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MEDIA RELEASE

International Women's Day event: First Nations Women Yarn

Women's Health Grampians' key International Women's Day event takes place on **9 March 2023**. First Nations Women Yarn is a panel event centring and celebrating the voices and lived experience of First Nations women from the Ballarat region and beyond.

The event reached 95% capacity within two days of being advertised, and has had a growing wait-list for the past week. This is evidence of a strong desire across the region to hear from First Nations people, and from women in particular. While this WHG event is linked to International Women's Day, we believe that listening to those who have historically been excluded from public conversations, including around equality, needs to be an ongoing year-round focus.

Lyndel Ward, proud Gamilaraay Woman, WHG First Nations Health Promotion Officer, and First Nations Women Yarn panel host, says: *'This will be a deadly yarn about where we've come from, why we continue to work in advocacy and activist roles for our community, and changes we need to see. Women have always tried to keep the foundations of family together despite significant challenges and opposition. Of the 19 target areas in the National Agreement for Closing the Gap* the vast majority are not on track to be achieved and some are getting worse, including Indigenous suicide, out-of-home care and incarceration rates. There's so much work still to do.'*

Marianne Hendron, CEO Women's Health Grampians, says: *'International Women's Day is one of the most important days of the year to celebrate women's achievements, reflect on progress made, and call for change and advocate for gender equality. We accept, as a feminist organisation, that the struggle for gender equality has often excluded First Nations women, and we at Women's Health Grampians are committed to learning and reflecting on our own privilege in order to work in genuine partnership. We recognise the strength and courage of First Nations women and girls who bravely speak up against oppression and the ongoing impact of colonisation, and generously share their wisdom on Family, Country and Culture.'*

First Nations Women Yarn features an acknowledgment of country by proud Yorta Yorta woman Rachel Muir, followed by a panel featuring three amazing speakers: Ashlee Rodgers, proud Yorta Yorta woman; Nikki Foy, proud Gunditjmara, Wotjobaluk woman; and Nikki Bell, proud Gunditjmara, Ngarrindjeri, Wotjobaluk woman. Finally, Deborah Lowah Clark, proud Meriam Torres Strait Islander woman and renowned Ballarat-based vocal performer, will give a short performance.

The event will run from 11.30am – 1.30pm on Thursday, 9 March 2023 at the Ballarat Trades Hall.

*The objective of the National Agreement for Closing the Gap is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians: <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement>

Media Enquiries:

Marianne Hendron
Chief Executive Officer, Women's Health Grampians
marianne@whg.org.au or 0429 265 724