menzies SCHOOL OF HEALTH RESEARCH

MEDIA RELEASE

Taking action to address extreme weather impacts on wellbeing

25 September 2026

A new four-year research partnership between Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies), Pintupi Homelands Health Service and the Pintupi Community will explore the impacts of climate change on mental health and co-design strategies to support wellbeing.

Announced yesterday, this project has been made possible through receiving just under $2 million in funding from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) – Health and Climate Change Grant.

Researchers and community will come together to yarn about the weather and its impact on wellbeing to identify both current and emerging mental health impacts experienced by Pintupi people due to climate change. These insights will inform the co-design of culturally safe support tools, to support residents and remote health staff to take an active role in addressing wellbeing and in turn help contribute to a more climate-resilient community.

Remote communities in Australia are significantly impacted by extreme weather, such as extended periods of high temperatures and flooding. This greatly effects health, food security, water quality and the ability to undertake cultural practices like caring for Country.

The unrelating nature of changing weather patterns also takes a toll on wellbeing, and this can show through heightened stress and feelings of deep uncertainty about the future. Prolonged heat exposure and climate-related pressures can also lead to higher psychological distress and harmful coping behaviours. As climate-related events become more frequent and intense, there is an urgent need for evidenced-based support and prevention strategies.

Led by Menzies School of Health Research's Remote Health Systems and Climate Change Centre (RHC3), this project is a collaboration with Pintupi Homelands Health Service, Central Land Council, Charles Darwin University's Northern Institute, The Poche SA + NT Centre at Flinders University and the University of Sydney's Centre for Rural Health.

Learn more about this project:
https://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Research/Projects/Major_Initiatives/Pintupi_led_climate_yarning_to_reduce_climate_change-related_mental_health_risks/

Quotes attributable to Chief Investigator on the Project and Menzies RHC3 Co-lead, Associate Professor Supriya Mathew:

"Climate solutions require a truly transdisciplinary lens, one that brings together environmental science, public health, social sciences, policy, and, most importantly, community knowledge. Through this grant, we aim to co-design solutions that are not only evidence-based, but also culturally responsive and acceptable at the community level. By using a place-based approach, this grant will support the development of strategies that

reduce both current and future climate-related mental health risks, strengthening resilience and well-being in the face of a changing climate."

Quotes attributable to Pintupi Homelands Health Service Chief Executive Officer and Project Partner Investigator, Dr Leander Menezes:
"In very remote communities like Kintore, climate change is not theoretical, it directly affects health, infrastructure, housing, and access to care. Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) are on the frontline of responding to these impacts. Research that is grounded in community realities and designed in partnership with ACCHSs is critical to ensuring climate responses are practical, culturally informed, and locally led."

Quotes attributable to Project Chief Investigator and Menzies Mental Health Research Lead, Professor Tricia Nagel:
"This new funding is an important opportunity to ensure cultural strength and mental health are central to future climate change adaption planning."

ENDS

Media Contact
Phone: (08) 8946 8680 **| Email:** media@menzies.edu.au

About Menzies School of Health Research
Menzies is at the forefront of health and medical research dedicated to improving the lives of peoples across the Northern Territory, Asia Pacific and beyond. By joining scientific knowledge with community wisdom, Menzies strives to Close the Gap, and shape a healthier, more equitable future where communities can thrive.