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## **“Legally Invisible” report supports active involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in health policy**

The National Health Leadership Forum Co-Chairs, Jody Broun and Justin Mohamed, today welcomed the paper *Legally Invisible—How Australian Laws Impede Stewardship and Governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* saying its findings add weight to the importance of having a national body to monitor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health programs and to plan and lobby for better outcomes.

The report shows there are 250 State and Federal health laws but very few of them deal with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and in those that do, responsibilities are diffused and co-ordination is lacking.

“The National Health Leadership Forum has united every major player in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health area as members – that’s over ten peak health bodies, including the community controlled health sector, and the TSRA,” said Ms Broun, “but bodies such as this can only do so much when there is a mishmash of responsibilities and a lack of mechanisms for input.

“The suggested reforms in this paper should be considered as part of an overall shake up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes through legal recognition and coherent policy,” she said.

Forum Co-Chair Justin Mohamed said the report showed that responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is subject to shifts in policy and funding with little responsibility shared with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“The report compares different approaches to First Nations’ health in New Zealand, Canada and the United States. The common denominator in improving health outcomes is ensuring First Nations Peoples make decisions about their health and health services,” he said.

“The report’s examination of constitutional change to address health disadvantage is also relevant and timely,” said Ms Broun, “in the meantime, we look forward to working in partnership with Minister Snowdon on developing the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan,” she concluded.

The NHLF is a part of the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples and is the primary advisor to the Congress Board.

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*Legally Invisible—How Australian Laws Impede Stewardship and Governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* is a review commissioned and released by the Lowitja Institute, Australia’s National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research.