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## **MEDIA RELEASE: NATIONAL NAIDOC WEEK 2023**

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) is proud to celebrate NAIDOC Week. The event began in 1938 as a day of protest for citizenship and equality, known as the Day of Mourning. In the mid-1950s, the meaning of the event shifted to include a celebration of culture and leadership. In 2023, the event has evolved into week-long celebration, with hundreds of gatherings around the nation.

This year's NAIDOC Week theme, **For Our Elders**, celebrates the critical leadership of Elders across generations. As the National NAIDOC Committee states, our Elders "pave the way for us to take the paths we can today". They provide guidance, "not only through generations of advocacy and activism, but in everyday life and how to place ourselves in the world". They remind us of our strength and resilience, lead the way with humility and strength, and gently pull us into line when we need it.

Our Elders are responsible for a tradition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing which has continued unbroken for thousands of years. NAATSIHWP is tasked with carrying on this tradition, and it is within our organisational DNA to honour those who have paved the way. In our organisation's very first Annual Report, CEO Clarke Scott paid homage to our leaders, proudly acknowledging "those warriors, young and old, who are out there in their communities, fighting to improve the health and wellbeing of our peoples. They are our mothers and grandmothers, our uncles and brothers – without them, their strength and their resilience, we wouldn't be here today. They have been our mentors, guides and carers."

In the spirit of honouring those have come before us, we take the time to celebrate the achievements of those first Health Workers who recognised the vital role of our workforce in improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, and worked hard to fulfil their vision of a workforce embedded in every health system across the country.

We encourage all Australians to engage with local NAIDOC Week events. This is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the oldest continuous culture on earth, celebrate your local community, and develop life-long relationships.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, this is a week of gatherings at kitchen tables, on footy fields, in city squares and deep in Country. We will dance, eat, sing, and celebrate the over 60,000 years of our existence on this continent, the strength of our nations, the wisdoms of our Elders, and the hopes we have for our young people. Happy NAIDOC Week!