



**Bronnie Taylor**

Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women

**Don Harwin**

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **\$21 MILLION TO BOOST ABORIGINAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE**

The NSW Government is investing \$21 million to expand the Aboriginal mental health and suicide prevention workforce as part of \$131 million mental health recovery package.

Minister for Mental Health Bronnie Taylor said the lockdown has exacerbated underlying mental health conditions and added to people's distress levels, especially among groups known to be at greater risk of suicide.

"As we return to doing the things we love with the people we love, we want to make sure that no-one is left behind," Mrs Taylor said.

"We know that mental health issues and thoughts of suicide can emerge in the weeks, months and years after a trauma, so our focus over the next two years is connecting people with the most appropriate services and support as early as possible."

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Don Harwin said the four-year investment will allow for the recruitment of 18 FTE Aboriginal Care Navigators and 18 FTE Aboriginal Peer Workers across NSW.

"Culture plays a crucial role in our resilience and mental wellbeing, especially for First Australians who have a powerful connection to our beautiful land and their ancestors," Mr Harwin said.

"If culture is understood, respected and valued throughout the mental health journey, it can speed up the recovery and keep people safe from acting on thoughts of suicide."

The funding will allow every Local Health District and Specialty Network to employ Aboriginal Care Navigators and Aboriginal Peer Workers.

Aboriginal Mental Health Care Navigators will be responsible for supporting Aboriginal people and their families to connect with the most appropriate service within and outside the local health district. They would also provide ongoing support and contact with these individuals and families.

Aboriginal Mental Health Peer Workers will be embedded within public mental health

services and responsible for providing culturally sensitive support, particularly in emergency settings. They would also link them to other supports, such as suicide prevention services, drug and alcohol services, and Aboriginal community services.

The \$131 million package builds on the \$2.6 billion 2021-2022 NSW mental health budget – the largest mental health investment in the state's history

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