

MEDIA RELEASE – 12 October 2021

20 new research projects transform Indigenous health research in Australia

Lowitja Institute, Australia's national institute for community controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, has unveiled a landmark program of 20 new research grants that changes the way Indigenous health research is done in Australia.

Lowitja Institute CEO Dr Janine Mohamed said the \$4.32 million 2021-2024 Lowitja Institute Research Program delivers research that is truly community-led, culturally-safe and self-determined and puts the cultural determinants of health at the heart of each project.

"Last year, Lowitja Institute fulfilled our long-held vision of becoming an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation, allowing us to throw off the shackles of the old Cooperative Research Centres framework which had always required us to partner only with established research institutions," Dr Mohamed said.

"Being community controlled allows us to privilege our mob when it comes to allocating research funds. It means we can ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people drive our research agenda and that we do the research our people want and need."

The 2021-2024 Lowitja Institute Research Projects range from the world acclaimed Melbourne-based Short Black Opera to a focus on aged care in the Torres Strait and on children by the Marinwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in Fitzroy Crossing.

Projects will also explore the health impacts of out-of-home care and Indigenous community radio, and map Rainbow Mob cultures, knowledges, and experiences.

"The program funds research that is not only diverse geographically but across age groups and the social and cultural determinants of health, and it has important systems reform on the agenda, including through health care delivery and data," Dr Mohamed said.

Most importantly, the 20 projects are all designed and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and deeply embedded in community and community outcomes.

"For too long, Indigenous health research in Australia was *on* and *about* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, not *by* and *for* us," Dr Mohamed said.

"Lowitja Institute has always sought to disrupt that paradigm, and this Research Grant program turns it on its head."

See the full list of program recipients and their project outlines below and visit [Lowitja.org.au/current-projects](https://www.lowitja.org.au/current-projects) for full information.

For more information, project photos or to arrange an interview with Dr Janine Mohamed or a Project Lead/ spokesperson, please contact Amy Hofman on 0405 114 930 or communications@lowitja.org.au.

Research recipient, project & location	Research focus
<p>Short Black Opera: Empowering Ensemble Dutala, Melbourne</p>	<p>Empowering Ensemble Dutala: creating a culturally relevant framework within Australia’s orchestras that supports inclusion and opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander orchestral musicians.</p> <p><i>“In establishing Ensemble Dutala and associated programs, Short Black Opera will create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians and composers to come together for culturally safe projects, providing inspiration and mentorship for younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and acting as a catalyst for other Performing Arts Organisations and educational institutions to move away from the Cultural exploitation and misappropriation that are currently accepted practice within the Australian Art Music sector.”</i></p> <p>- Prof Deborah Cheetham AO, Artistic Director and Project Lead</p>
<p>LeadershipFIT: Future-proofing tomorrow’s leadership champions, Brisbane</p>	<p>Focuses on advancing the leadership aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples through Indigenous-led intergenerational knowledge translation mechanisms. Pilot sites across Queensland will be ‘lighthouses’ so Senior Leaders and Elders can provide a rich leadership heritage to younger generations.</p> <p><i>“Our project focuses on advancing the leadership aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples through Indigenous-led intergenerational knowledge translation mechanisms. Our pilot sites, a small number of Community Controlled Health Organisations across Queensland, will be ‘lighthouses’ for the hopes, aspirations and legacies of Senior Leaders and Elders, to leave a rich leadership heritage to younger generations who will then pass on further leadership wisdom and knowledge to other generations to follow.”</i></p> <p>– Eddie and Suzanne Watkin, Founders and Project Leads</p>
<p>Brisbane Indigenous Media Association: Indigenous media and community listening: Harnessing the power of the spoken word for urban and regional Indigenous communities, Brisbane</p>	<p>Seeks to discover the role that radio plays in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in urban areas and major regional hubs in Queensland. It emerged from recognition that there was little current research about Indigenous community radio in Australia; nor of the importance of radio generally as an oral and spoken-word medium for Indigenous peoples.</p>
<p>Murri Watch: Supported Youth Accommodation, Wooloongaba, Queensland</p>	<p>To develop the most effective supported accommodation service delivery model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people experiencing homelessness in Queensland. The project will develop a practice framework and a monitoring and evaluation framework.</p> <p><i>“Support from the Lowitja Institute is invaluable for Murri Watch, enabling us to work with our communities to gather and document the evidence and information required to design the best possible service delivery framework. This supports our young people to lead stronger, more stable lives.”</i></p> <p>– Ken Georgetown, CEO and Project Lead</p>

<p>Torres Strait Aged Care Association: Advocacy for aged care, Thursday Island</p>	<p>To improve education and awareness of services and supports available to older Torres Strait Islanders living in the community. It will involve the development and evaluation of a pilot Information Advocacy Hub.</p> <p><i>“Gaps were identified in the initial research, so we selected information and efficacy as a research focus as so many people don’t know how, where or why to get services available to them. It’s about connecting older Torres Strait Islander people with the local community and government services available in their areas.”</i></p> <p>- Brian Milburn, Business Manager and Project Lead</p>
<p>Gurriny Yealamucka: Strengthening the evidence for family wellbeing, Yarrabah, Queensland</p>	<p>Seeks to enhance the evidence base of the Family Wellbeing Empowerment Program and other social and emotional wellbeing programs through methodologically rigorous evaluations and incorporating quantitative components including economic analysis.</p> <p><i>“The Family Wellbeing project will really evidence base the need for our mob to do the Family Wellbeing program as it will help with job ready, business ready.”</i></p> <p>– Suzanne Andrews, CEO and Project Lead</p>
<p>Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages: Victorian Aboriginal Languages Health Check, based in Melbourne</p>	<p>To better understand the status of Aboriginal languages and how the Mother Tongue can be maintained and revitalised using the Indigenous methodological approach of Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing through the Indigenous pedagogies of Yarning and Storying in the community.</p> <p><i>“Our research focuses on Language Revitalization, fundamental for the health and well-being of our mob. The Lowitja Institute has made a difference to our long term experience working in the area of Language Revitalization. With their support, we been able to do this research in our own terms and further implement our ‘fire camp’ methodology which is a holistic approach to get together and work towards our aims. Languages are diverse and so are the interests in doing Language revitalization.”</i></p> <p>- Dr Vicki Couzens, Researcher and Project Lead</p>
<p>Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services: Towards a culturally secure telehealth model, Broome, WA</p>	<p>This project will oversee the development of a telehealth service provision model for the Kimberley. The model will be informed by Aboriginal people and holistic in approach, while rigorous, transparent and efficacious in output.</p>
<p>Radarborg Pty Ltd: Appraising accreditation standards for Aboriginal Health Services, Townsville, Qld</p>	<p>Seeks to identify the reliable evidence on the efficiency and sustainability of accreditation standards for Aboriginal Health Services.</p> <p><i>“We are grateful the Lowitja Institute’s scholarship criteria funds community controlled organisations, enabling our Traditional Owner Company to enter the research space. Radarborg employs a Research Associate (Mr. Nkosinathi Sithole, a recently graduated PhD candidate) to support our research exploring the efficiency and sustainability of accreditation standards applied in the ACCHS sector.”</i></p> <p>– Jenifer Darr, Director and Project Lead</p>

<p>Miwatj Health: Health Literacy Tool, Nhulunbuy, East Arnhem, NT</p>	<p>Aims to define health literacy from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. It involves developing and trialling an organisational health literacy assessment tool and a data gathering and analysis process that best reflects the health and wellbeing priorities of the Yolngu communities of the East Arnhem region.</p>
<p>Nyamba Buru Yawuru: Community-driven empowerment through mabu liyan – closing the data and knowledge gap, Broome, WA</p>	<p>Grounded in mabu liyan, Yawuru’s conception of wellbeing, this project builds on the Yawuru Wellbeing Project and aims to contribute toward narrowing the knowledge gap and data gap. It also aims to demonstrate how community control and involvement in nation building, art and sports can lead to improvements in wellbeing for Indigenous people living in the Kimberley.</p>
<p>Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation: Wellness project and priority setting, Alice Springs, NT</p>	<p>Integrates an understanding of wellness of person and place, focussing on the seven dimensions within the framework identified by Town Campers as critical to their wellness – Keeping Country, Shelter, Identity, Camp/Community Leadership, Knowledge, Healing and Community.</p>
<p>Boon Wurrung Foundation: Mapping histories of Rainbow Mob cultures, knowledges and experiences, Melbourne</p>	<p>To map histories and represent queer Indigenous populations to ensure the cultural safety and strategy of Rainbow mobs are located in the health and service delivery of Aboriginal programs in Victoria.</p>
<p>SNAICC: Early Childhood Services in NSW, based in Melbourne</p>	<p>Building an effective support system for sustainable and effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services – the evidence base, to be developed through the evaluation of the pilot NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Years Support Entity project.</p> <p><i>“SNAICC values the support of the Lowitja Institute in the evaluation of a pilot project to build and empower Aboriginal community-controlled services across the country to improve developmental outcomes for our children, in line with commitments in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.”</i></p> <p>- Catherine Liddle, CEO and Project Lead</p>
<p>CATSINaM, national, based in Canberra</p>	<p>To strengthen the evidence base underpinning the need for professional education reform and to strengthen Indigenous nursing and midwifery leadership in the complex and intersectional spaces implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework.</p> <p><i>“In 2020, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery professionals including practitioners, researchers, educators, policy makers, funders, and community organisations came together to form a national Consortium, known as Muliyan. The Muliyan research consortium addresses the growing need to bring together Indigenist Nursing and Midwifery educational research and the decades of Indigenous specialist knowledge, expertise and experiences held by each of the partners”.</i></p> <p>- Roianne West, CEO and Project Lead</p>

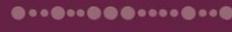
<p>Literacy for Life Foundation, ‘Yes, I Can’ in remote EAL/D Aboriginal communities, NT</p>	<p>To broaden and deepen the evidence base on the role of community-controlled adult literacy programs in improving health and socio-economic outcomes in remote EAL/D (English as Additional Language/Dialect) multilingual communities in the Northern Territory.</p> <p><i>“The grant will allow Literacy for Life Foundation, an Aboriginal not-for-profit, to broaden and deepen the evidence base on the role of community-controlled adult literacy programs in improving health and socio-economic outcomes in remote multilingual communities in the NT.”</i></p> <p>- Frances Williamson, Research and Training Manager and Project Lead</p>
<p>Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Association: Creating and sharing culturally-appropriate therapeutic practice guides, based in Melbourne</p>	<p>To document and implement more Aboriginal specific cultural elements of practice and roll them out across the organisation and to other ACCOs to build a strong Aboriginal evidence base in Victoria.</p> <p><i>“The Lowitja project grant will enable VACCA to build a strong Aboriginal evidence base in Victoria. This grant will document and implement more Aboriginal specific cultural elements of practice and roll it out across our organisation and to other Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs)”</i></p> <p>- Muriel Bamblett, CEO</p>
<p>Marinwarntikura Women’s Resource Centre: Longitudinal study: The Bigiswun Kid Project, Fitzroy Crossing, WA</p>	<p>To provide information on longitudinal outcomes for adolescents in remote Aboriginal Australia, identify whether implementation of individual Liliwan Management Plans was achieved, and document difficulties in accessing services.</p> <p><i>“The fact that it is genuinely community-initiated and led is the key to the project’s success. It’s not just research for research sake, it’s giving young people a voice and making sure the research has an immediate benefit for the community.”</i></p> <p>– Sue Thomas, Strategic Priority Lead</p>
<p>Abcare: Bimirr Darrundaygu, Coffs Harbour, NSW</p>	<p>To facilitate crucial research into the psychological harm experienced by children in out of home care (OOHC), to develop therapeutic supports and learning aids to help close the health, development and education gaps our children face.</p> <p><i>“Challenges regulating emotions underlie many neurodevelopmental and behavioural conditions and follow early life trauma. Children in OOHC often present with distress and challenges regulating their emotions. This project aims to review, develop, and evaluate a 12-week trauma informed emotion regulation skills program for Aboriginal children and adolescents in OOHC and their carer’s. We expect that the results from this study will guide therapeutic support services within the OOHC sector.”</i></p> <p>- Dr Emily Hindman, Researcher, Psychologist, Clinical Services Manager and Project Lead</p>
<p>Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre: Koori Kids Culture Club, South Nowra, NSW</p>	<p>To evaluate a pilot after-school cultural program in consultation with the local community. The aim of the program is to help children make healthy lifestyle choices through activities that represent Aboriginal culture.</p>

ABOUT THE LOWIJA INSTITUTE

The Lowitja Institute is Australia's 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.

Established in January 2010, the Lowitja Institute operates on key principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, a broader understanding of health that incorporates wellbeing, and the need for the work to have a clear and positive impact.

The history of the Lowitja Institute dates back to 1997 when the first Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was established. Since then, the Institute and the CRC organisations have led a substantial reform agenda in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research by working with communities, researchers and policymakers, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people setting the agenda and driving the outcomes.

 lowitja.org.au