



THIRRILI

Thirrili Ltd

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CEO Update

Welcome to the 18th edition of our Newsletter

I am sorry to report that we have seen an increase in suicides over the past two weeks – receiving notifications in Victoria, NSW, QLD, NT and SA. While these do not appear to be directly attributable to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the events are a very harsh reminder that quality, Indigenous-led postvention services are critical for our families and communities.

In 2017, Postvention Australia and the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, collaborated to develop the Postvention Australia Guidelines. In the foreword of that document, Emeritus Professor Ian W Webster AO, (Chair, Australian Suicide Prevention

Advisory Council 1998-2015) stated: "Postvention has always been part of the national suicide prevention strategy, but its contribution is even more important now as some of the past initiatives have not been as effective in reducing suicide rates as we had hoped".



Alarmingly, while this is acknowledged by the Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Council, very little funding has been directly allocated to Indigenous-led postvention services and supports.

The Postvention Australia Guidelines also include the provision of culturally sensitive and appropriate services as a key requirement, including the need to respect and strive to understand the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The best way to ensure that services meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations is to ensure these services and supports are developed and delivered by, and for, Indigenous Australians.

Suicide deaths remain stubbornly high when compared to those for non-Indigenous Australians. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Indigenous suicide

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NIPS Incident reports updated each issue

Sadly, since our last newsletter, we have had 8 completed suicides reported to us. The respective Coroner for each jurisdiction will ultimately determine the cause of death in each case. Please note further that not all suspected suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reported to us.

	Gender		State or Territory*							Total
	Male	Not known at this time	Female	QLD	WA	NT	VIC	NSW	SA	
Completed suicides	54	2	21	20	15	11	15	8	8	77

	17 and younger	18-30 inclusive	Older than 30	Not known at this time	Total
Completed suicides	11	35	27	4	77

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rate in Australia is 1.9 times higher than for non-Indigenous Australians. Suicide is the fifth leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (ABS 3303.0 - Causes of Death, Australia, 2018) .

Professor Webster, in his foreword to the Postvention Australia Guidelines also stated: *“The people who work in postvention are some of the most remarkable people you can meet – selfless, concern for others and going well beyond ‘the call of duty’.”*

Postvention has always been part of the national suicide prevention strategy but its contribution is even more important now as it becomes clear that some of the past initiatives have not been as effective in reducing suicide rates as hoped.

Postvention is fundamentally a relationship between people and between people and their community. These close one-to-one interactions are even more important now as governments and agencies turn to more technical/medical approaches and electronic communication to prevent suicide.

Postvention cannot be achieved, or the problems of bereavement assisted by a computer program; by a new government policy; by a new funding round; or an academic article. When someone has taken their own life, the support needed involves intensely personal engagement with individuals and communities. Those receiving such support need help to understand that their bewilderment is the universal experience of others bereaved by suicide. They also need to know that support will continue to be available for as long as they need it.

Some of the most remarkable postvention responses are when practical assistance is provided by individuals and local organisations to the sad aftermath of suicide: dealing with police, the Coroner’s Court, administrative messes and the personal upheavals left behind.

People bereaved by suicide can become the catalyst for communities to work together. They have a role, through their networks of relationships, in preventing suicide in the first place.

The Thirrili Board and Staff are committed to ensuring that Indigenous-led postvention services are available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities and will continue to work in partnership with Indigenous communities to co-design approaches to provision of supports for families suffering grief, loss and trauma. The new Thirrili Strategic Plan will be released shortly, and it focuses on the sustainability of a culturally safe and responsive model of supports and services to grieving families post a suicide or traumatic death incident.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our families and communities suffering grief, loss and trauma.

Jacqueline

Jacqueline McGowan-Jones
Chief Executive Officer

Meet Vickey Hill, Regional Implementation Manager



In Volume 12, we introduced Vickey as a Scholarship Program participant. It was clear from that program that we had uncovered a rare ‘diamond’ in Vickey. Fast forward to Volume 18 and after a competitive recruitment process, Vickey is our new Regional Implementation Manager (RIM). We welcome Vickey to the team and look forward to both working with, and learning from her. Vickey tells her story:

My name is Vickey Hill. I’m a proud Whadjuk yorga. My ancestral heritage is connected to Whadjuk, Baladong, Gnarla Karla Boodja, Yued and Wardandi (South West Boorjarah).

I’m a single Mother of 6 children and also a Grandmother of 6 grandchildren.

I have a strong and consistent work history in both Commonwealth and State Government , as well as not-for-profit organisations. Most of my career was spent working in the public service in Departments such as Commonwealth Employment Service, Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Abstudy, Social Security and Centrelink.

I’ve developed my skills through additional training and education to increase my knowledge and work with various community organisations.

I’m a registered Counsellor and also a qualified Trainer. I’m also a studying Bachelor Arts (Psychology) part-time.

I’m passionate about supporting and advocating for my people and am currently focusing on the issues of Trauma, Suicide and Families.

Culturally Safe Domestic Violence Workshops

The National Indigenous Times reports that a partnership between Lifeline WA and ICG trainers has employed Aboriginal people to deliver culturally safe and appropriate workshops. These workshops include Indigenous DV-alert, facilitated by Palyku Bunaba Walmajarri Nyoongar woman, Tara McCulloch, and Brothers Standing Tall, facilitated by Yamatji man, Brian Councillor.

DV-alert is a free two-day workshop that supports frontline community and volunteer workers in learning about Aboriginal culture and history. The workshop increases both their ability to identify signs of violence, and their capacity to deliver culturally safe care or refer clients to alternate services that will support the person's wellbeing.

A proud mother with experience supporting Indigenous women through domestic and family violence, McCulloch said it's important for people working within the sector to understand Aboriginal history and culture.

The Men's program, Brothers Standing Tall, is a two-hour interactive presentation on domestic and family violence which is specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. The presentation develops a culturally safe space for men to learn, yarn and feel supported around how to prevent violence in their families and communities.

To read the full story, go to:

<https://nit.com.au/indigenous-consulting-group-delivering-culturally-safe-domestic-violence-prevention-workshops/>



Worth a read

For those interested in suicide prevention and postvention, the latest issue of the Australian Counselling Research Journal includes an article entitled ***Coping planning to reduce stigma and support coping after suicide.***

In this article, the researchers note that death by suicide can complicate bereavement for loved ones because of stigma which can be attached. They suggest that changing the narrative around the cause of death and focussing on the loss instead of the cause of death— while connecting people with complicated grief with appropriate professional support and treatment— may contribute to a decrease in stigma and a reduction in suicide in those bereaved following the deaths by

suicide of family, friends or colleagues.

Authors: Helen M Stallman, PhD, DClinPsych,, Amanda D Hutchinson, PhD, Jeneva L Ohan, PhD.

To access the full text of this article and other articles in this edition of the journal, go to the URL below. Please note that the article begins on page 5.

<http://www.acrijournal.com.au/resources/assets/journals/Volume-14-Issue-1-2020/Volume-14-Issue-1-2020-FULL.pdf>



Worth another look

Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice

While this document has been around for a few years now, it is still, as stated by Dr Tom Calma AO in the foreword to the 2nd edition, "...an authority in the field, proving an important further step towards recognising the existence of a distinct field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander psychology, and raising awareness about the inappropriate application of western mental health models to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."

Not only is the information contained in this work invaluable, every chapter is written in a way that will engage with health professionals, academics and laypeople alike.

To download the document, go to:

<https://www.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/early-environment/developmental-origins-of-child-health/expired-projects/working-together-second-edition/>





Coffee no good

Victoria Police continue to impose fines for those people not adhering to COVID restrictions with 195 people fined in the 24 hours to 31 August 2020. Among them was a woman from a Bayside suburb who was caught driving outside the permitted 5 km. When asked by Police why she was further from home than permitted, her response was that she couldn't get good coffee in her suburb.

<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/food/drinks/bayside-coffee-snob-fined-for-breaching-melbournes-5km-restriction/news-story/f8f0acf73cc30d94a48e86334d3629df>

The 'resistance'

Up to 30, mainly young men, challenged police in a protest against lockdown restrictions in the Victorian suburb of Roxburgh Park on Sunday 30 August. At times chanting 'resistance' the group were dispersed but not before 3 men were arrested.

<https://www.news.com.au/technology/online/social/resistance-spreads-across-melbourne-as-antilockdown-protesters-clash-with-police/news-story/40dc0e598cb5a8a81c09b06439269811>

Victorian Coroner releases latest suicide figures

The Guardian Australia reports that while Mental health organisations have warned that suicides could increase as financial support initiatives such as jobkeeper are removed, the data show there has been no increase in the number of suicides in Victoria this year.

The Victorian coroners court published data from the Victorian Suicide Register on Thursday 27 August showing that 466 people have died from suicide in the state so far this year, compared to 468 people in the same period last year.

Jill Gallagher, chief executive of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, indicated that the coroner's figures were not consistent with what she said was a marked increase in suicides in the Aboriginal community, with four reported last week alone. "We've had a humungous increase," Gallagher said. "I'm not prepared to say what those numbers are, [but a] humungous increase in suicides."

Note: Suspected suicides as reported to us are included on the front page of this newsletter.

To read the complete article as appeared in the Guardian Australia on 27/08/2020, go to:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/aug/27/victorian-suicide-rates-lower-than-feared-but-coming-covid-welfare-cuts-cause-concern>

Army appoints second Indigenous Elder

For many long established institutions, any positive change process can often be seen as 'one step forward and two steps back'. I was therefore pleasantly surprised as a former soldier (a long time ago) to read in an ex-service newsletter that the Australian Army had appointed its second Indigenous Elder earlier this year. Congratulations to Ms Lorraine Hatton AO! The following is the 'Order of the Day' (army speak) advising of the appointment.

Australian Army Order Of The Day - On the occasion of the appointment of Army Indigenous Elder Ms Lorraine Hatton, OAM - 21 May 2020

"Indigenous Australians have defended and cared for this land for millennia. We honour their service to the nation. The appointment of Lorraine Hatton OAM, Aunty Lorraine, as the second Army Indigenous Elder, continues our recognition of the proud history of service that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have given to the Army and Australia.

Aunty Lorraine will build on the wonderful work of Uncle Roy Mundine OAM, who has provided Army with exemplary service as Army's inaugural Indigenous Elder since 2015. Uncle Roy has been a role model and advocate for all of Army. Uncle Roy will remain closely connected with Army as he transitions from the official duties of this role.

Aunty Lorraine is a Ngughi/Noonuccal Elder, originally from Minjerrabah, Queensland. In 2007, Aunty Lorraine retired at the rank of Warrant Officer Class Two after 20 years of distinguished service in the Royal Australian Signals Corps. Aunty Lorraine is an advocate for numerous veterans, youth and community initiatives, and was awarded an Order of Australia in 2019 for services to the Indigenous community.

We welcome Aunty Lorraine Hatton as the second Army Indigenous Elder.

LTGEN Rick Burr

Chief of Army

Unlikely twins

The story of Bill Coolburra and his 'twin' was told in an edition of the Army Newspaper in May this year. It is just one of the many stories of our brave Indigenous soldiers who have served with distinction at every conflict Australia has been involved in since the 1860s.

Bill Coolburra was one of the legendary 'Tunnel rats' whose job it was to perform underground search and destroy missions during the Vietnam War. Bill served as a field engineer with 3 Troop and I Field Squadron and was wounded twice during his Vietnam service.

Bill was born in Palm Island in Far North Queensland and enlisted in the Army in 1964. He served in Borneo in 1964-5, Vietnam in 1965-6 Malaya in 1967-8 and Singapore in 1971-3. He spent a total of 16 years in the jungle green and was known for being a top bloke with an infectious laugh.

Bill became close mates with a fellow name George Wilson, nicknamed Snowy because of his fair skin and hair. They were so close, they were referred to as the



'twins' and even Bill and Snowy in Borneo in 1964 referred to each other as 'twin brother'.

When Prime Minister Harold Holt visited Vietnam and met Snowy, he asked to meet his twin brother Bill. It was fair to say that the PM was more than a little surprised when Bill appeared before him.

They faced many life and death situations together and their bond was close. When years later and back in Australia Bill needed a kidney, incredibly, Snowy was a match and became a donor. This enabled Bill to enjoy another 8 years of life.

When Bill passed away in 2009, his funeral was attended by 500 people. He was highly respected in the community for his work as a lay pastor and elder in the Palm Island community and supporting and mentoring Indigenous young people, largely through encouraging sport as a pathway to a healthy life.

The 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment honoured him by providing a three-volley salute at his gravesite.

Each year, the Bill Coolburra Shield— an annual rugby league match— is played between the Palm Island

Skipjacks and Army Thunder. The Shield started in 2008 as a way of strengthening the relationship between Army and the Indigenous community of Palm Island.



Time on your hands?

If you are like me (in Victoria) and spending a lot more time indoors, perhaps this might interest you?

See below a list of 15 TED talks to 'open your mind'

1. [A pill to improve morality](#) Julian Savulescu: Australian philosopher and bioethicist.
2. [How to let the environment guide development](#) Johan Rockstrom
3. [A provocative way to finance the fight against climate change](#) Financial expert Michael Metcalfe
4. [We need a moral operating system](#) Damon Horowitz, philosopher and entrepreneur
5. [How to make a profit while making a difference](#) Audrey Choi
6. [Making global labour fair](#) Head of the Fair Labour Association Aurret van Heerden
7. [The post-crisis consumer](#) Marketing whiz John Gerzema
8. [The way we think about charity is dead wrong](#) Activist and fundraiser Dan Pallotta
9. [The global food waste scandal](#) Author and activist Tristram Stuart
10. [The other inconvenient truth](#) Jonathan Foley, Director of the Institute on the Environment at the University of Minnesota
11. [What's wrong with what we eat](#) Mark Bittman, bestselling cookbook author, journalist and TV personality.
12. [The true cost of oil](#) Garth Lenz
13. [How big brands can help save biodiversity](#) Jason Clay World Wildlife Fund Vice President
14. [How to let altruism be your guide](#) Happiness researcher and Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard
15. [The power of vulnerability](#) Storyteller Brené Brown,

COVID-19 information updated

COVID-19 continues to be a dangerous threat to health and in extreme cases, to life itself. In Victoria, to the 24 hours to 31 August 2020, 73 new cases were diagnosed with 41 deaths reported. In New South Wales, only 10 cases were reported in same period and Queensland just 1. While other jurisdictions may appear to be 'on top' of the Pandemic, we cannot be complacent as demonstrated by events in Victoria.

Take care of yourselves and your loved ones by following the advice of the NIAA and Commonwealth, State and Territory health experts. Links to each jurisdiction are below:

- [NIAA](#)
- [ACT](#)
- [Commonwealth](#)
- [NSW](#)
- [NT](#)
- [QLD](#)
- [SA](#)
- [TAS](#)
- [VIC](#)
- [WA](#)

For tips for staying healthy and strong during the coronavirus outbreak, visit our friends at Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia. Go to:

<https://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/files/gaaya-dhuwi-coronavirus-long.pdf>



Crisis contact numbers

- | | |
|---|--|
| ⇒ Thirrili After Suicide support 1800 805 807 | ⇒ Kids Help Line: 1800 551 800 |
| ⇒ Lifeline: 13 11 14 | ⇒ MensLine Australia: 1300 78 99 78 |
| ⇒ Suicide call back service: 1300 659 467 | ⇒ Beyond Blue: 1300 845 745 |
| ⇒ Coronavirus mental health support line 1800 512 348 | ⇒ GriefLine: 1300 845 745 (midday to 3am AEST 7 days a week) |

Thirrili Ltd: ABN 617 635 828

**PO Box 41855
Casuarina
NT 0811**

Website: thirrili.com.au



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