

## **New phase to strengthen local approach to diabetes in Manayingkarirra (Maningrida)**

**12 March 2026**

A new phase of the Manayingkarirra (Maningrida) Healthy Women's Project will deliver culturally appropriate health resources, shaped by the priorities of local women.

Led by Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) through the DIABETES across the LIFECOURSE: Northern Australia Partnership, in collaboration with Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation and the community, the project will co-design resources in local Aboriginal languages to support the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience some of the highest rates of type 2 diabetes globally, with one in five Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory (NT) diagnosed with diabetes during pregnancy. As a widespread health issue in the NT, there is an urgent need for accessible and culturally safe prevention and support for type 2 diabetes.

This new stage builds on strong community engagement from the project's first phase, where more than 140 women engaged in project activities, including fortnightly health education and physical activity sessions.

Established in 2023, the Manayingkarirra Healthy Women's Project was created to support women to care for their health and to reduce the rate and impacts of type 2 diabetes.

Community consultation revealed that women wanted a holistic approach to health, identifying three key priorities: better access to healthy food, clear and practical health information and greater access to services that support physical activity.

This drove the delivery of 13 health education sessions, which included cook-ups with a dietitian, yarning about blood sugar management, discussions on heart and kidney health and social and emotional wellbeing activities. Fourteen physical activity sessions saw women participate in stretching, aerobics and pool-based exercise. Together, these fortnightly sessions created supportive, culturally safe spaces for women to prioritise their health and share their experiences and knowledge outside a clinical setting.

The women's wellness groups have continued beyond the initial program, reflecting strong local leadership and community ownership.

The new project phase has been made possible through a recently announced [Diabetes Australia Community Priorities Grant](#), providing \$100,000 over the next two years.

As this phase commences, the project focus remains clear: to support women in Manayingkarirra to lead healthy, strong lives on their own terms.

**Quotes attributable to Menzies DIABETES across the LIFECOURSE: Northern Australia Partnership Project Officer, Norlisha Bartlett:**

"This is such an important project for the women of Maningrida. It has provided a culturally safe space for women to come together and share their health journeys, removing stigma and shame. Initially, only 4 women attended our first health education session. As the project gained momentum, we saw over 20 women in later sessions, with grandmothers encouraging their daughters to attend with their babies, because they came home happier after our sessions - specifically the water fun sessions in the pool.

"At first, the women were very shy, but by the end of the project, they would come and ask questions about their health. Seeing their confidence grow and empowering these women was the highlight of the project for me."

**Quotes attributable to Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation Women's Cultural Support Hub Coordinator, Jessica Phillips:**

"Diabetes is one of those diseases that is silent - it creeps up on you. Women in community often experience high levels of stress, and the way of life around food and what is available in the shops can have a real impact on diabetes risk.

"We don't talk about it - it's normalised and considered the way of life. But we need to talk about it, we need to change for the next generation.

"This project has been important in bringing mothers together, to talk about wellbeing and to help us all better understand our health."

**Quotes attributable to Menzies DIABETES across the LIFECOURSE: Northern Australia Partnership Senior Research Fellow, Dr Diana MacKay:**

"We know that Western ways of talking about health often aren't effective for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This project is a fantastic opportunity to share positive messages about preventing and living well with type 2 diabetes in a way which is meaningful for women in Maningrida.

"The growing rates of type 2 diabetes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities paints a scary story. The women of Maningrida have shown us that they want to turn this story around."

ENDS

**Media Contact**

**Phone:** (08) 8946 8680 | **Email:** [media@menzies.edu.au](mailto: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.