



MEDIA STATEMENT

2 July 2021

**NACCHO says we need to protect our people who give us the knowledge to
Heal Country, Heal our Nation**

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) Chair Donnella Mills says [NAIDOC Week 2021](#) calls upon all of us to continue to seek greater protection for our lands, our Elders, our people, and safeguard our culture.

“The health of Country, and the health of First Nation’s people, is firmly bound together. Country is family, kin, law, lore, ceremony, traditions, and language.

“After 250 years of dispossession and dislocation, traditional connection to Country and knowledge of Country is precarious. So much rests in the hands and minds of our Elders, our living national treasures.

“Right now, we have to protect the people who give us the knowledge to heal Country.

“We have shown the world what can be done to keep First Nations peoples safe during a global pandemic. In the USA, the Navajo had the highest death rate of any ethnic population. In Australia, not one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person has died from COVID-19. That is because the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector and Governments are working together to protect our most vulnerable families and communities.”

“Our sector should be proud. Indeed, the pandemic is not yet defeated, but at least recent gains have positioned us well and we can afford a little time to reflect on what we have achieved.

“We have a new challenge and that is to urgently vaccinate our people!

“Vaccine hesitancy is an issue across Australia, and it may be slower than we had hoped. There are deadly stories of communities queuing up so that they are protecting themselves and each other. We encourage everyone to get their COVID-19 shots! It’s important that we continue to keep our Elders, our families and communities safe.”

Ms Mills further added, “The community-control model was developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the very first Aboriginal Community Control Health Organisation in Redfern fifty years ago. Today, we have 143 ACCHOs operating out of about 550 clinics across Australia.

“Self-determination has given us better health outcomes in this pandemic. Self-determination and recognition of country and sovereignty would be a first step in healing our Country and healing our nation.”

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NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

[NACCHO](#) is the national peak body representing 143 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across the country on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing issues. NACCHO is the third largest employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, with over 3,500 out of the 6,000 staff working in ACCHOs being either of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander background.

Many NACCHO members have almost 50 years of experience in the delivery of comprehensive primary health care. Services are delivered through fixed, outreach and mobile clinics operating in urban, rural and remote settings across Australia.