the year we showcased Lowitja Institute’s work and engaged with important awareness days including Survival/Invasion Day, the anniversary of the Apology to Stolen Generations, Reconciliation Day, World Health Day, and the anniversary of the Referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

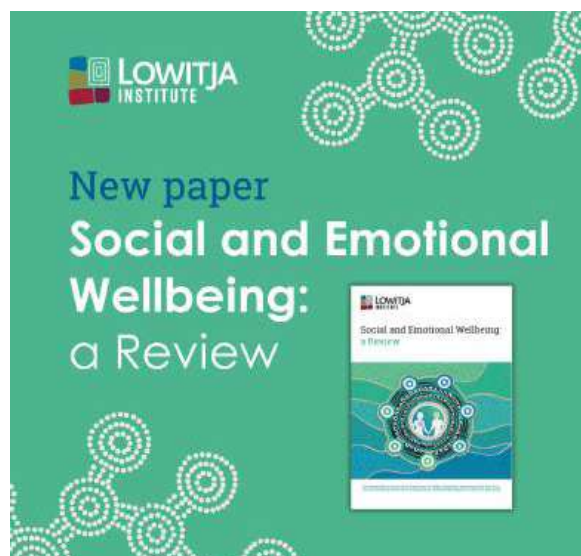
Our engaged online community has increased, with **12,249 LinkedIn** followers (23.5% increase on last year), in addition to, **4,073 Instagram** followers (31.7% increase), and **3,024 Facebook** followers (8.2% increase).

	OUTREACH	FOLLOWERS	% INCREASE FROM LAST YEAR
	LinkedIn	12,249	23.5 %
	Instagram	4,073	31.7%
	Facebook	3,024	8.2%

Conference 2025 social media

Conference 2025 social media summary:
1–30 June 2025

	OUTREACH	IMPRESSIONS
	LinkedIn	12,249
	Instagram	69,506
	Facebook	86,589



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.



UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, April 2025: Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart raised a UN intervention in New York, calling for action regarding increased Indigenous control and ownership of Indigenous health and population data.



(L-to-R): Lowitja Institute Deputy CEO Michael Newman, Chairperson Craig Ritchie, and CEO Paul Stewart at United Nations General Assembly Building, New York, US.



Deb Edwards, Head of the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation, provided a keynote at the Indigenous Allied Health National Conference, held on Kaurna Country, Adelaide, in December 2024.



(L-to-R): Productivity Commissioner Selwyn Button (formerly Lowitja Institute Board Chair) with our CEO Paul Stewart who addressed the Productivity Commission in June 2025.

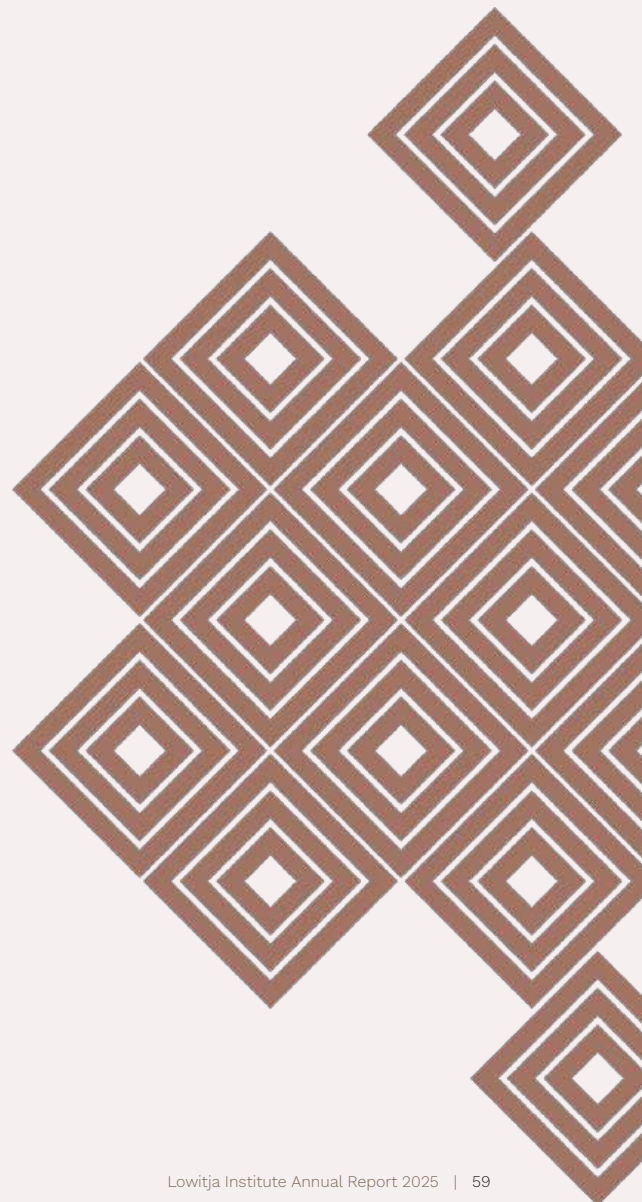


In December 2024, a delegation from the Medical Association for Indigenous People of Taiwan (MAIPT) visited our offices in Naarm for a morning of networking and knowledge exchange around the importance of community controlled health research.



*New partnerships
have broadened
our reach and
strengthened our
sustainability.*

Craig Ritchie, Chairperson,
Lowitja Institute



Governance and financial review

Lowitja Institute Board

CHAIRPERSON



Mr Craig Ritchie is an Aboriginal man of the Dhunghutti and Biripi nations. He 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).

Craig joined AIATSIS as deputy CEO in April 2016, and formally appointed CEO in May 2017. Prior to joining, Craig has worked in other senior roles in the Department of Education and Training 2011–16 in roles heading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education, higher education access and participation for people from low-SES backgrounds, and international student mobility, as well as founding director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in the ACT Government. Craig has extensive experience in the community sector, including as CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) – the peak advocacy body for Aboriginal community controlled health services.

During his public service career Craig was one of a growing number of Indigenous Commonwealth Government agency heads and a founding member of the APS Indigenous SES Network. He is an Honorary Senior Fellow at the University of Melbourne. He serves on the Vice-Chancellor’s Industry Advisory Board at the University of Technology Sydney. Craig studied history, classics and education at the University of Newcastle, has a post-graduate qualification in management and is currently completing his PhD at the Australian National University. His thesis topic is *Culture and Policymaking: Towards Better Aboriginal Policy* and explores the cultural basis of contemporary policymaking and researching the culture-based transformation of policymaking systems in Australia on the basis of Aboriginal culture.

*Selwyn Button stepped down as Chair and from the Board on 5 December 2024.

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

DIRECTORS



Ms Deborah Butler, is a Jawoyn woman, born and raised in Katherine, Northern Territory (NT). She has over 20 years' experience working with government policy and projects in various roles in both South Australia and the Northern Territory, primarily in the areas of Aboriginal housing and health policy.



Ms Suzanne Andrews, is a Jaru, Bunuba, Bardi saltwater woman from Western Australia's North Kimberley region, is Chief Executive of Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service. With extensive experience in health and the community control sector, Suzanne advocates for social change amongst her people and community.



Ms Jahna Cedar OAM, is a Nyiyaparli woman from the Pilbara region of Western Australia. 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, is a Kalkadoon and Waanyi man, has worked in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander field for over 25 years. He has held several roles across government and non-government, including working as an Aboriginal health worker, project manager, and chief executive officer. Dallas has also served on other health service boards.



Mr Michael Graham, a proud Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta and Wiradjuri man, has worked in the community controlled sector for the past 20 years and is the Chief Executive Officer at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS).



Ms Donisha Duff OAM, is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman from Thursday Island, Torres Strait with over 25 years' experience in health and Indigenous affairs, working in Federal and state governments and the non-government, university, and community controlled sectors. She is an Adjunct Associate Professor with Kurungkurl Katitjin, Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research at Edith Cowan University.

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

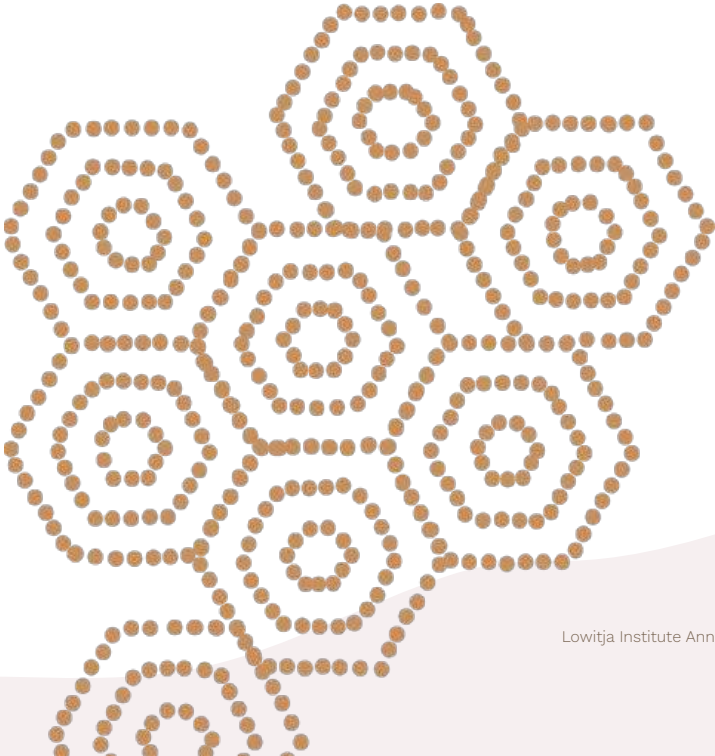
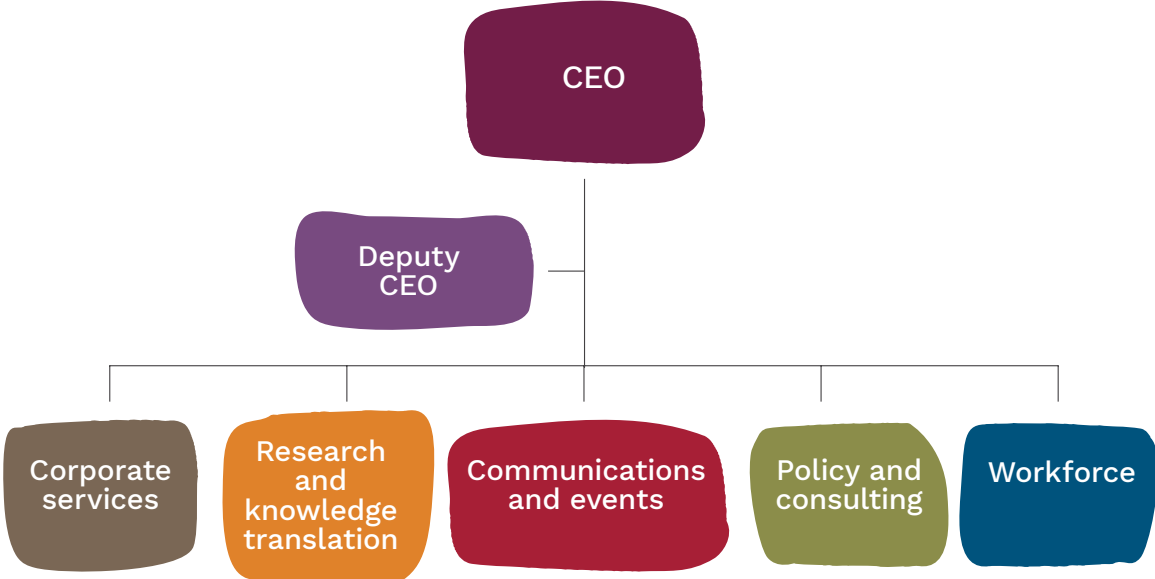
**CREATE A STRONG AND
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

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 2025

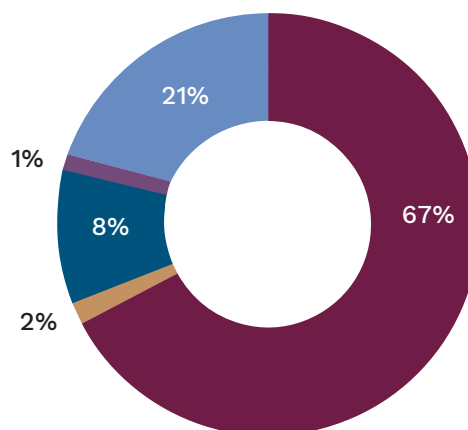
Lowitja Institute closed the 2024–25 financial year with a \$1,170,158 surplus, compared to \$907,635 in the previous year. Approximately 65% of this result was attributable to income from the Institute's biennial Conference, 15% from external projects and consultancy, with the remaining balance from donations and investments. All other reported income has been contracted and matched against expenditure in accordance with the relevant revenue recognition standards.

Income

Totalled \$10.78m

\$6.5m 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; \$2.2m generated from the Institute's biennial Conference; \$0.7m funded by other Commonwealth and state government departments, with the balance from philanthropic, external organisations, consulting, donations and interest income.

Lowitja Institute 2024-25 Income



ASSETS

Totalled \$13.43m

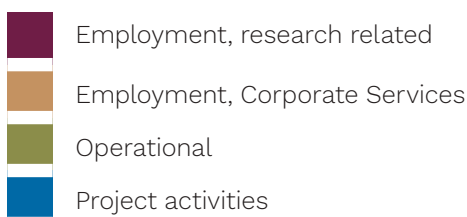
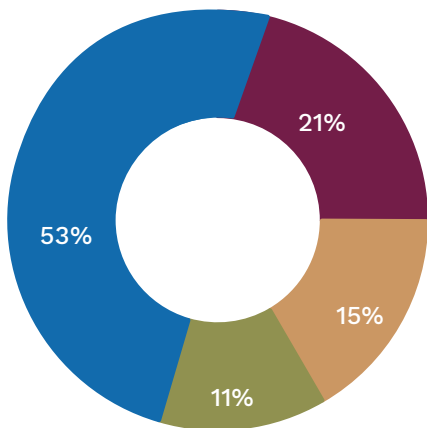
Cash and cash equivalents of \$4.5m, short-term cash deposits of \$7m, trade and other receivables \$1.3m, \$0.6m of non-current assets, which includes fixed and right-of-use assets.

Expenditure

Totalled \$9.61m

Research-related activities represented 74% of expenditure and Corporate Services 26%. Project activity expenditure totalled \$5.14m of which \$1.3m directly related to Research Project Grants, Seeding Grants and Scholarships, with the remaining across projects to progress the Institute's research agenda. \$3.42m was spent on human capital and operational expenditure was \$1.05m.

Lowitja Institute 2024-25 Expenditure



LIABILITIES

Totalled \$9.8m

Income held in advance \$8.04m, trade and other current liabilities \$1.04m, employee entitlement provisions \$0.28m, and lease liability of \$0.5m in connection with the Institute's leased premises.

Financial Position at 30 June 2025

