

MEDIA RELEASE – 20 April 2023

Lowitja Institute CEO calls for an international commitment to climate action through decolonisation

Lowitja Institute CEO Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed calls on the United Nations and member nation states to take full responsibility for decolonisation and anti-racism when addressing climate change and its impacts on Indigenous peoples' rights, health and wellbeing.

On Tuesday 18 April 2023 (ET), Adjunct Professor Mohamed delivered an intervention to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Twenty-Second Session in New York City, calling for strong action to guarantee the survival of Indigenous communities and our lands.

In her address, Adjunct Professor Mohamed urged United Nations and member nation states to fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and convene a meeting to discuss decolonised approaches and actions. This includes monitoring progress on climate change and its effects on Indigenous peoples' rights, particularly their health.

"Climate change has a significant impact on our peoples' health and wellbeing, and on our physical health, our social and emotional wellbeing, and our spiritual wellbeing, by disconnecting our peoples from Country and culture," she said.

Adjunct Professor Mohamed said that it is critical to highlight at the international level the urgent need to hold governments to account for their roles in climate change.

"There is a clear connection between climate change and colonisation. There is a ticking clock for action and we want nation states to act with urgency."

"We are at an ecological tipping point and a relational tipping point. To urgently act on climate change, we need to heal the deep relational wounds between governments and Indigenous peoples related to our colonial past."

"That's why we are calling on the United Nations and member nation states to take responsibility by committing to decolonisation."

"This means transforming the principles and practices that guide government decision-making and understanding the cultural determinants of health as foundational for health equity."

"In practice this means working in partnership with our peoples, and supporting our workforces who are at the forefront of climate change mitigation and adaptation, and drawing on deep knowledge about how to care for Country."

"It means being accountable and willing to be held to account, particularly when it comes to racism."

Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed and Lowitja Institute Deputy CEO Paul Stewart attended this week's session. They met with many Indigenous representatives from around the world to discuss the priority theme of the session, *Indigenous Peoples, human health, planetary and territorial health and climate change: a rights-based approach*.

Climate and health is a policy priority for Lowitja Institute, following the publication of Lowitja Institute discussion paper, [Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health](#) in 2021.

/ENDS

[Read the full intervention](#)

For more information or to arrange an interview with Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, please contact Jo Cackett on communications@lowitja.org.au or 0474 727 506.

ABOUT LOWITJA INSTITUTE

Lowitja Institute is Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health research institute, named in honour of its patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. It is working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by facilitating high-impact quality research, tools, resources and knowledge exchange, and 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.

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