

MEDIA RELEASE – 16 April 2021**Report offers blueprint for embedding cultural determinants of health in policies**

A new report published by Lowitja Institute provides a blueprint for placing culture at the core of policies affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, showing how the cultural determinants of health can be implemented into policy and practice.

Lowitja institute CEO Dr Janine Mohamed said the report — *Culture is key: towards cultural determinants-driven health policy* — outlines how culture is a protective factor for health and wellbeing and needs to be integrated and valued within health policy frameworks and programs, and also in broader government policies.

“For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the cultural determinants are an essential part of our identity and are protective factors of health and wellbeing, anchored in ways of knowing, doing and being that have continued for tens of thousands of years,” she said.

“However, this holistic concept of health is often neglected in government approaches to our health and wellbeing because it does not align with dominant culture or western perspectives and is not understood or fully appreciated by policymakers,” she said.

Dr Mohamed said the new Closing the Gap National Agreement and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan refresh offer a unique window of opportunity for government to invest in cultural determinant-driven whole-of-government policy.

The report’s recommendations to government include to:

- Develop a whole-of-government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures policy.
- Reform the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, funding, evaluation and reporting is undertaken to empower community driven policy and decision making.
- Commit to historical truth telling and acceptance as an important component of creating a health system free of racism.

The framework for implementing the cultural determinants involves:

- Shared commitment and collaboration across government.
- Community-driven holistic approaches.
- Operating on key principles of Indigenous leadership, strength-based and right-based approaches and a recognition of the impact of the social determinants of health and racism on health and wellbeing.
- Leadership for change, which recognises the culture of policy making, the value and role of culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing and a willingness to change the spaces where policy is made.

Lowitja Institute is hosting a webinar on Thursday 29 April to support the release of the report. For more details or to register, please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/150140547419>.

For more information about the report or to arrange an interview with Dr Janine Mohamed, please contact Amy Hofman on 0405 114 930.