



**2nd National Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander  
Suicide Prevention**  
20–21 November 2018

**2nd World  
Indigenous Suicide  
Prevention**  
22–23 November 2018

**Conferences**

Rendezvous Hotel Perth  
Scarborough, Western Australia

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS



*We need to teach our children and youth  
that life is spirit and spirit is life*

Conference Elders



# CALL FOR

## BACKGROUND

In 2018, over 550 delegates gathered in Perth, Western Australia for the 2nd National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Conference, and 2nd World Suicide Prevention Conference (20th - 23rd November). The Conferences brought together Indigenous community members, policy makers and researchers from Australia, Canada, United States of America and New Zealand to share their knowledge, experiences and solutions on what works in suicide prevention in a safe cultural space. Delegates were united on the urgent need for the recognition of the history of colonisation and subsequent trauma, including ongoing disadvantage, marginalisation and lack of action by government on Indigenous issues and the need for a healing and recovery processes for suicide prevention.

Article 43 of Charter of *The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigneous People's* enshrines the rights that "constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world."

**Indigenous peoples** have the right as a collective or as individuals of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognised in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Recovery from colonization is our globally shared agenda and this conference enabled delegates to examine issues and identify solutions that are needed. Indigenous Peoples from all countries who attended the conference call upon their respective governments to recognize the Indigenous Rights declaration, the right to self-determination and the right for data sovereignty.

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 recognize 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.
- ensure the **Recognition of the Right to Self-Determination** by acknowledging that the principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community governance and control, empowerment and self-determination need to underpin all suicide prevention policy, plans, service and programs.
- ensure **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 recognition of these rights requires bipartisan support and funding for:**

## CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Though their participation in a range of workshops the Conference delegates put forward several recommendations summarised as a **Call for Action**. Derived from an analysis of key themes, issues, desired outcomes and proposed strategies forward the recommendations include both general and specific recommendations of participant groups Indigenous Elders, LGBTIQ+SB, Youth, Lived Experience and Data Sovereignty stream:



**A dedicated National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy and Implementation Plan. This should build on:**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and cultural strengths.
- The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013- 23*.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project, *Solutions that Work*.

Both the resurrection and revision of **the Strategy and Plan** should be developed in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, suicide prevention and mental health leaders, and the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATISIP).

# ACTION

The Implementation Plan should:

- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community empowerment and self-determination **as Non-negotiable Indigenous Human Rights.**
- Support and build the capacity and cultural competence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers.
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led and co-designed responses to suicide prevention developed in collaboration with governments, organisations and services.
- Support a broader **Australian Recovery and Healing Process based on truth-telling** that recognises the events and impacts of colonisation including intergenerational trauma, disadvantage, marginalisation and neglect.
- Support a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention research centre to set national research priorities and facilitate and evaluate locally based community research projects and provide timely and accessible reports of successful strategies, programs and services.
- 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.
- Include a **National Data Plan** that protects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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.

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**Allocate greater levels of program funds for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services as a component of the Implementation Plan.**

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Additional recommendations based on the key issues that emerged in workshops with Indigenous Elders, LGBTIQ+SB, Youth, and Lived Experience participants are summarised below and should be incorporated in the Plan.

- **Need for Leadership, Voice and Inclusion.** It is important to listen to the voices of the Elders, Youth, the LGBTIQ+SB and Lived Experience participants so that their specific needs, issues and expertise are considered in all suicide prevention activities and specific networks and frameworks.
- **Need for Resources** for young people, LGBTI+SB and lived experience people to actively and meaningfully participate in relevant decision-making forums, conferences and research.

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**Elders call to all levels of government for: an immediate response to unacceptable rates of suicides of young people, including a Royal Commission or 'Truth and Reconciliation' Commission as the basis for healing and moving forward; and programs and services to recognise and support the restoration and maintenance of culture and identity for the younger generation. This will require funding for Elders to determine community needs and services and maintain and retain the care, nurture, teaching and cultural connections of their children and families; and for, traditional healers to be included in wellbeing activities.**

*As Indigenous leaders in health and education, we commend the work of the delegates and present these recommendations for immediate action -  
Professors Pat Dudgeon, Tom Calma and Jill Milroy*



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA**

Poche Centre for  
Indigenous Health



The Centre of Best Practice in  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Suicide Prevention

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**Acknowledgement: Front cover  
Dancers: Mallory Oakes and Derek Nannup**