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MEDIA RELEASE: CLOSE THE GAP REPORT 2023

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) wishes to congratulate the Close the Gap campaign on the release of the 14th annual Close the Gap Campaign Report. Titled 'Strong Culture, Strong Youth: Our Legacy, Our Future', the report highlights the vital role of culture and self-determination in achieving positive long-term health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

With a particular focus on organisations and individuals working in communities to enrich the lives of First Nations children and youth across the nation, the report showcases eight case studies spanning the creative arts, mentoring, justice initiatives, climate activism, LGBTQ+SB rights advocacy, language innovations, suicide prevention, and the structural reform of mental health services.

NAATSIHWP CEO and Co-Chair of the Close the Gap Campaign, Karl Briscoe, introduces the report by highlighting how our youth are key to driving positive change:

"When our campaign first began, we knew that the health equity and equality we were fighting for would be for the future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young peoples. Of course, we had envisaged that with adequate investment, and policy reform, our generation could reap the benefit of what this Campaign advocates for.

But we must see our children and youth with improved life outcomes. We all want to give our children opportunity, care, leadership and community. We want to create an environment where they get to decide what their aspirations and dreams are, and then to make them become reality."

Like the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce, the report demonstrates how Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing are leading the way to address the cultural determinants of health and shaping the trajectory of positive health and life outcomes for our future generations. Again, the report draws attention to the essential role of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander-led decision-making in shaping holistic health and wellbeing outcomes built upon strong cultural foundations.

This National Close the Gap Day, we send governments a clear message that Australians value health equality as a fundamental right for all. NAATSIHWP urges all Australian Governments to act on the 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.