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Community benefit key in securing funding partnership

Mayi Kuwayu has received a major funding boost, with the Ian Potter Foundation injecting \$590,000 into the Study. That amount will be matched by the Australian National University's College of Health and Medicine, and Chancelry, with a total of \$1.18 million for advancing Mayi Kuwayu's work on getting results from the Study back into the community and into policy.

The Study, led by Associate Professor Raymond Lovett of the Research School of Population Health, aims to understand how a connection to culture affects the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Launched in November 2018, the Study now has more than 10,000 participants across Australia and is the first large-scale longitudinal study to explore the concept of culture as a powerful health asset.

Associate Professor Lovett (Wongaibon) said it was vital to ensure that data from the Study was used to benefit communities and to help guide policy into the future.

"Philanthropic partnerships play a key role in driving change by supporting independent projects such as the Mayi Kuwayu Study," Associate Professor Lovett said. "The funding from the Ian Potter Foundation will be used to increase community engagement, including reporting back to communities with meaningful findings. Making sure that communities benefit from their participation is a crucial step often missed in studies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"The data and findings can be used locally to inform community-level programs and individual wellbeing. Results will also be shared with Government, to inform and influence state and federal policy and programs. We are already undergoing regular and continued conversations with Government to keep policymakers engaged with the process, progress and findings."

The strength of the Study lies in community participation, making the engagement and consultation work of community outreach researchers vital to its success, said Jan Chapman, the Mayi Kuwayu Study manager.

"We have partnered with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and communities across the country and conducted extensive community consultation. Our team knows that partnerships are essential for the Study's success. We know how important it is to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations with researchers and policymakers to effect real change," Ms Chapman, a Taungurung woman said.

"This funding partnership will allow us to share the findings widely, help individuals and community to understand the Study results relevant to their area, and support local initiatives."

The Study team at the ANU is led and governed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and community organisations who have a demonstrated track record in conducting research with and for community.

Associate Professor Lovett says the recruitment of a community outreach researcher is the next crucial step in supporting this important work.