AusHSI Australian Centre for Health Services Innovation

LOWITJA INSTITUTE

MTPConnect Australia's Life Sciences Innovation Accelerator

MEDIA RELEASE

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First Nations Forum Identifies Pathway to Drive Lasting Impact in Diabetes and Cardiovascular Research

MTPConnect, the Lowitja Institute and the Australian Centre for Health Services Innovation (AusHSI) have today released guidance to help those funding or shaping First Nations health research to achieve long-term impact.

It's the result of a jointly hosted forum held in Naarm (Melbourne) in late 2025 which explored sustainable models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research in diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Groups funded through MTPConnect's Targeted Translation Research Accelerator (TTRA) program which progressed solutions for diabetes and cardiovascular disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, came together with community partners, government representatives, funders and sector leaders.

"The forum brought into sharp focus what genuine, community-led research looks like in practice, grounded in trust, cultural authority and local priorities," said MTPConnect CEO and MD Stuart Dignam.

"Supporting the generation of evidence is only the beginning - enabling its sustainable implementation is an ethical imperative, and the only way to ensure that health and wellbeing benefits are enduring," said Stuart Dignam.

"Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and participation in research is critical to ensuring that research is driven by community priorities, conducted in culturally safe ways, and delivers meaningful outcomes for our peoples and communities," said Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart.

"Forum participants told us that community-centred research needs to be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from start to finish. Ensuring leadership at all stages of the research process enhances community trust. When resources are created by and for communities, it leads to meaningful, long-term outcomes," said Paul Stewart.

"It was a privilege to participate in the forum and hear directly from community," said AusHSI Operations Director Megan Campbell.

"This important resource will support funders, policymakers and partners to elevate and sustain First Nations research leadership, and ensure evidence is translated into meaningful, long-term improvements in health and wellbeing. We encourage all organisations funding or shaping health research to engage with these findings and embed these approaches in their work," said Megan Campbell.

The guidance outlines enablers of long-term impact in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diabetes and cardiovascular research and is available to download from the MTPConnect website, Lowitja Institute website and the AusHSI website.

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Driving Lasting Change: Enablers of long-term impact in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Diabetes and Cardiovascular Research

Sustainability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research is essential to ensure that knowledge, relationships, and community benefit endure beyond individual projects or funding cycles. Sustainable research builds long-term capacity, supports community leadership, and enables evidence to translate into lasting improvements in health and wellbeing.

On 1 December 2025 MTPConnect, the Lowitja Institute and the Australian Centre for Health Services Innovation (AusHSI) jointly hosted a forum in Naarm (Melbourne) to explore sustainable models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research in diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The forum brought together groups funded through MTPConnect's Targeted Translation Research Accelerator program, community partners, government representatives, funders and sector leaders, to share strengths, reflect on community-led research, and pathways that support enduring health and wellbeing outcomes.

Participants highlighted how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander–centred research approaches lead to better outcomes, and why strong, respectful community-driven partnerships are critical for agile, responsive, and sustainable impact.

The following Enablers of Long-Term Impact emerged clearly throughout the forum and should be considered and implemented by those funding or shaping policy in First Nations health research:

System accountability for uptake and outcomes
Sustainable impact is enabled when health systems, funders and policymakers are accountable to communities and can collectively demonstrate how research outcomes are implemented, monitored and sustained against community-defined priorities and success measures.

Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and governance
Sustainable impact is enabled when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lead decision-making across the conception, design, implementation, scaling and evaluation of health research and its outcomes across policy, funding and service delivery.

Invest in long-term community-led partnerships, not short-term projects
Enduring impact requires partnerships led by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and communities, supported by funding and policy settings that prioritise continuity, trust, place-based solutions, and early involvement of all partners.

Funding models that support implementation and system change
Lasting health outcomes are enabled by funding models that resource not only research activity, but implementation, adaptation, workforce capability and impact evaluation, so findings can be embedded into services, systems and policy.

Uphold Indigenous data sovereignty and Indigenous data governance
Ethical, effective and sustainable implementation of research outcomes, and lasting community benefit, is enabled when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty is embedded across policy and practice, ensuring community control over data, knowledge and its application.

Artwork by Ngarrindjeri Artist, Jordan Lovegrove - Karko Creations

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About MTPConnect: MTPConnect is Australia's Life Sciences Innovation Accelerator – an independent, not-for-profit organisation championing growth of Australia's vibrant life sciences sector by backing start-ups, researchers, entrepreneurs and SMEs to bring new medical products from research labs to the market, delivering innovation programs and helping Australian companies connect and access global markets through trade missions and strategic collaborations. It delivered the $47 million TTRA initiative, supported by the Medical Research Future Fund, providing an integrated research program to improve the prevention, management and treatment of diabetes and cardiovascular disease, both leading causes of death and disability in Australia.

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

About AusHSI: The Australian Centre for Health Services Innovation (AusHSI) is a leading research, education and consulting organisation dedicated to improving the quality, safety and value of healthcare. AusHSI works at the interface of research, policy and practice to accelerate the translation of evidence into real-world impact, with a strong focus on partnership, co-design and implementation. AusHSI is part of the QUT Centre for Healthcare Transformation in the Faculty of Health, contributing to QUT's leadership in applied, high-impact health services research.

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IMAGES FROM FORUM THAT ARE APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION

Caption: *A panel discusses cross cutting themes and key learnings from their TTRA-funded projects. From left: Ms Talena Waia, Wellbeing Officer, Gulf Youth and Community Services, Borroloola; Ms Edwina Murphy, Peer Facilitator, Menzies School of Health Research; Ms Rebecca Nielsen, Aboriginal Project Officer at SA Health, Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network (BHFLHN); Ms Karrina DeMasi, Project Manager, Aboriginal Womens' Cardiovascular Research, The Kids Institute; Dr Bronwyn Rossingh Research Manager Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation; Professor Beverley-Ann Biggs, Head, Global and Indigenous Health Group, Doherty Institute, University of Melbourne*

Caption: *Forum participants listen to presentations from the TTRA-funded projects*

***Caption**: A panel discusses cross cutting themes and key learnings from their TTRA-funded projects. From left: Dr Bronwyn Rossingh Research Manager Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation; Professor Beverley-Ann Biggs, Head, Global and Indigenous Health Group, Doherty Institute, University of Melbourne; Mr George Garambaka Gurruwiwi, Project Chief Investigator, Doherty Institute, University of Melbourne*

***Caption**: A panel discusses sustainability and sustainable models of funding. From left: Ms Jayde Ward, Director, Philanthropic Services, JBWere; Ms Jaki Adams, Executive Manager Research and Knowledge Translation – Lowitja Institute; Mr Abe Ropitini, Executive Director Population Health - the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation*