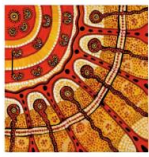


MEDIA RELEASE



Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention



Black Dog
Institute

National Indigenous leaders welcome \$5.5million launch of mental health and suicide prevention initiatives

National Indigenous leaders have joined together to welcome the launch today in Canberra of two new initiatives dedicated to amplifying the voice of Indigenous people with lived experience of suicide and the establishment of an independent body dedicated to the social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of Indigenous individuals and communities.

The *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia* is a national Indigenous mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention leadership body which will receive \$4.5million and will be supported by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health (NATSILMH), Australian Indigenous Psychologists' Association (AIPA) and Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATSISP).

Founded within the Black Dog Institute (BDI) and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, BDI will leverage the support, connections and learnings required to establish and enable an Indigenous-led National Lived Experience Network. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network which has been allocated \$1million in funding, will provide a national voice for Indigenous people with lived experience of suicide, ensuring it is incorporated into the policies which govern and develop suicide prevention initiatives for Indigenous people and will be led by Leilani Darwin who will fulfil the role of Head of the Network.

NATSILMH Chair Mr Tom Brideson, CBPATSISP Director Professor Pat Dudgeon, BDI Director and Chief Scientist, Scientia Professor Helen Christensen AO, BDI Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre and network Leilani Darwin, and Ms Tania Dalton, Chair of AIPA, welcomed today's joint announcement which reflects a significant commitment to a national approach to Indigenous suicide and mental ill-health prevention from the Federal Government.

NATSILMH Chair Tom Brideson said the establishment of *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia* and The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre and Network shows a commitment to closing the gap on Indigenous wellbeing, mental health and suicide rates.

"We thank the Prime Minister, Ministers Hunt and Wyatt, and the Australian Government for their recognition that the overall Indigenous health and life expectancy gap cannot be closed without an address to our wellbeing and mental health, and to our suicide rates," Mr Brideson said.

"To that end, I am particularly pleased that the work of *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia*, supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre & Network, will include leading an inclusive development process for an Indigenous suicide prevention plan with a strong youth component."

Leadership in from Indigenous leaders is important when it comes to mental health and suicide prevention according to CBPATSISP Director Professor Pat Dudgeon.

“Indigenous leadership, accountable to our communities, is essential if efforts to close the mental health and suicide rate gaps are to be effective. Today’s announcements answer the calls for leadership bodies in these spaces from Indigenous mental health and suicide prevention leaders stretching back at least 40 years,” Professor Dudgeon said.

“I take this opportunity to pay tribute to those leaders. In particular, I acknowledge the work of NATSILMH since 2013. The naming of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia after its Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration is a testament to NATSILMH’s influence. With these announcements, Indigenous leadership of Indigenous mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention is - at last - cemented into the national policy space.”

Scientia Professor Helen Christensen AO, Black Dog Institute Director and Chief Scientist said the institute was pleased to be involved in leading international best practice.

“Black Dog Institute commends the Prime Minister, Ministers, and the Australian Government for taking the initiative to address such a critical gap in Australia’s mental health care system,” Professor Helen Christensen said.

“This is the first time a network for Indigenous Lived Experience has been approved by government at a Federal level and the Network will provide an international example of our government’s commitment to collaboration and support of Australia’s First Nations People.

“With support from our partnership with the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATSISP), and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project report (ATSISPEP), we will place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the heart of what we do to deliver best practice, evidence-based solutions to help address the critical issue of mental ill-health in our Indigenous communities.”

Black Dog Institute Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network Leilani Darwin said she is incredibly proud to be leading a network of people dedicated to amplifying Indigenous lived experience voices to ensure policy and programs are culturally appropriate and informed.

“We are so pleased to now see key government and Indigenous organisations and representatives collaborate to address Indigenous mental health,” Ms Darwin said.

“Founded within Black Dog and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we are excited to establish, inform, influence and enhance culturally-appropriate suicide prevention activities and mental health support programs that work for our First Nations people.

“This Lived Experience Network will be the conduit that links networks together to mobilise, connect and enable the right people to have a seat at the table to deliver culturally fitting and safe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led suicide prevention and mental wellbeing.”

Ms Tania Dalton, Chair of AIPA said Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia will also provide a national voice for all Indigenous Australians.

“Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia will be inclusive and partner with other Indigenous and mainstream mental health and suicide prevention organisations,” Ms Dalton said.

“It will provide a national voice for all Indigenous Australians including LGBTIQ, Stolen Generations, and - critically - young people in relation to their mental health and wellbeing, and in relation to suicide prevention.

“It will also promote the leadership of a new generation of leaders in this space. In relation to this, I also welcome the announcement of an Indigenous Lived Experience Network today by Minister Wyatt, under the leadership of Ms Leilani Darwin.

“The Network will provide a voice for Indigenous people with lived experience of suicide and be an invaluable partner to Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia.”

According to NATSILMH Chair Mr Tom Brideson the intention is for Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia to connect with all communities across the country.

“Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia will put deep roots into our diverse communities - from our cities to the most remote communities - through networks and national events that bring Indigenous Australians concerned about our wellbeing, mental health and suicide rates together,” Mr Brideson said.

“We intend Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia to make a real difference to the mental health, wellbeing of Indigenous Australians and reduce suicide rates, and we commend the Australian Government for its announcement today and its commitment to closing the Indigenous mental health and suicide rate gaps.”

END

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- For media enquiries and interview requests for Leilani Darwin, Professor Helen Christensen or Black Dog Institute, please contact: Natalie Craig, 02 9382 3712 or 0448 144 999 or via Natalie.craig@blackdog.org.au,
- For more information about NATSILMH and the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration see: <https://natsilmh.org.au/>
- For more information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network see: <https://blackdoginstitute.org.au/lived-experience-network>
- For more information about CBPATSSIP see <https://www.cbpatssp.com.au/>
- For more information about AIPA see: <http://www.indigenouspsychology.com.au/>
- For more information on the appropriate reporting of mental illness and suicide see the Mindframe: www.mindframe.org.au
- Lifeline: 131 114
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
- Mensline: 1300 78 99 78