

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Honouring Legacy, Investing in the Next Generation: Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarships Reflect NAIDOC 2025 Theme

As Australia celebrates 50 years of NAIDOC Week with the powerful theme *"The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy"*, the Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme (PHMSS) proudly stands as a living embodiment of that vision in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year of supporting the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders and continuing the legacy of one of Australia's most respected First Nations advocates, Dr Arnold "Puggy" Hunter.

Dr Arnold "Puggy" Hunter a Nyikina man born in Darwin in 1951, Dr Hunter dedicated his life to addressing health inequity and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through self-determination and community control. As the inaugural Chair of NACCHO, Dr Hunter was a fearless reformer who championed policy change, grassroots empowerment, and equitable access to care. His legacy lives on through the scholarship that bears his name, investing in future health leaders who share his passion for justice and community strength.

Since its establishment, the PHMSS has supported over 2400 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to pursue careers in nursing, midwifery, medicine, and allied health. These students — many the first in their families to attend university — are the next generation of change-makers in health, culture, and community.

Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), in proud partnership with the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) and the Rural Doctors Network (RDN), is honoured to continue to deliver the *Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme (PHMSS)*, as it celebrates its 23<sup>rd</sup> year of programming, and its second year under Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control.

The PHMSS, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, provides vital financial and cultural support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students pursuing undergraduate studies in health. Scholarships offer up to **\$15,000 per annum (full time)** over the standard duration of the course, alongside access to mentoring and culturally safe support services.

**Donna Murray**, Wiradyuri and Wonnarua woman and IAHA Chief Executive Officer, said the alignment with this year's NAIDOC theme is deeply meaningful:

*"This year's NAIDOC theme reminds us that strength and legacy are not only inherited — they are built. The Puggy Hunter Scholarship invests in the visionaries, carers, and leaders who collectively carry forward the fight for health equity with the same determination Puggy lived by. We are proud to walk with the next generation, ensuring they are supported, seen, and celebrated. This is how we honour Puggy's legacy — not only in words, but through action."*

**Karl Briscoe**, Kuku Yalanji man and NAATSIHWP Chief Executive Officer, said:

“This scholarship plays a vital role in ensuring equitable access to education and building a strong, Indigenous-led health workforce.”

**Professor Peter O’Mara**, Wiradjuri man and RDN Chair, stated:

“RDN is proud to support this community-led model and provide technical and program delivery expertise to benefit students from rural and remote communities.”

As NAIDOC Week events are held across the country celebrating Indigenous achievement and resilience, the PHMSS calls on current and future students to take up the challenge laid down by Dr Hunter: to be bold in leadership, grounded in culture, and relentless in the pursuit of better futures.

Applications for the next round of the Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme open on **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September and close on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025.**

More information will be available on the IAHA website.

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**About the Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme:**

The PHMSS was established in 2001 in honour of Dr Arnold “Puggy” Hunter, a trailblazing advocate for Aboriginal health and Chair of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). The scholarship supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying entry-level health courses across Australia.