

## MEDIA RELEASE

### 2021 Close the Gap Report

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) wishes to congratulate the Lowitja Institute on the release of the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Close the Gap Campaign Report. Titled '*Leadership and Legacy Through Crises: Keeping our Mob safe*', the report calls on the Australian Government to recognise that the solutions to health inequalities already exist within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and that these approaches must be supported through significant investment.

The report showcases the resilience, strengths and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations throughout the crises of 2020: devastating bushfires and climate change, the coronavirus pandemic and the mental health emergency facing First Australians.

Notably, in acting against COVID-19, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been world leading in preventing the spread. With the number of positive cases among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently six times lower than the rest of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not only effectively combated a global pandemic, but did so while mitigating systemic inequalities that made us more vulnerable to the coronavirus in the first place. This is a success the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce played a critical role in achieving.

NAATSIHWP CEO and Co-Chair of the Close the Gap Campaign, Karl Briscoe emphasises this point, '*COVID-19 has shown the world what we already knew, that supporting the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is critical to delivering improved health outcomes. In acknowledging the success of our people in preventing the spread of COVID-19, the Australian Government must now demonstrate their commitment to support us in finding the same success over other challenges impacting our health and wellbeing*'.

In moving forward, if the capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to protect our communities, as demonstrated in 2020, were to be matched by appropriate political will, there is little doubt that the broader challenges faced by our communities would also see swift improvement.

NAATSIHWP urges all Australian Governments to act on the 15 recommendations within the report and follow our lead as we continue to work for the improved health, wellbeing and safety of our communities and countries. [Close the Gap 2021 Report: Leadership and legacy through crises: keeping our mob safe](#)