



NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

5 September 2024

New initiative boosts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacy leadership

NACCHO is thrilled to announce the recipients of the 2024 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Leadership Grant: Jes Pearson and Cheyne Sullivan. This significant initiative, supported by Pfizer Australia, aims to empower these outstanding individuals to develop invaluable leadership skills through an international and cross-cultural experience.

By supporting future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacist leaders like Jes and Cheyne, the aim is to amplify their voices, advocate for community needs, and enhance the cultural safety and effectiveness of healthcare delivery.

Jes Pearson and Cheyne Sullivan will have the opportunity to embark on an international journey to exchange experiences, gain knowledge, and foster leadership capabilities. Through interactions with Indigenous pharmacist representatives in other countries, they will build networks, share best practices, and identify effective strategies. Upon their return to Australia, they will share their insights with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector.

Dr. Dawn Casey, Deputy CEO of NACCHO, expressed her enthusiasm for the initiative, "We are thrilled to see the calibre of upcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacy sector leaders. We congratulate the two winners and all applicants for their initiative and commitment. Developing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacy workforce is a key enabler to improve the cultural safety and accessibility of pharmacy services for our mob."

Cheyne Sullivan, a Barkindji woman and SA Pharmacy Aboriginal Health and Beyond the Gap Project Lead, shared her excitement, "Winning the NACCHO leadership grant will provide an opportunity to gain a global perspective on challenges, approaches, and strategies related to medicines management for Indigenous peoples. Through cultural exchange, connecting and learning from diverse perspectives, I will apply learnings to my work as SA Pharmacy Aboriginal Health and Beyond the Gap Project Lead. I am looking forward to deepening my understanding of medicines management for Indigenous peoples and fostering collaboration to assist me in continuing to serve my community. Thank you to NACCHO for this opportunity."

Jes Pearson, a Wiradjuri woman originally from Wellington and currently working towards becoming a registered pharmacist, shared her thoughts on receiving the grant, "Growing up as an Indigenous person in my community, I struggled with opportunities to discover my culture, as well as career prospects as a First Nations student. I'm only the second person in my immediate and extended family to attend university, behind my older sister who graduated as a Physiotherapist in 2023.

Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands

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Address: Level 5 East, 2 Constitution Avenue, Canberra City ACT 2601

All correspondence: PO Box 130, Civic Square ACT 2608

Phone: +61 (02) 6246 9300 **Fax:** (02) 6248 0644

Email: reception@naccho.org.au

ABN 89 078 949 710

During my studies, I have been able to help other First Nations students uncover the opportunities available to them and realise that they, too, can achieve these goals that seem so unattainable."

"Learning my family's history and culture, accompanied by my after-school job at the pharmacy, is where my passion for Indigenous health grew. Working in a rural pharmacy since a young age has given me rich experience in not only the pharmacy profession but also rural and Indigenous healthcare. This passion of mine has inspired me to become a leader in my field, to advocate for better healthcare for First Nations people, especially in rural communities. The NACCHO Grant will provide me with a broader perspective on practice, to assist in improving Indigenous healthcare, which is a step closer to achieving my goal."

Anne Harris, Managing Director of Pfizer Australia & New Zealand, emphasised the importance of this initiative: "Developing and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare professionals is vital for the provision of culturally appropriate care. At Pfizer, we recognise how important this is in achieving equitable health outcomes for First Nations communities. Congratulations Jes and Cheyne – we're excited to contribute to your professional growth and leadership in pharmacy."

Leigh Simmonds, Senior Manager Patient Advocacy at Pfizer, added, "At Pfizer, we have been on a journey of reconciliation. Through listening and learning, we have come to a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of culture, language, Country, and Aboriginal world views of health and wellbeing. We recognise the importance of health workforce development. Support for this leadership grant is just one aspect of our overall commitment to improving health equity for generations to come."

Building the skills of future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacist leaders is a critical part of ensuring improved visibility of the profession for prospective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This initiative will also enable Jes and Cheyne to champion the priorities and medicine needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the health sector, including improving the cultural safety, appropriateness, and effectiveness of care.

With only around 100 pharmacists in Australia identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander—representing less than 0.3% of the pharmacist workforce—initiatives like this are essential for creating pathways to leadership within the profession.

The grant, funded by Pfizer Australia, includes up to \$15,000 for travel and accommodation per recipient. For more information on the grant and the recipients, visit: <https://www.naccho.org.au/pharmacy-leadership-grant/>

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For media enquiries, contact Charles David at Charles.David@naccho.org.au or 0490 090 544. Photos can be provided on request.

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.



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