



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**6 July 2023**

**The NACCHO Board supports the *Uluru Statement from the Heart***

The Board of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) supports the full implementation of *the Uluru Statement from the Heart*, including a Voice, treaty, and truth telling.

The Chair of NACCHO, Donnella Mills, said in Cairns today, “Our Board is right behind the Voice.” NACCHO’s full statement is [here](#).

Donnella Mills said, “Not much positive came out of COVID, but it did give us a great example of what happens when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are heard. When we have a voice.”

NACCHO has estimated that almost 2,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives were saved during the pandemic, when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities spoke up and designed and implemented urgent COVID responses for their own communities.

Donnella Mills said, “We asked the Commonwealth to sit down with us and get an emergency plan in place. They agreed. They listened to us. We cut red tape, got funding out quickly and designed our own response.”

The measures put in place:

- helped get the message out in our languages,
- helped get protective measures in place,
- allowed communities to run their own rapid system of contact tracing,
- financed community shut-downs, when necessary,
- helped protect elders by removing them to safe places,
- sourced mobile homes to be deployed to ensure isolation for infected patients in areas of overcrowded housing, and
- helped get a network established for the vulnerable to cope in the lockdowns and to keep them communicating with their families and friends.

Donnella Mills said, “We were lucky that the Department of Health was listening to us. But imagine what would have happened if they hadn’t. About 2,000 lives would have been lost. We cannot afford to leave this to chance. With an enshrined Voice, we are much more likely to be heard.”

Based on government COVID data and the higher level of comorbidities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the share of COVID deaths should have been over 2,200 people, yet only about 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders died.

NACCHO also believes that the Voice aligns with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Supporting self-determination and building the capacity of the community-control sector is central to the commitment that all Australian governments made as part of this Agreement. The Voice will only lend strength to the Agreement and to existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and structures.

**-END-**

**For media enquiries: Verity Leach at [verity.leach@naccho.org.au](mailto:verity.leach@naccho.org.au) or 0438 944 113.**

[NACCHO](#) is the national peak body representing 145 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 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.



**NACCHO**  
National Aboriginal Community  
Controlled Health Organisation

***Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands***  
[www.naccho.org.au](http://www.naccho.org.au)