MEDIA RELEASE
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First Nations-led research projects awarded to address COVID-19 community needs

A unique $2 million funding round has privileged First Nations voices and resulted in high-quality COVID-19 research projects that will result in better outcomes for First Nations communities.

The 11 projects from across Australia were awarded funding from the Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious Disease Emergencies (APPRISE) Centre of Research Excellence, based on a $2 million donation from the Paul Ramsay Foundation to support the development of effective responses to COVID-19 for First Nations communities.

Townsville-based APPRISE investigator Professor Adrian Miller of the Jirrbal people of North Queensland and Director of the Centre for Indigenous Health Equity Research at CQUniversity says APPRISE gave the space for a First Nations-led process that began with the creation of the APPRISE First Nations Council to advise on all aspects of the grant process from research priorities to evaluation criteria.

“The whole process was unique because rather than just having a small proportion of First Nations people sitting on a panel, the First Nations Council was entirely comprised of senior First Nations researchers.

“A key focus was to attract applications from diverse organisations and with our First Nations-led approach we were able to attract proposals from the Aboriginal-controlled health sector as well as universities”, he said.

APPRISE PhD scholar Kristy Crooks of the Euahlayi nation and an Aboriginal Program Manager with the Health Protection Unit for Hunter New England Population Health said First Nations people determined the structure and set the priorities and principles and this ensured engagement with diverse First Nations researchers across the nation to improve the whole process.

“Having First Nations people setting the research priorities and having the recommendations panel stacked with First Nations people meant that we were able to get research applications that filled areas of need for our people.

“If you had non-First Nations people leading the process, you’d have a different outcome and you’d see different projects being funded based on what they perceive to be important. But we placed value on what we see as a priority and what we see as important and that will result in better health outcomes for our communities,” she said.

The projects are all led by First Nations people and have predominantly First Nations team members.

Following the guidelines set for the program, the projects emphasise community engagement and community governance that are considered crucial for enabling the best health outcomes for First Nations communities.

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About APPRISE

The Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious disease Emergencies (APPRISE) Centre of Research Excellence is developing research to inform Australia’s emergency response to infectious diseases.

The APPRISE CRE is an Australia-wide network of experts involved in medical, scientific, public health and ethics research. APPRISE is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

APPRISE collaborating institutions are:

- CQUniversity Australia
- The University of Melbourne
- The University of Sydney
- University of New South Wales
- Menzies School of Health Research
- Monash University
- Deakin University
- Pathwest Laboratory Medicine WA
- Burnet Institute
- Australian Red Cross Blood Service
- University of Queensland
- University of Adelaide
- Hunter New England Population Health