



Senator The Hon Malarndirri McCarthy

Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians

Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health

First of its kind study to explore cancer from a First Nations perspective

A new national study has launched to give Australians a better understanding of how First Nations people view and experience cancer.

Funded by Cancer Australia, Kulay Kalingka – the first study of this kind in Australia – is led, designed and implemented by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research team at the Australian National University (ANU).

The team will collect data for 22 cancer control indicators in First Nations people.

These include their knowledge, attitudes and understanding of cancer, participation in health promotion and cancer screening programs.

The study will also examine exposure to risk factors, and patient and carer experiences of cancer, including cancer treatment and participation in clinical trials.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to experience disparities in cancer outcomes when compared to non-Indigenous Australians, including higher incidence rates, and cancer mortality rates, and lower participation rates in bowel, breast, and cervical cancer population screening programs.

Between 2006 and 2019 the gap in cancer mortality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians widened, with a 14% increase in cancer mortality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and a 13% decrease in the rates for non-Indigenous Australians.

Quotes attributable to Assistant Minister Malarndirri McCarthy:

“Improving cancer outcomes for First Nations people is a national priority for the Government.

“Cancer is one of the leading causes of death in our communities and we are more likely to die from cancers associated with preventable risk factors.

“This means we must understand the barriers relating to accessing health care and the uptake of screening.

“Kulay Kalingka is just one way the Government is striving to work respectfully and in true partnership with First Nations people, communities and organisations to seek insights that will help close the gap on health outcomes”.

Quotes attributable to Professor Raymond Lovett, ANU National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research:

“We need to better understand the insights and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cancer and learn from this how we can improve their cancer outcomes.

“There are significant gaps in data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This new study aims to address these disparities.”

Quotes attributable to Professor Dorothy Keefe, CEO Cancer Australia:

“We are proud to work in partnership with the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research to develop and implement culturally safe and appropriate strategies, programs and initiatives such as the Kulay Kalingka study, with the aim of improving health and wellbeing.

“The data will be of enormous benefit to the Australian Cancer Plan we are currently developing.”

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Senator McCarthy - Jamal Ben Haddou 0417 387 775 or
Jamal.benhaddou@aph.gov.au

Cancer Australia – Susie Dobson 0438 209 833
or Susie.dobson@canceraustralia.gov.au

Australian National University – Jessica Fagan 0436 694 750
jessica.fagan@anu.edu.au