

MEDIA RELEASE – 03 December 2021

Pat Anderson AO steps down as Lowitja Institute Chair after nearly 20 years

Lowitja Institute today pays tribute to internationally respected Aboriginal health leader Pat Anderson, who was instrumental in the organisation's establishment and its development as Australia's renowned national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health research institute.

Ms Anderson AO, an Alyawarre woman and powerful advocate for the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and First Peoples globally, has retired as Lowitja Institute chairperson after nearly 20 years in the role.

The Board has elected Mr Selwyn Button, a Gungarri man from South West Queensland, who is Registrar of the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations and chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Brisbane Limited, as its new chairperson.

Lowitja Institute CEO Dr Janine Mohamed said Ms Anderson played a key role in the first efforts nearly three decades ago in Darwin to advance research led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"This involved challenging and disrupting Western models of research that was done on and about us, not by and for us — and that was not an easy task," Dr Mohamed said.

"Pat has been a fearless advocate for justice and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for decades and an outstanding mentor and strong moral compass."

"She is a trailblazer and ceiling breaker for all women."

"Like our founding patron and namesake Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, Pat is a guiding light for all of us at Lowitja Institute, and we are so grateful she will continue to be involved with us as a patron."

Ms Anderson, who grew up on a camp outside Darwin in the 1950s, has led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations, investigations and campaigns, in the Northern Territory and nationally, as well as international efforts to achieve social justice for First Nations people.

As well as being CEO of the Danila Dilba Health Service in Darwin and Chairperson of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), she co-chaired the *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle*: 'Little Children are Sacred' inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse.

In 2003, she stepped into Dr O'Donoghue's footsteps to become chair of the then Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, which preceded the Lowitja Institute. She had been a Board member since 1997.

Under her guidance, the Lowitja Institute has shifted the paradigm in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and methodology to ensure that it is led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs and priorities and makes a real, measurable and positive difference.

It has helped build a strong and growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce, and provided the evidence base to influence critical change in health policy, including on the impact of racism on health, tobacco control, chronic disease, and a growing focus on the cultural determinants of health.

Four years ago, she played a leading role in facilitating the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which she continues to offer as a gift to the Australian people — regrettably yet to be embraced by the Australian Government. Its calls for Voice, Truth and Treaty continue to be priorities for the Lowitja Institute.

Earlier this year Ms Anderson was named as 2021 ACT Senior Australian of the Year, awarded for her powerful advocacy for the health of Australia's First Peoples nationally and internationally.

For more information/photos/interviews, please contact Amy Hofman on 0405 114 930

Pat Anderson: brief timeline

2021: Delivered the annual Don Dunstan Foundation [Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration](#); ACT Senior Australian of the Year; accepted the Sydney Peace Prize with Professors Megan Davis and Noel Pearson for the Uluru Statement from The Heart.

2019: Doctor of Laws honoris causa, The University of Melbourne

2018: Doctor of Laws honoris causa, UNSW

2018: NAIDOC Lifetime Achievement Award

2017: Co-Chair, Referendum Council, declared the Uluru Statement from The Heart; Doctor of Medical Science honoris causa, Edith Cowan University

2016: Human Rights Medal 2016, Australian Human Rights Commission

2015: Westpac and Australian Financial Review 100 Women of Influence Public Policy category winner

2014: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council, Award for Elders and Leaders in Higher Education

2013: Officer of the Order of Australia (AO)

2013: Honorary degree of Doctor of the University (DUniv), Flinders University

2012: Human Rights Award, Community Individual Award – Tony Fitzgerald Memorial Award

2010: Appointed Chairperson, Lowitja Institute Board

2007: Public Health Association of Australia, Sidney Sax Medal

2007: Northern Territory Senior Citizen of the Year

2006: Appointed co-chair of the Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse

2003: Appointed Chairperson of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health

2002: Appointed Deputy Chairperson of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health Board, chair National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), co-chairperson National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council

1997-2003: Founding Board Member, CRC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

ABOUT LOWITJA INSTITUTE

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 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.

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