

# The Jilpa Nappaljari Jones Memorial Oration

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference 2022 is proud to host the first annual Jilpa Nappaljari Jones Memorial Oration.

## The Oration

The Jilpa Nappaljari Jones Memorial Oration aims to celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to eye care. The Oration acknowledges the significant contribution Jilpa made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health and her inspiration for a whole generation of amazing women leaders in eye health.

The inaugural oration will be presented by Jaki Adams Barton as part of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference 2022, on Larrakia land in Darwin, 24- 26 May 2022.

## Jilpa Nappaljari Jones

Jilpa Nappaljari Jones AM, Walmajarri woman, pioneering nurse, has dedicated her life to the improvement of health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Her life's journey is intertwined with the journey for self-determination in health, and the struggle to improve health and vision.

Born on Walmajarri land in the Great Sandy Desert, Jilpa was taken away from her family at the age of 5 and raised in Queensland. At age 15, Jilpa chose to study nursing, and eventually became one of the first Aboriginal registered nurses after graduating in General Nursing (Midwifery and Ophthalmology).

Jilpa obtained a Churchill Trust Scholarship to study and work at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, before returning to Australia and working in Cairns.

In 1971, Jilpa moved to Sydney and was one of the first nurses to work in the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service after its establishment that same year. The Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service was the first Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service in Australia, and its pioneering work inspired others to establish Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services all across the country.

In 1975, Jilpa joined the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program. The much-celebrated program, championed by ophthalmologist Prof Fred Hollows, included large teams travelling across Australia to screen, diagnose, and treat trachoma and other eye conditions among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Jilpa worked in one of those teams, travelling across Queensland and Western Australia in the duration of the program. In one of the Western Australia trips, Jilpa's team worked in Fitzroy Crossing on Walmadjari land, and was reunited with her birth mother.

In addition to eye health, Jilpa made significant contributions to midwifery, including work in Far North Queensland to study birthing choices, and to asthma treatment.

Jilpa was appointed to the council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in 1994. She also was a lifelong member of the Fred Hollows Foundation and friend of Fred's dating back to their joint work at the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service and on the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program.

Jilpa's interest in improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care continued. She was the lead author of A Critical History of Indigenous Eye Health Policy-Making: Towards Effective System Reform (2011). This comprehensive policy review was key in informing the policy recommendations of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision the following year. Jilpa continued to provide her expertise and leadership in eye health as a member of the Indigenous Eye Health Advisory Board of the Indigenous Eye Health Unit at the University of Melbourne.

Jilpa's passion for knowledge shined through her life, and in 2003 completed a further degree at the Australian National University in Political Science and History. Jilpa also served as a Director of Black Women's Action in Education (which later became the Roberta Sykes Foundation). In 2007, Jilpa was part of a successful native title claim for her native Walmajarri land, as part of the Great Sandy Desert land claim project.



## Jaki Adams

Jaki was born and raised in Garramilla (Darwin), on Larrakia Country, and is of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, with ancestral links to the Yadhagana and Wuthathi people of Cape York Peninsula, traditional family ties with the Gurindji people, and extended family relationships with the people of the Torres Straits and Warlpiri (Yuendumu).

Jaki has over 25 years' experience in the government and international development sectors.

Jaki has held many leadership roles in Australia, including Chair of Vision 2020 Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee; and currently is a Vision 2020 Australia Board Member; The Fred Hollows Foundation's lead representative on the national Close the Gap Steering Committee (Health Equity and Social Justice); an Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) Board Member; and more recently, becoming a Board Director of Thirilli Ltd (Indigenous Suicide Postvention Service).

Jaki has been at The Fred Hollows Foundation for close to 10 years. Her current role as Director of Social Justice and Regional Engagement within the Office of the CEO sees her continuing to champion her drive and passion for health equity, elevating the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and progressing true allyship; supporting strategic eye care relationships across the Pacific; and progressing a global network to improve eye care access for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (including recently establishing a First Nations Special Interest Group through the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB)).

In previous roles at The Foundation, Jaki has overseen the Indigenous Australia Program and eye care programming across the Pacific, Timor Leste, the Philippines and Indonesia.

## Further readings:

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/whats-new/news/jilpa-nappaljari-jones-marjorie-baldwin-jones-am>

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/speakingout/jilpa-jones/13618584>

<https://www.hollows.org/au/latest/vale-jilpa-jones-am>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2021/11/05/darling-friend-eye-health-pioneer-jilpa-nappaljari-jones-remembered>

[https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/research\\_pub/jones-buzzacott-briscoe-murray-2008-beyond-sandy-blight\\_0\\_2.pdf](https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/research_pub/jones-buzzacott-briscoe-murray-2008-beyond-sandy-blight_0_2.pdf)

<https://ranzco.edu/blog/because-of-her-we-can-celebrating-the-role-of-women-in-the-national-trachoma-and-eye-health-program-by-guy-gillor/>

[https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/1984133/critical\\_history\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1984133/critical_history_full_report.pdf)