

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet 7

Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conferences - Call For Action

In 2018 over 550 delegates gathered in Perth, Western Australia for the 2nd National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 2nd World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conferences hosted by the Centre for Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATSISP). This fact sheet summarises the key outcomes from these Conferences.



- ◆ 2 Conferences
- ◆ 29 Speakers (33% international)
- ◆ 113 Presentations
- ◆ 550 Delegates
 - ◆ 393 Australia
 - ◆ 24 Canada
 - ◆ 2 USA
 - ◆ 25 New Zealand
 - ◆ 106 Other

*Delegates were united on the **urgent need for the recognition of the impacts of the history of colonisation and subsequent trauma**, including ongoing disadvantage, and lack of action by government on Indigenous issues and **the need for healing and recovery processes for suicide prevention.***

The Conferences made three recommendations to the Australian Government based on the following:

- 1 A dedicated, strengths-based National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy and funded Implementation Plan ('Plan') to be co-designed with Indigenous communities, suicide prevention and mental health leaders, and CBPATSISP. The Plan should maintain strategic directions of the 2013 *Strategy* but be adapted to account for:
 - The role of regionally organised primary health care system via Primary Health Networks.
 - 'Integrated approaches' to Indigenous suicide prevention as adopted in the *Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan* being trialled in the Kimberley and Darwin.
 - The *Solutions That Work* report findings of ATSISEPP ([See Fact Sheet 5](#)).
- 2 Allocate greater levels of program funds to Indigenous communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services as a component of the above Plan.
- 3 A 'Truth and Reconciliation' Commission for healing and moving forward; and programs and services to restore and maintain culture and identity for the younger generation **as an overarching response to Indigenous suicide.**

Call For Action

We call upon the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments of Australia to ensure:

- the **Recognition of Indigenous Rights** by acknowledging that the current suicide crisis for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a direct result of the historic injustices of previous Australian government policies of colonisation, dispossession from lands and resources, the forced removal of children from their families and enduring systemic racism; and to recognise and implement the inherent rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to support their cultures, spiritual traditions, social structures and access to lands and resources to optimise their health and social and emotional wellbeing in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- the **Recognition of the Right to Self-Determination** by acknowledging that the principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples community governance and control, empowerment and self-determination need to underpin all suicide prevention policies, plans, services and programs.
- the **Recognition of the Right for Data Sovereignty** so Aboriginal people have access to national and community level data in a manner that they require to build local community capability to collect, analyse and use data for planning and evaluation of suicide prevention programs.

The Implementation Plan should support and strengthen:

- Indigenous community empowerment and self-determination **as non-negotiable Indigenous Human Rights.**

- the capacity and cultural competence of Indigenous service providers.
- community-led and co-designed responses to suicide prevention developed in collaboration with governments, organisations and services.
- a broader **Australian Recovery and Healing Process** that recognises the impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, disadvantage, marginalisation and neglect.
- a national Indigenous suicide prevention research centre to set research priorities and facilitate and evaluate community research projects and provide timely and accessible reports of successful strategies, programs and services.

In addition it should include:

- a **National Training Plan** that focuses on: increasing the Indigenous suicide prevention workforce to levels commensurate with need; ensuring the suicide prevention workforce is culturally safe and competent; embedding the role of appropriately remunerated Elders and cultural healers in mental health and suicide prevention services; and, providing gatekeeper training in all Aboriginal urban, rural and remote communities.
- a **National Data Plan** that protects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples community and other data sovereignty and builds local community capability to collect, analyse and use data for planning and evaluation of suicide prevention programs with those showing promising outcomes resourced and established.

See the [Summary and Recommendations and Conference Report](#) for full Recommendations, Call For Action and Implementation Plan.

More information about suicide prevention and additional fact sheets are available on the [CBPATSISP](#) website.

References:

CBPATSISP (2019) *Summary & Recommendations*, the 2nd National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Conference and the 2nd World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference, Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, School of Indigenous Studies, UWA

CBPATSISP (2019) *Report on the 2nd National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Conference and the 2nd World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference*, CBPATSISP, Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, School of Indigenous Studies, UWA.

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