

## MEDIA RELEASE 27/06/21

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### FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES URGED TO IGNORE THE “JIBBER” AND SEE A “JABBER” ABOUT COVID VACCINES

**NEW CAMPAIGN: Vaccine hesitancy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities targeted with the message: “Don’t listen to the Jibber, go see a Jabber.”**

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Western Queensland’s First Nations communities are being encouraged to speak with their local clinicians about the COVID vaccine, amid concerning reports of vaccine hesitancy among vulnerable populations in rural and remote Queensland.

The Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN), responsible for facilitating the COVID vaccine roll-out in selected outback populations, is spearheading a new campaign to raise awareness about the importance of getting accurate information about vaccines from reliable sources.

“On the whole we have had a very good response to the vaccine in our patch, with good take-up rates in our general population,” explains WQPHN CEO Sandy Gillies.

“But from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health partners we’re hearing anecdotal reports of people continuing to be hesitant about receiving the vaccine, worried about side effects and confused with the messages they’re receiving from media and other sources.”

“So we’re encouraging our First Nations communities to try and bypass the mixed messages and fearmongering that can spread by word-of-mouth or online, and just simply chat with your local health clinic about the vaccine and raise any concerns you might have about the jab,” Sandy said.

The WQPHN’s “Jibber Jabber” campaign encourages people to ignore the “Jibber”, defined as foolish or worthless talk, and instead talk to a “Jabber”, being someone who administers a COVID vaccine jab.

Sandy Gillies, a Gunggari woman and Winton local, says it’s important to approach this issue with a warm, welcoming tone.

“We’ve been careful not to be pushy about getting a jab as we know heavy-handed approaches don’t work in First Nations communities or more broadly across our patch,” Sandy explains.

“We wanted to focus more on ensuring people have the right information first before making a decision about the vaccine, so that patients are armed with all the facts and are clear about what getting the vaccine means for them.”

[The Nukal Murra Alliance](#), a collaboration between key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services in Western Queensland and the WQPHN, was integral in providing the on-the-ground information that informed the campaign.

Alliance member and Gidgee Healing CEO Renee Blackman says her community in North West Queensland is also experiencing vaccine hesitancy.

“I don’t get the sense on the ground that people are across-the-board anti the vaccine, it’s just that they don’t feel like they’ve got enough information to make an educated choice about whether the vaccine is for them,” Renee Blackman said.

“Nobody wants to be the ‘patient zero’ in our region, the person that brings the virus out, but if it does ever get out here we all want to be prepared for it because we are a long way away from any metropolitan response services that could quickly deal with an outbreak.”

“What I’d encourage people to do is ask your clinicians, speak to the people in the know about what’s best for you, because it is different for everybody,” Renee said.

#### **Western Qld Primary Health Network (WQPHN) quick facts:**

- commissions (or funds) health services in Western Queensland
- covers almost one million square kilometres of Queensland, 55% of the state’s total land area
- aligns health investment with demonstrated population health needs
- uses health intelligence data to orientate health services efficiently and effectively
- ensures the right primary health care is delivered, at the right time by the right provider
- advised by GPs and other health professionals and consumers
- one of 31 PHNs across Australia established and funded by the Commonwealth Government

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