

## **MEDIA RELEASE – 12 May 2021**

### **2021-22 Budget has welcome measures but more investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and justice required**

The Lowitja Institute has welcomed several important spending measures in the 2021-22 Federal Budget but has called for more work and commitment to support comprehensive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-driven solutions across much-needed areas.

Lowitja Institute CEO Dr Janine Mohamed said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations had wanted to see significant investment in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, although it is hoped that spending will be announced in the Implementation Plans due to be released mid-year.

“The Budget could have been a significant and important opportunity to comprehensively invest in historical truth-telling as called for through the Uluru Statement from the Heart,” Dr Mohamed said.

Lowitja Institute welcomed several important measures, particularly a focus on building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care workforce, supporting COVID-19 responses by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, and important funding for suicide prevention.

Dr Mohamed said the \$10 million five-year NHMRC grant allocated to the National First Nations Research Network was a significant initiative. The network is a newly formed cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, led by four experienced First Nations Australian leaders including Pat Anderson AO, Chair of Lowitja Institute.

“The National First Nations Research Network will build on Lowitja Institute’s outstanding legacy work in creating pathways to build workforce capabilities for the sustained health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This grant provides an opportunity for future funding and government policy to directly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lead investigators,” she said.

However, Lowitja Institute shares the concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice organisations at the Federal Government’s missed opportunity to support the national crisis of Indigenous over-incarceration and deaths in custody.

“This Budget could have been a landmark document that reflected the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic response, in that supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to lead will bring about much better outcomes,” Dr Mohamed said.

“Specifically, we need to see a targeted investment in research led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and organisations and a prioritisation of our workforce across all areas, including prioritising STEM scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

We will not be able to deliver the outcomes required to close the gap without supporting the leadership of community-led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives.”

*For more information or to arrange an interview with Dr Janine Mohamed, please contact Amy Hofman on 0405 114 930 or [amy.hofman@lowitja.org.au](mailto:amy.hofman@lowitja.org.au).*

**The Lowitja Institute** is Australia’s only community controlled national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, named in honour of its Patron, Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG. It is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working for the health and wellbeing of Australia’s First Peoples through high impact quality research, knowledge exchange, and by supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.