



# MEDIA STATEMENT

19 NOVEMBER 2025

---

## **Invisible pandemic: Long COVID remains a silent health threat in Aboriginal communities**

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) has delivered an update to NT health practitioners on Long COVID, warning that it remains a significant and under-recognised health burden in remote communities.

AMSANT Public Health Registrar and Infectious Diseases Physician, Dr Andrew Nguyen, who briefed practitioners last week, said despite collective pandemic fatigue, Long COVID continues to pose a major public health risk in the Northern Territory.

Around 5.6% of Australians who have had COVID — more than 870,000 people — are living with lasting symptoms including debilitating fatigue, brain fog, and chronic pain. Yet the true impact in Aboriginal communities remains unknown due to major gaps in access, research and diagnosis.

Dr Nguyen said Long COVID is likely to be under-diagnosed in the NT, particularly in remote Aboriginal communities where essential diagnostic tests are not consistently accessible, exposing existing health inequities. Symptoms may present differently, especially on a background of multiple medical conditions which disproportionately impact Aboriginal people.

“Long COVID is disabling for many people,” Dr Nguyen said. “Symptoms can fluctuate and affect daily functioning, work and quality of life. Early assessment and coordinated care are critical.”

“But we simply don’t know how Long COVID is manifesting in Aboriginal communities because the diagnostic pathways are not there. If people can’t access the tests, they can’t get the diagnosis. The likelihood of Long COVID being picked up for Aboriginal people compared to other Australians is just not the same.”

Dr Nguyen said the NT remains the only jurisdiction that never established a dedicated Long COVID clinic, which reflects how little is known about the condition locally.

He also noted emerging concern about possible links between COVID infection and increased deaths and acute illness among Aboriginal people since 2022 but said no NT-specific data yet exists on how often these complications are occurring.

“The fact that we have no Long COVID clinic in the NT tells us how little data, funding and attention have been directed to understanding the burden among Aboriginal communities,” he said. “We know from the evidence that COVID increases the risk of cardiac events, but we do not know how often this is happening in the NT. That is deeply concerning.”

Dr Nguyen said increasing awareness among clinicians about symptoms and treatment is a critical first step, but research is urgently needed to understand how Long COVID is affecting Aboriginal communities and to support appropriate models of care.

This is particularly important as there are now emerging approaches to managing Long COVID, including medications to ease symptoms and allied health support to assist recovery. Anyone experiencing Long COVID symptoms should speak with their healthcare provider to discuss appropriate referral pathways and potential options for care. Vaccinations, including COVID-19 boosters, remain an important tool in reducing the risk of Long COVID and are recommended for at-risk individuals, including in Aboriginal communities.

As the peak body for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in the NT, AMSANT supports ongoing research, surveillance and service development to better understand and respond to Long COVID in remote communities.

**ENDS**

**Media contact:** Amy Price, 0437 027 156

