

# 5th Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HEALTH SUMMIT

Aboriginal Health – It's Time to Reset



## Communique of the 5th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Summit

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living lives healed and free

The 5th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Summit, held in Sydney on 22nd June 2018, aimed to reset the Aboriginal health agenda. By bringing together Aboriginal experts to lead strategic discussions about why and how the health system needs to change, participants concluded there was more to be done to meet the hopes and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

The Summit, an initiative of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Standing Committee, was co-hosted by the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of New South Wales and NSW Health. The Summit brought together 150 delegates including the Hon. Minister for Indigenous Health Ken Wyatt (who announced funding for an investigation into barriers to accessing kidney transplants for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) and the Hon. Minister for Health, NSW, Bradley Hazzard, senior bureaucrats and academics, peak organisations, journalists and advocates and consultants with representatives from community controlled organisations.

Around the nation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are pushing for change. The Summit reflected the status quo is not working and conversations echoed the broader call for the Aboriginal affairs discourse to change from deficit to strengths based narratives. Furthermore, there was a call for more transparency, truth-telling, power-sharing and culture-informed decision-making practices integrated within policy production, program implementation and evaluation strategies. In addition, there was a call for sustainable funding solutions to optimise service delivery outcomes for a client base with increasingly complex needs.

### The Summit noted:

- The role of racism as an important determinant of health. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should feel free from racism, empowered as individuals and have educational opportunities, careers, and health services to meet their needs and overcome inequality, poverty and increase the quality and length of their life.
- Self-determination is the pathway to improved health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The full expression of self-determination will require governments to make space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people and organisations to lead discussions and decision-making<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The Victorian Government is acknowledged for their work towards advancing Treaty discussions in genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria.

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- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander view of health encompasses the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing, and that of the community. This also includes supportive extended family networks, connection to country and language. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture has many strengths that can provide a positive influence on wellbeing.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should feel safe to engage cultural knowledge including the daily use of languages, connection with lands, and ready access to cultural resources. From this understanding, services that provide 'lip service' to cultural respect and awareness are inappropriate for our people. All services must be culturally safe and fulfil their obligations to deliver services aligned with Australian human right conventions.
- Programs and policies initiated and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people facilitate a seismic change in the way health services are governed, funded, delivered and measured. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, including healing, trust and **love**, must be at the centre of this health service redesign.
- Indigenous data sovereignty is critical in redesigning the health sector. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need to determine what data is collected and how it is analysed and used. This form of data needs to be integrated in policy, programs to better understand impact of the work over time.

## The Summit recommended:

- Supporting the recommendations in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Voice, treaty and truth-telling are essential for bringing about the reset required to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.
- Taking a zero tolerance approach to racism in health systems and services. Comprehensive strategies to monitor and respond to institutionalised and interpersonal racism are required.
- Recognising the Aboriginal community controlled health sector and Aboriginal Health Workers as being uniquely placed to provide services that respond to the social and cultural determinants of health, and aligning investment with this principle.
- Redistributing power by making space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead. Embedding governance and accountability structures that privilege Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, and ensuring partnerships are equitable and capture community voices and perspectives.
- Investing in healing-informed approaches that are community led and ensuring priorities for government and other stakeholders are identified by communities.
- Facilitating data sovereignty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This includes embedding governance mechanisms where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people determine what data is collected, and how data is analysed and used.