the Lowitja Institute

Australia's National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research

MEDIA RELEASE – 9 December 2016

HUMAN RIGHTS CHAMPION RECOGNISED: MS PAT ANDERSON AO

A lifelong commitment to the rights of Australia's First Peoples was recognised in Sydney this afternoon when Ms Pat Anderson AO was announced the winner of the Human Rights Medal 2016. An Alyawarre woman known nationally and internationally as a powerful advocate for human rights and social justice, Ms Anderson has made an outstanding contribution to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"The rights and welfare of Australia's First Peoples have been central to my long career in education, primary health care, health research, early childhood development, violence against women and children and, more broadly, the social determinants of health and wellbeing," Ms Anderson said.

Ms Anderson, whose Aboriginal mother was taken as a young child from her family in the 1930s, grew up in Parap camp in Darwin grew up in Parap camp in Darwin, acutely aware of the extreme forms of discrimination and racism then experienced by Aboriginal people. "Growing up closely with the women and families in the camp had a profound impact on me," Ms Anderson said, "that's where my lifelong commitment to establishing the rightful place of Australia's First Peoples as equal partners in our society was born. That commitment, and the rights of women and children everywhere, have been central to my career and much of my personal life."

Currently the co-Chair of the Prime Minister's Referendum Council, Ms Anderson is also the Chair of the Lowitja Institute. In that role, she is leading the organisation through a transformational process from sole reliance on government funding to a bold program of business development that will ensure its sustainability into the future. Ms Anderson has also played a leading national role in building collaborative relationships between researchers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, policymakers and health service providers, and much of her career has focused on strategic rights campaigns that have successfully changed the national agenda of the day.

"I am honoured to receive the Human Rights Medal 2016 particularly in such a strong field of co-finalists.I take this opportunity to celebrate the contribution, large and small, that many people around the country make every day to their communities," Ms Anderson said.

Lowitja Institute CEO, Mr Romlie Mokak, said, "As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working for the health and wellbeing for Australia's First Peoples, we are privileged to have Ms Anderson's wisdom and experience in advocacy, collaboration and governance lead our Board."

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ABOUT THE LOWITJA INSTITUTE

The Lowitja Institute is Australia's national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, named in honour of its Patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. It is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples through high impact quality research, knowledge exchange, and by supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.

Established in January 2010, the Lowitja Institute operates on key principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, a broader understanding of health that incorporates wellbeing, and the need for the work to have a clear and positive impact.

The Institute hosts the Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC (Lowitja Institute CRC) which is funded by the Australian Government CRC Programme. The history of the Lowitja Institute CRC dates back to 1997 when the first CRC for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was established.

The Institute and the CRC organisations since 1997 have led a substantial reform agenda in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research by working with communities, researchers and policymakers, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people setting the agenda and driving the outcomes. At present, the Lowitja Institute CRC works in partnership with 23 Participants around Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations; State, Territory and Australian government departments; and academic research institutions.

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