



JOINT STATEMENT

HEALTH BODIES DECLARE ABORIGINAL YOUTH SUICIDE AN URGENT NATIONAL PRIORITY

- Health bodies call for Prime Minister and state and territory leaders to declare urgent national health priority
- Immediate investment in Aboriginal-led mental health and wellbeing services needed to stop child deaths
- Long-term solution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination requires commitment to Uluru Statement from the Heart

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) are calling on the Prime Minister to make tackling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth suicides a national health priority.

Suicide was once unknown to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but now every community has been affected by suicide.

In response to the recent Aboriginal youth suicides and the release of the WA Coroner's report on the inquest into the deaths of thirteen children and young persons in the Kimberley Region, we are calling on the Prime Minister and state and territory leaders to put the issue at the top of the COAG agenda and to implement a coordinated crisis response to urgently scale up Aboriginal led mental health services before more young lives are tragically lost.

An urgent boost to Aboriginal community controlled health services is required to build on the existing range of initiatives that are being rolled out. We also call on the Government to expand upon evidence-based resilience and cultural connection programs to be adapted and attuned to local needs.

We are calling on the Federal Government to:

- Provide secure and long-term funding to Aboriginal community controlled health services to expand their mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, suicide prevention, and alcohol and other drugs services, using best-practice trauma-informed approaches
- Increase funding for ACCHSs to employ staff to deliver mental health and social and emotional wellbeing services, including psychologists, psychiatrists, speech pathologists, mental health workers and other professionals and workers;
- Increase the delivery of training to Aboriginal health practitioners to establish and/or consolidate skills development in mental health care and support, including suicide prevention

- Commit to developing a comprehensive strategy to build resilience and facilitate healing from intergenerational trauma, designed and delivered in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

RACP spokesperson Dr Mick Creati, said: “The unspeakable child suicide tragedy that has been unfolding requires a national response and the attention of the Prime Minister. Unless we see urgent boost to investment in Aboriginal-led mental health services then the deaths will continue.”

NACCHO CEO, Pat Turner, said: ‘The recent Aboriginal youth suicides represent a national emergency that demands immediate attention. Aboriginal community controlled health services need to be properly resourced to ensure our children are having regular health checks and to develop community led solutions.’

RANZCP President Dr Kym Jenkins, said: ‘We must address the factors underlying suicidality in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including intergenerational trauma, disadvantage and distress. For this, we urgently need an increased capacity of mental health and wellbeing services to help people and communities recover from trauma and build resilience for the future.’

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