



***The world's only culturally based health profession with national training and regulation is right here in Australia and was critical to the successful and renowned COVID-19 response in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.***

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. Largely misunderstood within the mainstream health system, this workforce is critical to the delivery of safe and effective health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples around the country. Their comprehensive training in Primary Health Care is a 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.

Evidence directly connects the roles of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners to improved health outcomes across the life course. They have lived experience in and a deep understanding of the communities they serve. Further, 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. In places where fly in and fly out health staff often rotate and change, our workforce remains one of the consistent faces when communities access health clinics.

Notably, these professions have been the training ground for some of the countries most preminent leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. Incomparable academics such as Associate Professor Chelsea Watego (formerly Bond), Dr Janine Mohamed, Prof. Ian Anderson AO and emerging community leaders such as NT Young Australian of the Year Nominee, Stuart McGrath, all began their careers as Aboriginal Health Workers and Practitioners.

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) is the national peak workforce organisation with responsibility for ensuring the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforces are embedded as a vital, valued and professional component of Australia's health care system. We, like the rest of the health sector, feel immense pride in the success found across the Nation in preventing the spread of

COVID-19 into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, particularly because we believe our members played an absolutely critical role in this success.

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. As such, NAATSIHWP members have agreed that on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2021, we will celebrate the inaugural annual National Day of Recognition for the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner Workforce.

We hope that the ABC see the value in our workforce and would help us showcase some of the incredible personal stories of our workforce across the nation. For any further information please contact NAATSIHWP CEO, Karl Briscoe on 0477 440 337 or via email at [ceo@naatsihwp.org.au](mailto:ceo@naatsihwp.org.au).