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**National Association  
of Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander  
Physiotherapists, Inc.**

# Media Release

## **Experiences of Racism/Intolerance High Amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Physios - Survey**

16 June 2011 – for immediate release

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Physiotherapists, Inc. (NAATSIP) has revealed that 81% of surveyed members have experienced some form of racism or intolerance while working as a physiotherapist, or during their studies.

A survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander physiotherapists and physiotherapy students was conducted by NAATSIP in May of this year, following concerns that a high proportion of members were reporting experiencing racism or intolerance in their workplaces.

Results from the study indicate that 93% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander physiotherapists currently experience some form of racism or intolerance in their workplace, and 67% have similar experiences while studying. Most encounters were verbal in nature, and 1 in 5 respondents described either witnessing or experiencing a physical act they considered to be racially motivated.

NAATSIP's Executive Committee stated the findings are both disturbing and unacceptable. "We know that the number of responses we received only represent a portion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander physiotherapy workforce, however these responses are still quite shocking." NAATSIP President, Mr Ray Gates, stated.

Approximately 60% of racist or intolerant behaviour came from patients or their families, while 40% came from co-workers. "This raises concerns that despite reports of the health workforce becoming more culturally aware, there are still major deficiencies in providing culturally safe environments." Mr Gates stated.

"If our survey is representative of what's happening amongst the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander physios, how they be expected to provide effective care in that sort of environment?"

"Providing culturally safe services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whether they're patients, health care providers or service staff, needs to become mandatory if we're going to make a difference in the health of our peoples." Mr Gates stated.

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NAATSIP's Executive Committee is keen to address the concerns raised by the survey. "We need to work out the best ways to support our members who experience racism or intolerance." Mr Gates stated. "We'll be sharing our data with the Lowitja Institute, as part of their current research into racism, and raising our concerns with the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peak health bodies, education providers, and other stakeholders, in particular the Australian Physiotherapy Association and Indigenous Allied Health Australia, so we can see these issues addressed." he said.

Further information about the survey can be obtained by contacting NAATSIP's administration at: [admin@naatsip.org](mailto:admin@naatsip.org)

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