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## **18 hospitals sign up to close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heart health**

Eighteen hospitals from around Australia have signed up to the Lighthouse Hospital Project aimed at improving the hospital treatment of coronary heart disease among Indigenous Australians

Lighthouse is operated and managed by the Heart Foundation and the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA). It is funded by the Australian Government.

The 18 hospitals cover almost one-half of all cardiac admissions in Australia for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Heart Foundation National CEO Adjunct Professor John Kelly said closing the gap in cardiovascular disease between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was a key Heart Foundation priority, and it was highly appropriate that today's announcement coincided with National Sorry Day.

'Cardiac care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is serious business. Australia's First Peoples are more likely to have heart attacks than non-Indigenous Australians, and more likely to have early heart disease onset coupled with other health problems, frequent hospital admissions and premature death.

'Deaths happen at almost twice the rate for non-Indigenous Australians, yet Indigenous Australians appear to have fewer tests and treatments while in hospital, and discharge from hospital against medical advice is five times as high', Professor Kelly said

AHHA CEO Alison Verhoeven says that Lighthouse aims to ensure Indigenous Australians receive appropriate evidence-based care in a culturally safe manner.

'A critical component of success will be close and genuine collaboration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, communities and organisations in the design and implementation of the activities.

'To borrow from the words of the Prime Minister, Lighthouse will encourage and support hospitals to do things **'with'** Aboriginal people not **'to'** them.

CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Patricia Turner, says NACCHO 'will provide leadership and guidance to the Lighthouse team in enabling the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and Aboriginal health workforce to be intimately involved in designing and implementing the program'.

'We are very supportive of this program and its contribution to National Sorry Day today, and to Reconciliation Week which starts tomorrow', Ms Turner said.

Click [here](#) for more information on the Lighthouse Project.

### **Media inquiries:**

**Heart Foundation:** John Kelly, Chief Executive Officer (call Tina Wall, 0427 591 638)

**AHHA:** Alison Verhoeven, Chief Executive, 0403 282 501