

MEDIA RELEASE

National Day of Recognition for the critical Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner Workforce

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) are proud to invite the Australian public to join us on **7th of August 2021** for the **Inaugural National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners**.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners are the world's only Indigenous health professions underpinned by national training and regulation. For many years, NAATSIHWP's members have been critical to the safe and effective delivery of health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities. Their combination of clinical, cultural, social and linguistic skills delivers an engagement capability and community reach that sets them apart from other health professionals. They provide a high standard of culturally responsive care, and act as cultural brokers and health system navigators.

The establishment of these professions has been perhaps one of the most successful exercises in self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over our own health outcomes, as these professions have been established by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

NAATSIHWP, as the peak body for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners, believes that our members often do not receive the recognition they deserve for their crucial work. As our workforce is a world first, the unique nature of NAATSIHWP's members and their work should be a source of National pride.

Accordingly, NAATSIHWP's members have collectively agreed that the 7th of August, the day of NAATSIHWP's establishment in 2009, would be appropriate to celebrate the achievements of the workforce over many years.

It is past time we recognise the world leading innovation in culturally safe and community focused health care being led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We welcome and encourage all Australian's to join us on the **7th of August**, this year and in years to come, to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners in their own local communities around the country. More information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners can be found at: www.naatsihwp.org.au.

For media enquiries, please contact David Follent on 0430 827 90 or email
chair@natsihwa.org.au



NAATSIHWP celebrates the National Day of Recognition

As part of celebrations for the inaugural National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners, on 07 August 2021, NAATSIHWP hosted Associate Professor Ray Lovett for morning tea.

Associate Professor Lovett spoke about his career journey and how becoming an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker provided a great foundation for his transition into academia. He also spoke about his current role as the Study Lead on 'Mayi Kuwayu - the National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing' and how this innovative Study, that has been created by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, is transforming our understanding about the strength of and intrinsic link between cultures and improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.

The morning tea provided the opportunity to reflect on the critical role the workforce plays and on how the evolution of the professions within Australia's health care system has been driven and led by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people every step of the way. With the professions today comprising the only culturally based health workforce underpinned by national training and regulation in the world the NAATSIHWP team consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners as a source of national pride.

If you wish to join us in celebrating the valuable role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners play as part of the National Day of Recognition please record and share your stories at hashtag #NAATSIHWPHeroes.

More information about Mayi Kuwayu can be found [here](#).

'My name is **Katrina**, I am a proud Wadigali woman. My mob is from Tibooburra and Bourke Way and I work as an **Aboriginal Health Worker**, in Primary Care Services for Nunkuwarrin Yunti SA.

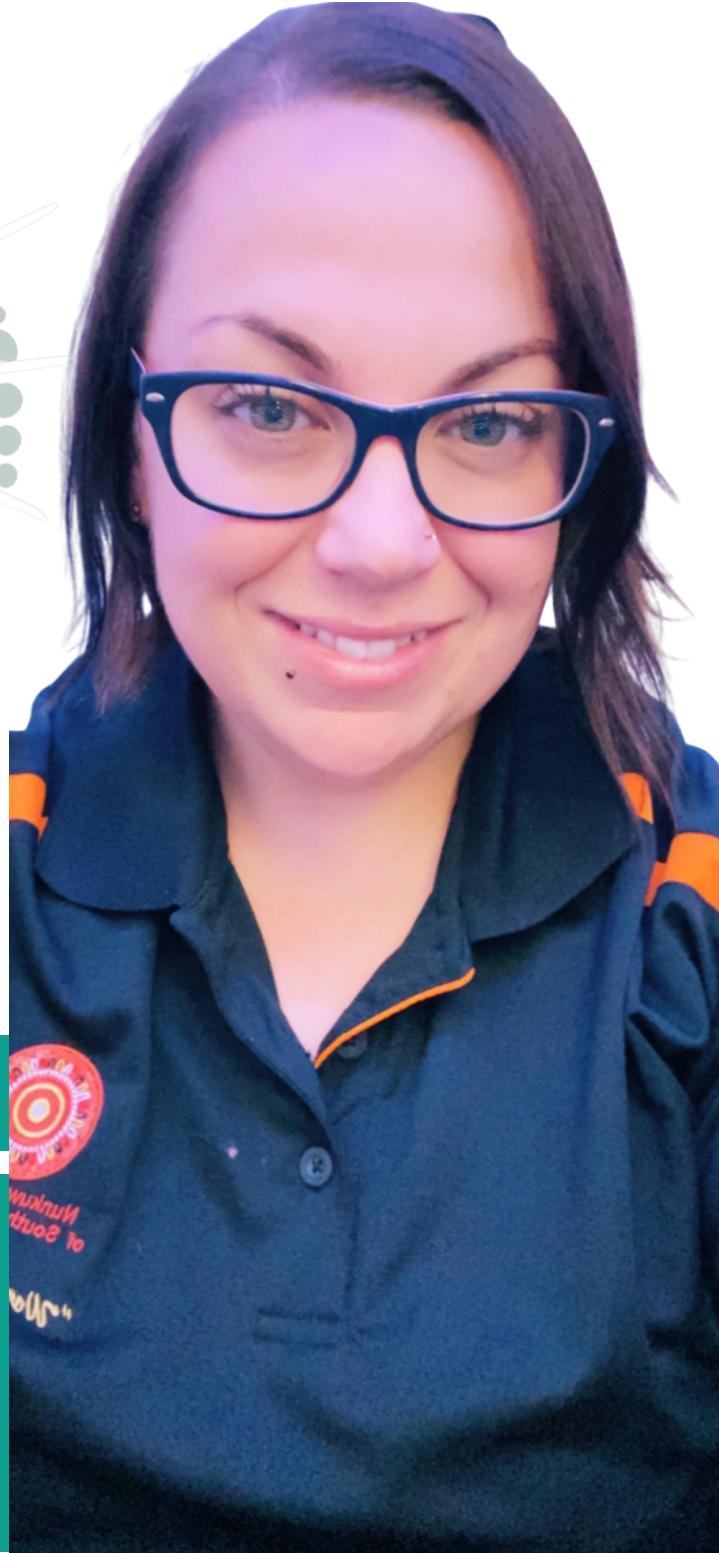
The **National Day of Recognition** to me means "**Pride and Honour**", that we, as Aboriginal Health Workers and Health Practitioners are recognised as our own individual people and roles. That we are being identified in a work force which is so highly influenced by western ways, that **our culture and heritage are not forgotten.**'

KATRINA MILTON,
ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER

NATIONAL DAY OF RECOGNITION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH WORKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

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'My name is **Carol**, I was born in Wonnarua and raised in Hunter Valley, NSW. I work as an **Aboriginal Health Practitioner**, in Birra-li Aboriginal Maternal & Child Health Service.

The **National Day of Recognition** to me means recognising all the hard work and study we have completed along the way, showing leadership for the younger generation and caring for our Elders. It is the **love of working for our mob** – the culture, values and wellbeing. It is **staying strong and true to ourselves**.'

CAROL ANDERSON
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

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'My name is **Christopher**, I am a Yorta Yorta "freshwater man" from Cummeroogunja on the banks of the famous Murray River. I work as the **Deputy Manager and Cultural Educator** for Lower Eastern NSW and ACT to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Education Unit with GP Synergy.

It is wonderful and inspiring to see one of the 'oldest continuous professions' in the "world" respectfully having its very own culturally significant event/date, **a legacy for all our Aboriginal Health Workers and Health Practitioners** gone before us. This is significant to me as it connects me to my third-great-grandfather, William Cooper, who is "Father NAIDOC". I feel the NDRATSIHWP has been a significant event / date deriving from when Grandfather established NAIDOC in 1938!'

CHRISTOPHER O'BRIEN
DEPUTY MANAGER
CULTURAL EDUCATOR

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'My name is **Elaine**, I am a Luritja woman from Central Arrernte and I work as an **Aboriginal Health Practitioner** at the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in NT.

This day for me means

- assisting to close the gap between the wider population and Aboriginal people
- being a **voice for my people** when dealing with General Health Practitioners
- culturally appropriate approach in dealing with our people
- **advocating on behalf of my people**
- my achievements being recognised by my peers'

ELAINE CAMPBELL
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

NATIONAL DAY OF RECOGNITION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH WORKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

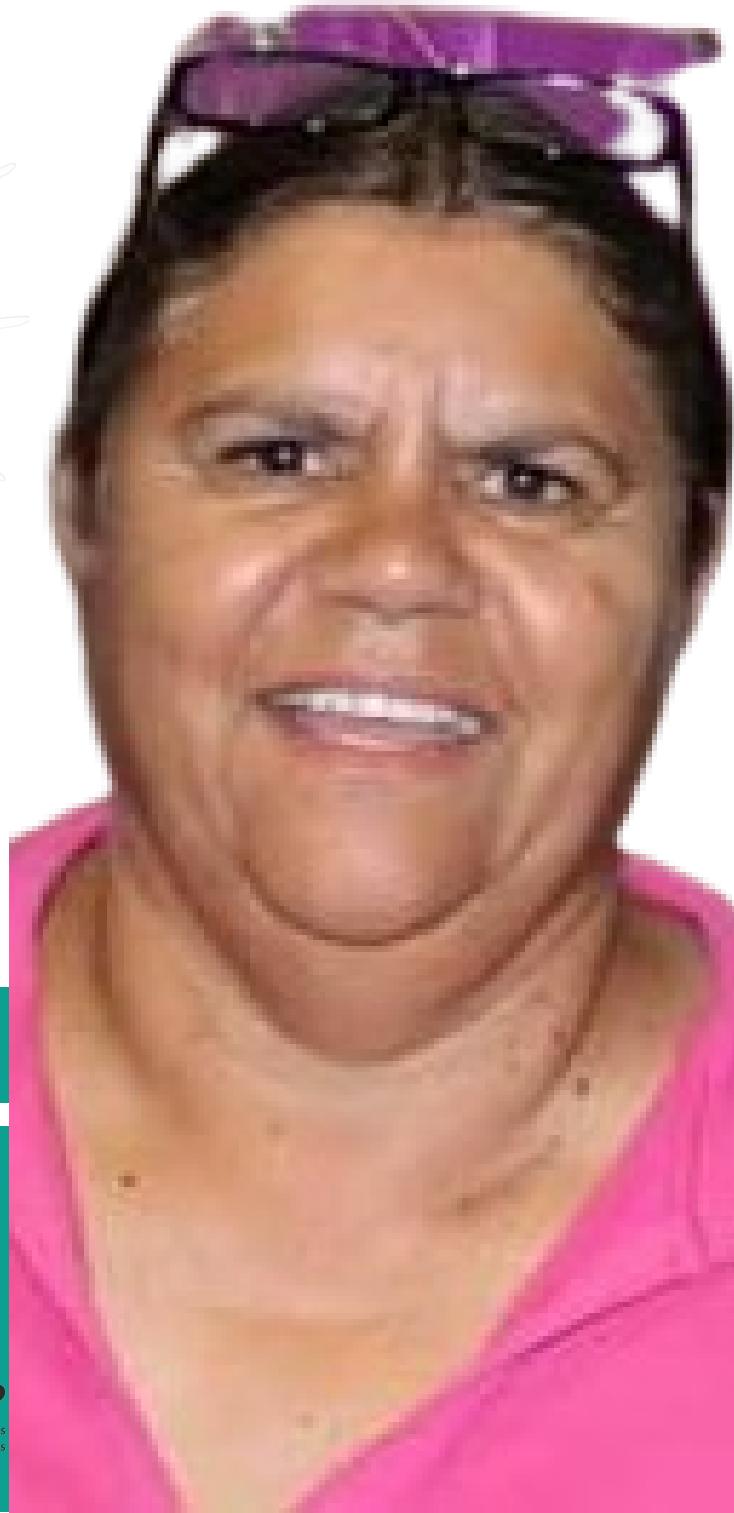
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'My name is **Frances**, I am a Zagareb woman from Darnsley Island (Erub) and I work as an **Advanced Aboriginal Health Worker**.

The "**National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners**" means to me that the elders before us who originally started this work have finally been **recognised for the amazing work they do** and to the past and current AHW's and AHP's this is recognition for the work they do'

FRANCES IVINSON
ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER

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'My name is **Judith**, I am an Ankamuthi (Injinoo) and Erub (Darnsley Island) woman and I work as an **Advanced Health Worker** at Ravenshoe Primary Health Care Centre.

The "National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners" fills me with pride that my chosen profession has been recognised for the **many years that our elders and community members have worked hard** to maintain health education and health promotion and started that battle of self determination and "close the gap" of holistic health issues. I have often been asked why I don't become a nurse and my answer is always the same, why? **When I am working with what I am passionate about - Indigenous specific holistic primary health care.'**

JUDITH PARNHAM
ADVANCED HEALTH WORKER
RESEARCH ASSISTANT & MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY STUDENT
NAATSIHWP DIRECTOR FOR QLD

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'My name is **Karen**, I am a Narrunga and Arrernte woman and I work as an **Aboriginal Health Practitioner** at Kumangka Padninthi which is Kaurna language for "Walking Together".

National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torrens Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners sums up how I feel, working as an Aboriginal Health Practitioner at Kumangka Padninthi. **I am the Sugar Ant that sticks my team together** by educating patients on their medical and health issues, and all personnel that I come in contact with working in a busy Emergency Department on Aboriginal Culture. It is about **strengthening relationships and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people, for the benefit of all.**'

KAREN SOMERFIELD
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

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'My name is **Leah**, I am a Wagyl Kaip woman and I work as an **Aboriginal Health Practitioner** at SWAMS.

National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners means

- Acknowledgement of Indigenous Health Professionals,
- the important role they play in bridging the gap of care to our people and
- recognition of a very important role for the health and well-being of the Noongar peoples.'

LEAH LEADBITTER
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

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'My name is **Leonard**, I am a Waka Waka Man and I work as an **Aboriginal Health Practitioner**.

National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners is significant to me because after working as an Aboriginal Health Practitioner for over 20 years, **our profession is finally now becoming recognised** amongst the community and government.'

LEONARD LAW
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

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'My name is **Lorraine**, I am a Ngaringman/Nungali Woman and I work as a **Senior Aboriginal Health Practitioner**.

I've been working for the past 25yrs with **little or no recognition** to the wider community and I'm sure that I'm not the only one either.

I've witnessed babies come into this world, I've witnessed them have babies of their own, starting their own families. I've witnessed and supported many people as they faced their passing; whether accidental, suicidal, palliative or just old age and I've been there to comfort who they've left behind.

I've **argued, advocated, liaised on behalf of my families and countrymen** against outside and non-indigenous organisations.

I'm also a **Marriage Counselor, Educator on Diabetes, Chronic Kidney, Dialysis, Drugs and Alcohol, Liaison Officer for School, Centrelink and Housing, Domestic Violence advocate, Community Interpreter, Welfare Worker, Gardener, Cleaner.**

At the end of the day I see myself as a role-model to the number of communities in the Katherine West Region but most of all as a: remote Aboriginal Health Practitioner. AND, **I wouldn't want it any other way and I'll do it all over again.**

I don't need my name up in lights but a pat on the back sometimes and "you're doing a great job" goes a long way.'

LORRAINE JOHNS
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

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'My name is **Margaret**, I am a Kaanju/Mamu/Nywaigi woman and I work as an **Advanced Health Worker**.

Recognition is when an Indigenous client spots you as a familiar friendly face when they walk into a clinic or hospital.

It is about being recognised for your work. **We play an important role in reducing the levels of patient anxiety and improving the quality of communication** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when visiting their clinics, hospital or doctor.

We constantly **advocate, support and liaise with Community and deliver health promotion with a passion** to ensure our people have equitable health services.

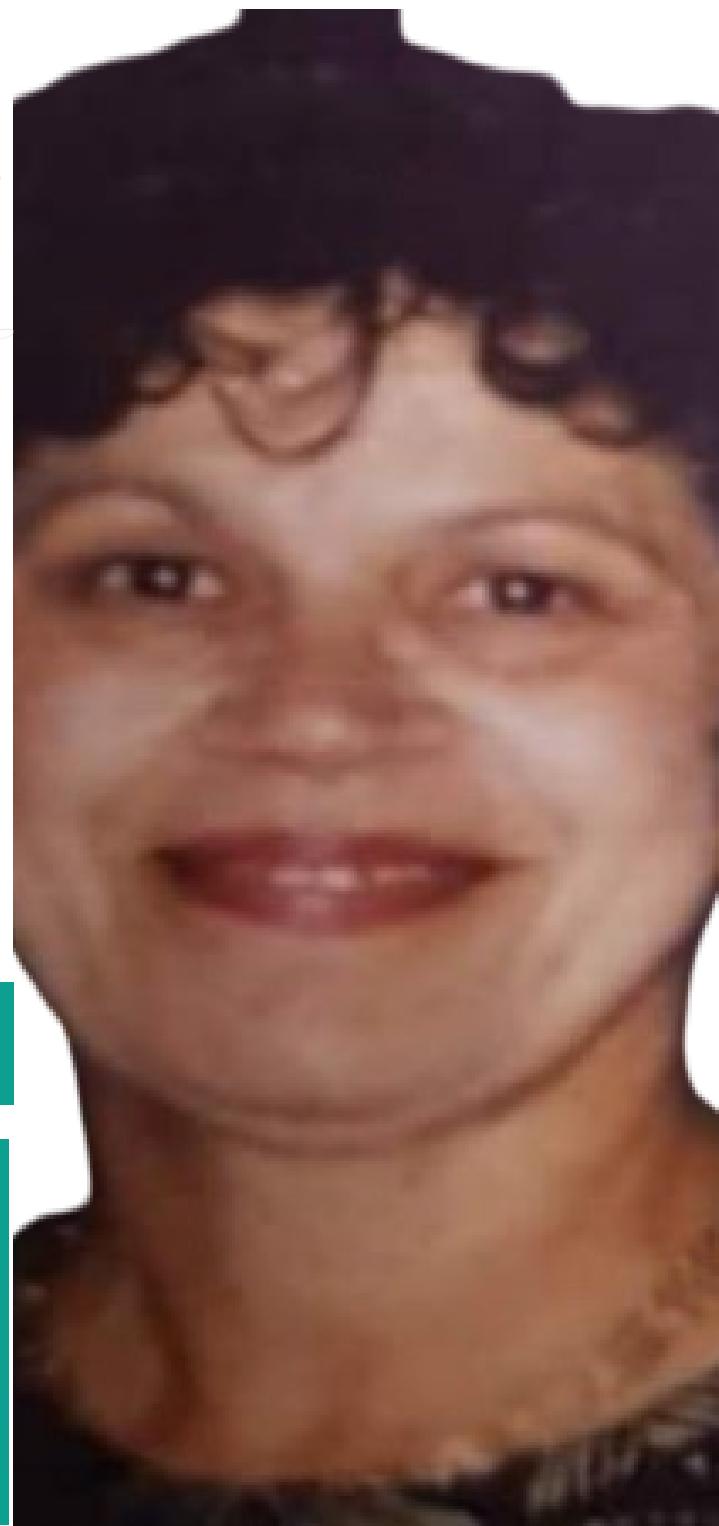
Largely **misunderstood within the mainstream health system, our workforce is critical to the delivery of safe and effective health services** to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples around the country.

MARGARET WAGG
ADVANCED HEALTH WORKER

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'My name is **Michelle**, I am a **Biripi** woman and I work as an **Aboriginal Health Worker**.

The National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners means that I can be counted and **recognised for the job that I do** within my local AMS.

It is being able to see our local Aboriginal Community in a Culturally safe environment.

It is a privilege, and being able to get to know our Mob.

Enabling them to take control of their own Health and Wellbeing, and having a say in their treatment is so **rewarding**.

MICHELLE MILLER
ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER

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'My name is **Neil**, I am a **Meriam man** from Mer Island and I work as a **Care Coordinator** in the Integrated Team Care.

'The National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners for me is a day of joy.

We are **finally being valued for all the unnoticed roles we perform** in our community.

It is a day that **pushes us to keep going** because we know, **we are more than just an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or Practitioner.**

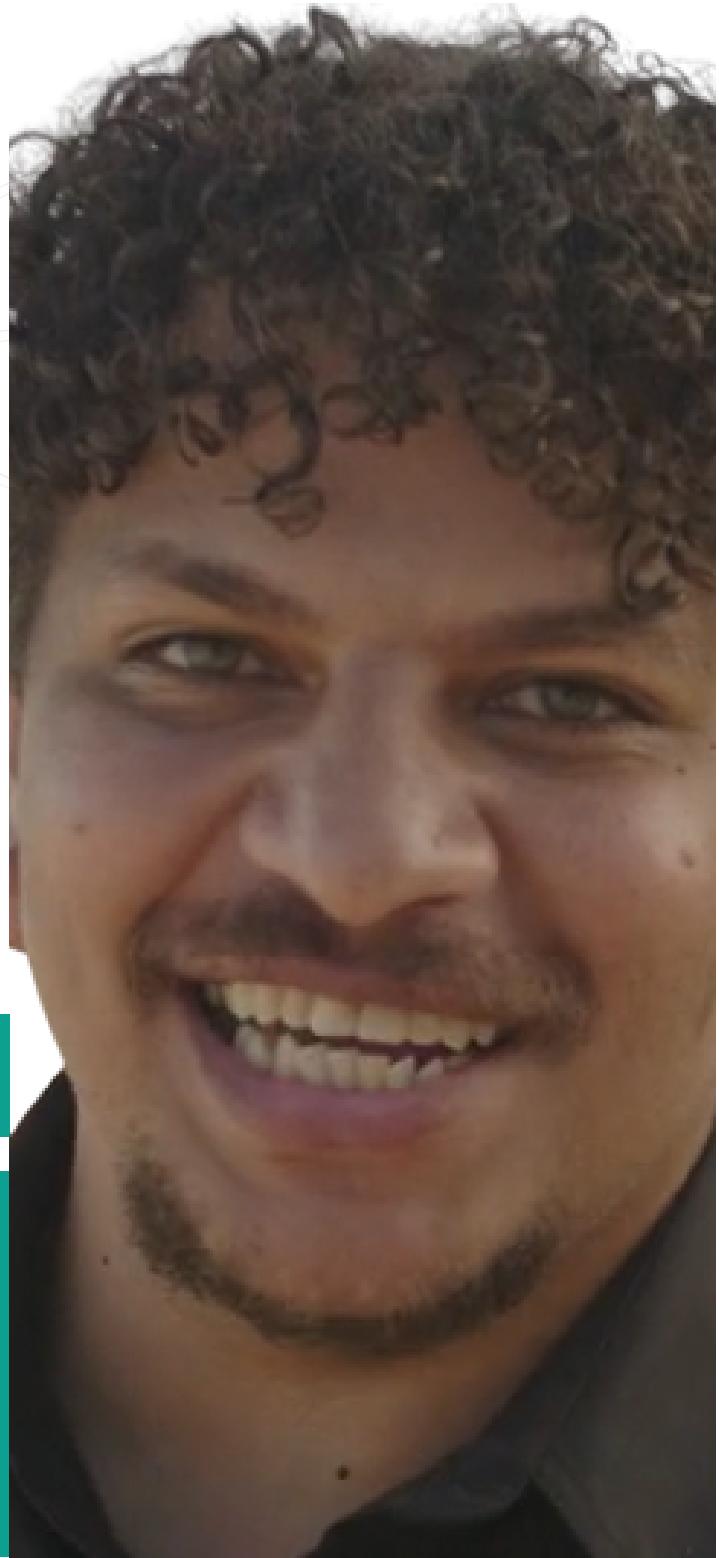
I look forward to this day!

**NEIL KAIKEY
CARE COORDINATOR**

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'My name is **Oceania**, I am a **Wardandi Noongar woman** from Busselton WA and I work as an **Aboriginal Health Practitioner**.

The National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners is a **privilege**.

We are being **recognised for the hard work we do behind closed doors** as front line workers helping our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make sure they **put their health first** and make their journey in life a little easier through our guidance and support.'

OCEANIA HARRIS
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

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'My name is **Suzie**, I am a **Palawa woman** from Lutrawita, Tasmania and I work as an **Aboriginal Health Practitioner**.

The National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners means a day for the wider communities to **acknowledge the vital roles we provide** for the health of our community.

It is **recognition of the strength** our community has shown in **developing and maintaining a culturally unique workforce**.

The day also provides a platform for our profession to **showcase our great work, educate the wider community of the benefits of employing us and attract more community members** to the variety of career paths available to them.'

SUZIE SMITH
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER
NAATSIHWP DIRECTOR FOR TAS

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'My name is **Wendy**, I am a **Ngemba woman** from Brewarrina with strong connections to the Murrawarri and Kamilaroi Nations. I am a TAFE Teacher and an **Aboriginal Health Practitioner**.

I have been in the **Aboriginal Health sector for over 30 years** in a few different roles where my academic achievements were not recognised nor supported by management.

In 1998, I sat on a committee who managed the Associate Diploma of Community Health & Development qualification to include a clinical role so that people like me could be trained and skilled to **provide culturally appropriate clinical services to our communities**.

In another role as an Aboriginal Health Manager, one of my role was to seek strategic workforce support to collaboratively work with TAFE and ACCHS to encourage existing and new Aboriginal Workforce to complete a formal qualification which lends them to becoming registered and recognised. In 2007, at the Aboriginal Health State Awards our Trainee Program in Partnership with TAFE NSW won the Top Honours Award for "From little things big things grow".

I feel like **I have come full circle in Aboriginal Health from fighting for recognition to having the course and qualification recognised and furthering my own academic experience**. Being recognised feels so amazing and teaching a qualification where we can **stand tall and be proud of well-deserved achievements** is something that I am super proud of.

WENDY MOORE
ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER
TAFE TEACHER

NATIONAL DAY OF RECOGNITION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH WORKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

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