

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Powerful first keynote speakers announced ahead of the Aboriginal Health Conference**

They moved every heart in Australia, and now Thiinma Elder, Peter Salmon, and Midwest-based musician and linguist Rosie Sitorus are bringing their powerful performance to this year's Aboriginal Health Conference.

Peter, a 92-year-old stockman from the Upper Gascoyne, is the last living speaker of the First Nations language Thiinma.

Earlier this year, Peter and Rosie appeared on ABC TV's *The Piano*, performing their song 'Warri Yungu, Warri Paba', which is written in Thiinma.

The pair will share the importance of language, country and community, and how it is at the core of Aboriginal healthcare, at this year's conference held from August 15-16 at the Pan Pacific Perth, Boorloo.

The conference is delivered by Rural Health West in partnership with WA Country Health Service.

"It's all so intricately connected. Caring for Peter's country is the centre of everything that he does and that we do," Rosie said.

"Looking after your family, looking after your country and looking after your people, it's all the same thing, really."

This will also reflect the conference's theme of "*Healing Ourselves, Healing Country, Healing Community*".

"The most important thing for Aboriginal people is to talk about their Country. That's all we have to do, look after Country right from the beginning," Peter said.

Rosie said understanding someone's identity, particularly in the "Aboriginal health space", can help health professionals provide the best community and individual care they can.

For Rosie, language is a carrier of culture, it's the way the Country communicates.

“We know that people who don't have the language to understand the world or have the world understand them, struggle in the society that is built around us,” she said.

“Peter understands pretty much everything in the world around him, but he comes at it from a slightly different angle. I might come down the main road, but Peter comes around the hills. He gets there, but it's just a slightly different way that he gets there.”

She said it's the job of those working towards a more equitable and healthy society, to find those other ways that people get to meaning and connection.

“The Aboriginal Health Conference will offer a good opportunity to share the work we do with the audience,” Rosie said.

Two of Peter's grandsons will join the pair on stage.

Rosie said the opportunity will show Peter's grandsons that being connected to him and his legacy means they can use their strengths to carry it on.

“That will be very great,” Peter said.

“Good to get them. Good to get them going here and keep them going.”

Rosie said: “Peter often says what we're doing makes him feel 10 or 20 years younger because we're connecting to the country, to the language, to the old people.”

## **ENDS**

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### **Media Notes:**

*Rural Health West aims to improve access to quality healthcare for rural communities through the provision of a highly skilled, motivated and sustainable medical and allied health workforce. We are a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded through the WA Country Health Service and the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.*

*The Aboriginal Health Conference brings together Aboriginal health workers, academics, students, health organisations and stakeholders committed to strengthening the social, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of our mob. Across two days, delegates will connect, share knowledge, and explore practical, community-led approaches that support lasting health outcomes for individuals, families, communities, and Country. More information on the Aboriginal Health Conference can be found here: <https://www.aboriginalhealthconference.com.au/>.*