



MEDIA RELEASE

RESEARCHERNEYE WAPPAYALAWANGKA

Central Australia Academic Health Science Network

COVID-19: “We are in this together”

At a Council meeting of the Central Australia Academic Health Science Network [CA AHSN] today, a call was made for decisive and urgent action on the prevention of COVID-19 spreading to remote Australian communities, Executive Director Chips Mackinolty said today.

“We are in this together, and we have a collective responsibility at all levels of government and health service delivery to keep people safe,” said Mr Mackinolty.

“As health and medical research organisations, we are calling for an absolute priority to be given to minimising risk and preventing death in communities across central Australia.

“A major priority in our endeavours is working with Aboriginal communities and support to the primary health services in the bush and our regional centres.

“Things that might work in the big cities simply won’t work out bush, so we need to focus on local solutions.

“We believe it is critical that rapid and extensive testing be rolled out as soon as possible, so that such work is timely and localised. As a first step this should be located in Alice Springs, rapidly followed by other regional centres.

“Of paramount concern is that our health services—already severely under resourced—not be further burdened. Just as happened in the recent bush fire crises, we would see it as essential that Commonwealth-funded remote area health medical workers being brought in to help.

“Both Aboriginal community-controlled and government primary health services face enormous day-to-day challenges—and we strongly support them as the real heroes of health care in remote Australia, from Aboriginal Health Practitioners, to nurses to allied health workers to doctors, to all staff doing such vital work.

“Meanwhile, our research activities will limit fieldwork, and researchers recently overseas will not be allowed to travel remotely. This follows the initiatives already of some of our partner organisations

Mr Mackinolty said that CA AHSN would continue to be informed by messaging from the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT [AMSANT] and the Department of Health. AMSANT has already been supplying advice to member services, with a focus on updating vaccinations and a focus on day-to-day preventive measure such as hand washing.

In any case, we will also seek to follow the recommendations of local Aboriginal community organisations in our work.

“A major priority, from the Commonwealth and NT governments should be a major effort in providing accurate and concise information to Aboriginal people—with a strong emphasis given to delivering such information in First Nations languages.

For further information, contact Chips Mackinolty on 0448 168 464

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* Acronym pronounced as in “Cousin”

A health research partnership benefitting Warumungu, Arrernte (Eastern), Pintupi, Pitjantjatjara, Arrernte (Central), Yankunytjatjara, Luritja, Arrernte (Western), Warlpiri, Anmatyere, Ngaanyatjarra, Kaytetye and Alyawarre speakers across Central Australia