**CALL FOR URGENT FUNDING BOOST FOR RHD IN AUSTRALIA**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, alongside non-Indigenous leaders, from across the nation are calling for a significant and urgent injection of $40 million in funding to tackle Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) following last night’s Four Corners’ episode.

The plight of young Aboriginal people with RHD has also been highlighted in a new feature film being released next Wednesday, during the annual Close the Gap Week (commencing 14 March 2022).

Director of RHDAustralia, Vicki Wade (featured in the ABC program) joined the call this morning, alongside Dr Bo Remenyi (NT), Paul Wright from ANTaR, Professor Jonathan Carapetis from the Telethon Kids Institute (WA), Glenn Keys from Aspen Medical (ACT) and Georgina Byron from The Snow Foundation.

“The nation needs to stand up and do something about this tragic and totally preventable cause of death before more of our young people are killed. Communities are ready and many are already taking action,” Vicki Wade said.

“We have community leadership, we have the medical technology, and we have a clear pathway to ending RHD, what we need is an immediate commitment from the Federal Government to fully fund the Rheumatic Heart Disease Endgame Strategy. It must happen now, and it must be meaningful.”

Released in 2020, the [RHD Endgame Strategy](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__endrhd.telethonkids.org.au_RHD-2DEndgame-2DStrategy_&d=DwMFAg&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=ZMNSx84pSEK_KVAIQ301_8YmoMrlQuRj8kD83bHrjjM&m=gY2Fj9MzhcPxd-3vgeGa44oVdRF8lOIaujI8H-k23mI&s=2O1JnDVi0JGL5tFiNsXX24VtXeZwMU-kbIpuyUoGvfQ&e=) is the blueprint to eliminate RHD in Australia.

Paediatrician Professor Carapetis said he wasn’t shocked by the ABC program, “in 2018, the World Health Assembly passed an international resolution requiring countries, including Australia, to prevent and eliminate RHD.  Australia is a signatory to that convention and so we have both an international and domestic obligation to fix this issue, and fix it now,” Professor Carapetis said.

“This has been going on for too long, with Commonwealth and all jurisdictional slow to respond to an ever-growing need with a tragic outcome. This is despite the fact that this disease has been effectively eliminated for non-Indigenous Australians.”

“We saw last night the devastating consequences of RHD.  People with RHD need better care, but most importantly we need to stop new cases happening. We know how to do this – it just needs commitment and funding.”

The new film, *Take Heart: Deadly Heart*, is a follow up from the 2016 film, *Take Heart: The Quest to Rid Australasia from Rheumatic Heart Disease* that first highlighted the issue on a national stage, sparking the development of the RHD Endgame Strategy, funded by the Federal Government.

RHD is a national issue, *Take Heart: Deadly Heart* demonstrates that by investing in community-led initiatives and prevention programs, RHD is a problem that can be solved. The film highlights the solutions to RHD and the strategies that will pave the way towards eliminating RHD once and for all.

Dr Bo Remenyi is a paediatric cardiologist working directly in Aboriginal communities through the [Take Heart](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__ddec1-2D0-2Den-2Dctp.trendmicro.com-3A443_wis_clicktime_v1_query-3Furl-3Dhttps-253a-252f-252furldefense.proofpoint.com-252fv2-252furl-253fu-253dhttps-252d3A-255f-255fdeadlyhearttrek.org-255f-2526d-253dDwMFAg-2526c-253deuGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-252dv5A-255fCdpgnVfiiMM-2526r-253dObTDvc0nI60UIdPMcfac6qnC2rN8BF75eL9qRBxKGmg-2526m-253dBMRRqOwoclN2yZyppvEPeVMfAMJuZDu4tFVFD2-255fZDR4-2526s-253dMUWt3T49QHyjL4nyJWcyxxYDdxEQ8bS8x3Yr234AGas-2526e-253d-26umid-3D499583d0-2D9a96-2D4d7e-2D907e-2D61bde0e4265e-26auth-3Dbd49bbd20ffeb7d6acc8e9a85bb2e9a8f7a67034-2Ded113f0d347610c1c9528b73c4f6d942e64c259a&d=DwMFAg&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=ZMNSx84pSEK_KVAIQ301_8YmoMrlQuRj8kD83bHrjjM&m=gY2Fj9MzhcPxd-3vgeGa44oVdRF8lOIaujI8H-k23mI&s=b3MO4UAN1w2tuXCQplsvwj_blfaFu4idPZ_F8EHST3o&e=) program. “Despite this initial commitment from the Government, there has been little action and RHD rates amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait people are on the rise,” Dr Bo Remenyi said.

“I’ve been working closely with children, families, communities and health experts across this nation, and I’ve seen too many young people die because of neglect, disinterest, racism and poor health outcomes, all of which are utterly preventable.”

Vicki Wade added, “the current Federal Government commitment is to end RHD by 2030. However, without action right now, it is estimated as many as 9,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and these are mostly our young ones, will develop acute rheumatic fever or RHD by 2031.”

“This is not OK – we are on track for things to get worse, not better, so we must act now. We urgently need an additional $40 million over 3 years to begin the implementation of the RHD Endgame Strategy. It must be community-led and focussed on early intervention and creating healthy environments for our kids to grow up in.”

To make tangible progress towards ending RHD, the full cost of implementing the Endgame Strategy is $649M over a decade. The group is encouraging everyone to attend a premiere of the *Take Heart: Deadly Heart* film next Tuesday 15 at Nova cinema in Melbourne and on Wednesday 16 in Sydney at the Eternity Playhouse, Darlinghurst Theatre Company. Screenings across the country will follow. For more information, visit  [https://takeheartrhd.com/](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__ddec1-2D0-2Den-2Dctp.trendmicro.com-3A443_wis_clicktime_v1_query-3Furl-3Dhttps-253a-252f-252furldefense.proofpoint.com-252fv2-252furl-253fu-253dhttps-252d3A-255f-255ftakeheartrhd.com-255f-2526d-253dDwMFAg-2526c-253deuGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-252dv5A-255fCdpgnVfiiMM-2526r-253dObTDvc0nI60UIdPMcfac6qnC2rN8BF75eL9qRBxKGmg-2526m-253dBMRRqOwoclN2yZyppvEPeVMfAMJuZDu4tFVFD2-255fZDR4-2526s-253d7BUYieAZQ2EcX6L8JyxxxmoOyaY9fMsuFSeLornFqhQ-2526e-253d-26umid-3D499583d0-2D9a96-2D4d7e-2D907e-2D61bde0e4265e-26auth-3Dbd49bbd20ffeb7d6acc8e9a85bb2e9a8f7a67034-2Dd02e0d319d80a893bec35eff660900bb07a13f65&d=DwMFAg&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=ZMNSx84pSEK_KVAIQ301_8YmoMrlQuRj8kD83bHrjjM&m=gY2Fj9MzhcPxd-3vgeGa44oVdRF8lOIaujI8H-k23mI&s=eOSFWvVt3ecJgyl7LsLJg1DsTo9xWRfWosO3zKyTA6c&e=)

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