## MEDIA RELEASE

**LAUNCH OF BRIDGING THE GAP FOUNDATION**

**5 July 2018:** The Bridging the Gap Foundation (the Foundation) was officially launched today with the release of a campaign film created by award-winning agency KWP! to draw attention to the need to improve health and education opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The Foundation is as a national organisation which will raise awareness and funds for Indigenous health and education. Established through the Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) and Charles Darwin University (CDU), the Foundation will fund research and undertake projects in health and education in order to address one of Australia’s most urgent issues: the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians’ health and education opportunities and outcomes.

Initially, the projects will be primarily undertaken by Menzies and CDU, but these two institutions cannot do it alone. The Foundation will work in partnership with health and education researchers, universities, sports organisations and other institutions in Australia and overseas, and will collaborate with governments and agencies at both national and international levels, to achieve its goal of improving Indigenous health and education.

There are many challenges currently facing our Indigenous communities, which can all be summarised in a simple statistic: there is a 10-year gap in the average life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians with health and education being major contributors to this gap.

“We are proud to announce this important foundation which will partner with health services and other organisations including sports clubs to improve outcomes and increase education and employment opportunities for Indigenous students,” said Richard Ryan AO, Chairman, Bridging the Gap Foundation.

KWP!, one of Australia’s largest full-service independent agencies, was engaged by the Foundation to create a campaign video to be the voice of the Foundation and highlight the vital need to bridge the gap.

“The lack of parity in health and opportunity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians struck our team hard. We felt that this great shame needed to be exposed in the most powerful way for all Australians to understand the unacceptable nature of this problem. In choosing to directly compare the hope and innocence of two young girls, both full of potential, one’s future under threat, we could expose the truth of this undeniable stain on our society. We hope this powerful portrait will stop people, make them consider the circumstances and raise awareness of what the Foundation is trying to achieve,” David O’Loughlin, Partner & Joint Managing Director, KWP!.

Menzies and CDU have an extraordinary track record in Indigenous health and education research respectively; Menzies has been involved in research and projects in community for over 30 years and CDU has been involved in Indigenous education for over 25 years.

The Foundation will aim to achieve its goal of bridging the gap through its community projects and partnerships including (but not limited to) HealthLAB, Growing Our Own, Hepatitis B, Wilurrara Tjutaku Football League, Nutrition and ICHM Scholarships. The Foundation is also working on other important projects such as cancer and kidney health.

HealthLAB is an initiative aimed at reducing the prevalence of chronic, preventable disease in Australia. HealthLab is an innovative, interactive, mobile laboratory which travels to remote Indigenous communities to promote healthy lifestyle behaviours through evidence-based education. Participants measure their own biomedical risk factors for chronic diseases and learn how to reduce their lifetime and intergenerational risk of disease.

Chronic diseases are responsible for nearly 80% of the total burden of disease and injury in Australia and more than two-thirds of all health expenditure. While access to services is an issue for all Australians who live in very remote communities, a high proportion of these people are Indigenous Australians. The burden of chronic disease is therefore disproportionately carried by Indigenous Australians.

The Foundation has also formed a new partnership with the International College of Hotel Management (ICHM) to provide two scholarships for Indigenous students to attend the college and study hospitality. An Indigenous mentor will also be provided to the students while they are on campus, along with a counsellor and learning support.

**For all media enquiries contact:**

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**About us**

*Bridging the Gap Foundation has been established through the Menzies School of Health Research and Charles Darwin University. Its objective is to fund research into health and education and undertake projects in these fields in order to address one of Australia’s most urgent issues: the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians’ health and education opportunities and outcomes.*

*You can help bridge the gap by contributing to the work of the Foundation. Donations can be made online or by cheque. All donations are tax deductible. If you wish to discuss a donation, please contact:*

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*For more information / to watch the film:* [*www.btgfoundation.com.au*](http://www.btgfoundation.com.au) *Social media:* @BTGFAustralia