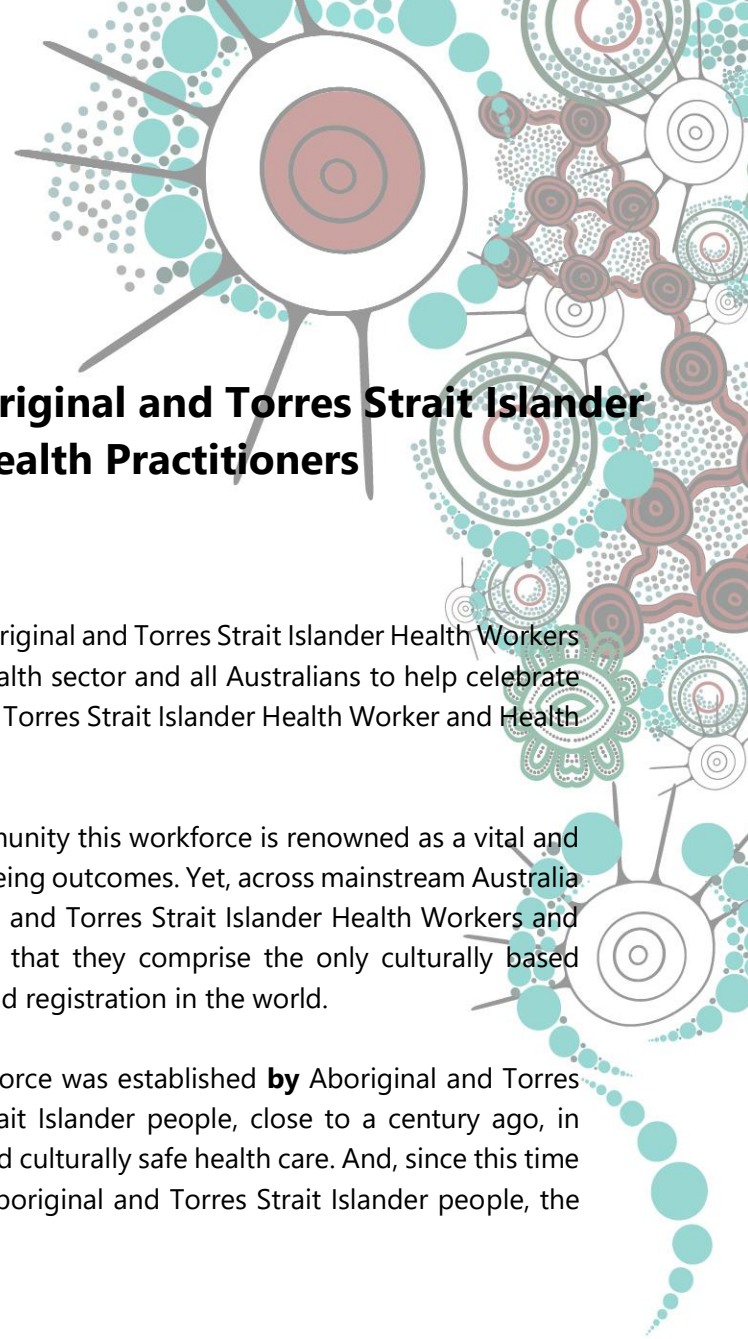




NAATSIHWP

National Association of Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners



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

Why a National Day of Recognition?

- On 7 August annually, the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) invites the health sector and all Australians to help celebrate the achievements and evolution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce.
- Within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community this workforce is renowned as a vital and reliable resource critical to improved health and wellbeing outcomes. Yet, across mainstream Australia few would know, understand or recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners as **stand-alone professions** or that they comprise the only culturally based health workforce underpinned by national training and registration in the world.
- Unofficial accounts and narratives indicate the workforce was established **by** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people **for** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, close to a century ago, in response to the need for geographically accessible and culturally safe health care. And, since this time under the guidance, knowledge and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the workforce has continued to grow and progress.
- Today with:
 - Indigenous led structures in place such as:
 - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice Board of Australia guiding professional standards;
 - an Industry Reference Committee ensuring nationwide training is tailored to the needs of a growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population; and,
 - evidence directly connecting the workforce to improved health and wellbeing outcomes across the life course, it provides perhaps one of the most significant demonstrations of how inherent self-determination is to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- However, despite the crucial role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners play within Australia's health care system they continue to be under-supported, under-recognised and under-utilised.
- A lack of understanding about the role and value of the workforce, ad hoc inconsistent workforce policies and health system bias, continue to hinder the expansion and development of the workforce nationally.
- Unfortunately, these issues are not new and were first identified over a decade ago, and given the positive sustainable health, education and employment outcomes the workforce delivers, too little is being done to support its growth and professional utilisation.

- The National Day of Recognition is therefore being held to:
 - promote the unique nature of the workforce
 - develop shared understandings about the vital role the workforce plays and
 - ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners receive the recognition they deserve.
- NAATSIHWP members collectively agreed that the 7th of August, the day of NAATSIHWP's establishment in 2009, would be most appropriate to promote the workforces unique and critical nature and celebrate its ongoing achievement, annually.

The Roles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioner Workforces

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners work on the frontline of Australia's primary health care system. They are rarely part of the fly in fly out workforce but instead have a lived experience in and deep understanding of the communities they serve.
- Their combination of clinical, cultural, social and linguistic skills delivers an engagement capability and community reach that sets them apart from others working in the health care system. They act as cultural brokers; health system navigators; and provide a high standard of culturally safe and responsive primary health care. Their ability to respond to the clinical, social and cultural needs and contexts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities positions them as unique among Health Professionals.
- They work in rural, regional, remote and urban locations and are employed across the primary health care sector, including the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector, Aboriginal Medical Services as well as mainstream and private health services.
- Of the two professions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, have a high level of clinical skills and are trained to work autonomously. In recognition, they have been required to meet practice standards and register under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia since 2012.
- Greater support and investment is needed to ensure the workforce is embedded as a vital, valued and professional component of Australia's primary health care system. Efforts to close the gap in health and wellbeing outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader population must recognise and position this workforce as a priority.
- The workforce delivers significant benefits for stakeholders across the primary health care system:
 - for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Governments, the workforce delivers positive sustainable health, education, and employment outcomes; and
 - for health service providers, the workforce delivers clinical, culturally safe and responsive care, innovation and improved productivity through greater workforce diversity and financial benefits (if models of care that effectively utilise the provider claims process available for these professions through the Medicare system are implemented).¹

¹Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, with a minimum Certificate III, and all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, if working for an eligible employer, may be eligible to apply for a Medicare provider number.

About NAATSIHWP

- NAATSIHWP is the peak body with responsibility for professionalising, promoting and expanding the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce and ensuring Australia's health care system meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.
- It supports a growing national network of over 1100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners across Australia through the provision of ongoing professional development support, training, resources. Additionally, to ensure the voices, perspectives and aspirations of the workforce are incorporated into the delivery of more effective health, social and workforce policies.
- Policy development, mentoring and support, education and professional development forums, and media activities are all critical components of the NAATSIHWP's role and responsibilities. It also works closely with other National Peak workforce and health bodies.
- NAATSIHWP is governed by a Board of nine Directors, all with backgrounds working as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or Health Practitioners - one from each State and Territory and one from the Torres Strait Islands.

How should the day be celebrated?

- Share your own stories about the workforce, or alternatively share those posted on NAATSIHWP social media, using the hashtag **#NAATSIHWPHeroes2022**
- Hold your own celebrations, such as a morning tea or lunch to highlight the success and achievements of the workforce
- Distribute a media release or social media, promoting the vital role and unique status of the workforce across your networks, using the hashtag **#NAATSIHWPHeroes2022**
- If you don't know about this workforce, find out about their critical role and what they do: [What We Do](#)
- To support the workforce, please donate here: [NAATSIHWP Donations](#) *(all donations are tax deductible)*
- Encourage others to join in the celebrations and increase their understanding about these unsung heroes and the role they play in delivering health, education, and employment outcomes