

Lifeline Australia

8 October 2020

Report launch wellbeing and healing through connection and culture report

Lifeline and The Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention launch the Wellbeing and Healing Through Connection and Culture Report

Key recommendations:

A culturally responsive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander e-mental health suicide prevention service should be guided by Indigenous governance and implement the following across all Lifeline services:

- Action Area 1: Sensitive processes for identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander callers
- Action Area 2: Development of a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lifeline telephone crisis line, online chat and/or text service designed by and delivered by a skilled Indigenous workforce.
- Action Area 3: An in-depth clinical understanding of the culturally unique risk and protective factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing to inform Lifeline crisis support

Today, Lifeline Australia, in partnership with The Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, will launch the Wellbeing and Healing Through Connection and Culture Report.

Authored by Professor Pat Dudgeon, Professor Gracelyn Smallwood, Associate Professor Roz Walker, Dr Abigail Bray and Tania Dalton, the report is the first literature review undertaken in Australia analysing the emerging research and knowledge, key themes and principles surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives and concepts of healing and social and emotional wellbeing as they relate to suicide prevention.

John Brogden, Chairman of Lifeline Australia said:

“We are proud to be working with the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention to deliver this report today. This work makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the importance of cultural perspectives and concepts of healing and social and emotional wellbeing as they relate to suicide prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

At Lifeline, we know from experience that we all need human connection, but the experience of connection to culture and concepts of healing are unique to our First Nation’s Peoples. We commissioned this report to formally acknowledge the strength of that connection and seek to understand the hope that it brings.”

On behalf of the Board and Executive, Mr Brogden thanked the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention for this outstanding research:

“We especially acknowledge the Report’s authors; Professor Pat Dudgeon, Professor Gracelyn Smallwood, Associate Professor Roz Walker, Dr Abigail Bray and Tania Dalton for this ground-breaking work which will inform Lifeline Australia’s way forward by assisting us to deliver culturally competent and appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.” He said.

“The recommendations made in the report will be used to enhance our existing service delivery through collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, culturally responsive training programs and program development right across Australia. Most importantly, the recommendations of the report lay the groundwork for Lifeline to support delivery of a culturally responsive Indigenous designed and delivered national crisis line.” Mr Brogden continued.

Professor Pat Dudgeon, Bardi woman and Director, The Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia said:

“Lifeline should be commended for undertaking a report like this, ensuring that it was in the hands of Indigenous people, that it was Indigenous lead and it speaks to Indigenous realities, Indigenous priorities and aspirations.

It’s a report that looks at what’s happened to us as a population and what needs to happen for us to recover and heal. We build on a lot of the research and reports that have been done around Indigenous suicide prevention, particularly community driven programs and reports. This was important because we know from our own research that there needs to be Indigenous governance of the issue, as well as cultural perspectives. They are the two most important things in any undertaking to start looking at Indigenous suicide prevention.”

Professor Dudgeon said, the voice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community firmly calls for genuine and proper co-design as the central element to any service looking to address Indigenous suicide prevention moving forward:

“Throughout this process, it was vital that we were able to prioritise what we thought was important. This will inform Lifeline and other services to deliver culturally competent and appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It’s my expectation that this report will give a platform for Lifeline to engage in genuine and proper co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop services that will meet their specific needs. That will be a very good thing.” Professor Dudgeon said.

Lifeline acknowledges Servier Australia for providing the funding to support the commission.

Lifeline is Australia’s leading suicide prevention service, operating the 13 11 14 telephone line within 40 centres around the nation. The service expects to respond to over one million requests for support this year, creating an average of 120 safety plans to keep a person experiencing suicidal ideation safe every day.

If you, or someone you know is in need of support, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 (24 hours / 7 days) or chat to a Crisis Supporter online at lifeline.org.au (7pm – midnight / 7 nights)