

Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research that promotes the health and wellbeing of the next generation: NAIDOC 2025

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NAIDOC started as a day of mourning but has become a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' cultures and people.¹ Every year, NAIDOC has a different theme; this year's theme is "*The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy*".² As a journal, we see the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people leading research that has traditionally been done "about" or "for" Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people rather than "with" or "led by" them. We see the vision Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers have for our people and for research itself through the articles they publish. The articles in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health (ANZJPH) form part of a legacy, both in terms of their messages and in paving the way for emerging researchers now and into the future.

The ANZJPH recognises the enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culture and knowledge. Indigenous-led research is an essential part of self-determination, helping to guide community-led solutions to address health issues they prioritise. In this way, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research provides one path towards a public health system and services that better support stronger and healthier communities. We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the research we publish, the utilisation of the Public Health Association of Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Terminology guidelines³ and my engagement with the journal as an Aboriginal person and as an editor.

ANZJPH understands the importance it and other scientific journals play in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and amplifying their ways of knowing, being, and doing. The journal published an editorial calling for more support for Indigenous Health Research in 2020. Since then, several significant developments have occurred in the health research landscape. Substantial investments, for example, have been made by the Australian government through its \$160M Indigenous Health Research Fund, supporting a range of Indigenous-led, translation-focused research. The National Health and

Medical Research Council has also revised its Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria to ensure health research benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. There have also been new opportunities to publish work, including the "First Nations Health and Wellbeing: The Lowitja Journal", established in 2023.

The ANZJPH has published outstanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research over the past 2 years across a range of public health issues. To celebrate NAIDOC Week and acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research, we have included some of this work in a special issue of the journal. Each of the articles either explicitly or implicitly draws from and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are strong despite the impact of colonisation; through the journal, we help to share the vision Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have for future generations, and it's the legacy of those who have gone before us on which we build. Each of the articles in this special edition brings something that honours the 2025 NAIDOC theme.

Nona's commentary, "*Traditional community-based knowledge for envisioning climate change action for the Torres Strait*", published in October 2024, raises the vital issue of the impact of the climate crisis on Torres Strait Islander Country and its people. Torres Strait Islander cultures are interwoven throughout the article. He calls for Torres Strait Islander self-determined led research into climate and health.⁴

Riley et al. article titled "*Examining zoonotic notifications in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations over time: An analysis of the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System from 1996-2021*" highlights how the Indigenous view of health has always understood the interconnects among people, animals and the environment, which is the foundation of what is now a western concept called "One Health". They call for Indigenous understandings of the connection to be embedded into One Health approaches. They propose that future studies utilise local Indigenous seasonal calendars, which are often based on environmental cues, to help understand the seasonal effects of zoonoses.⁵

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Cultural ways were the premise of the article by Brodie et al., “Enhancement of scoping review methodology to reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing”. It argues that Indigenous methodologies, which are underpinned by Indigenous cultures, are vital to work involving Indigenous people, including scoping reviews, to ensure they are relevant and of benefit to them. They highlight the need for partnership with and endorsement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all stages of the research. Working in this way will lead to the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing across all stages of the work.⁶

Clements et al. also focus on the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s engagement in research in their article “*Aboriginal peoples’ lived experience of household overcrowding in the Kimberley and implications for research reciprocity in COVID-19 recovery*”. The research itself was led by and for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, which meant that the research design, data collection and interpretation were conducted through an Aboriginal lens, making the research culturally safe and more meaningful for the community. This research demonstrates the unique vision Aboriginal people have for their communities.⁷

An Aboriginal model of care for renal dialysis is the focus of “*A pilot place-based renal dialysis model of care responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities in South Australia*” by Toni Shearing et al. An Aboriginal model of care is centred on Aboriginal cultural concepts of health; concepts that the authors were embedded into the research through partnership with the relevant communities. Their work demonstrates that cultural approaches to health benefit patients, their families and the health service.⁸

Fredericks et al. discuss in “*Mapping pandemic responses in urban Indigenous Australia: Reflections on systems thinking and pandemic preparedness*” the importance of Indigenous voices in public health approaches and policies. They emphasise how Indigenous-led COVID-19 responses reduced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s morbidity and mortality. They also outline the limitations of Eurocentric public health approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The research doesn’t just call for partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it demonstrates the value through their research.⁹

Doyle et al. and Canuto et al. both call for culturally safe service provision.^{10,11} According to Doyle et al., there is a need for culturally safe alcohol and other drug programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison, as stated in “*Alcohol and other drug use before custody among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in New South Wales, Australia*”.¹⁰ Canuto et al.’s commentary, “*Further investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men’s health research funding is urgently required*,” details the disparity in funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men’s health research.¹¹ From a cultural point of view, as outlined, it’s not just crucial for men individually to be healthy but also for their families and communities.¹²

The final article, “*Heal Country, heal our Nation: Talking up Racism*,” included in this special edition by Parter et al. focuses on the 2022–2023 NAIDOC themes “Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up” and “Heal Country”, respectively. This article highlights the importance of a Country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the impact racism has on our health.¹³

There are two common themes across the articles: partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities on research that involves us and the role our cultures play in shaping our health and wellbeing. As a journal, we hope to continue our partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and showcase work that honours their cultures. Through this special edition, we hope that you will join us in celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, now and into the future.

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Conflict of interest

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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