



THIRRILI

Thirrili Ltd

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CEO Update

Hello All

Funding extended

I am very pleased to advise that the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) has provided Thirrili with an extension of funding to 30 June 2021 to deliver the National indigenous Postvention Service. The extension will mean that our families and communities will continue to have access to the Service for the remainder of this financial year.

While we have seen a reduction nationally in the numbers of suicides, the data is quite alarming for the increase in self-harm and suicide attempts. We have also noted an increase in suicides over the past few months, which may be (in some part) attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alarming, our statistics show that more than 50% of the completed suicides occurred for people aged 30 years and under. Thirrili will continue its crucial work in supporting families and communities with bereavement support, and advocating for access to supports and services to assist



them in working through their grief and loss.

Building Our Team

I am excited to announce that we have continued to build our team, with four new staff commencing

with Thirrili over the past two weeks. Watch this newsletter for profiles of each of our new staff over coming weeks. Our National Indigenous Postvention team are:

- Rachael Schmerl, Executive Manager Programs & Policy (Rachael has been with us for three years and leads this team with not only extensive experience in the Postvention team, but also as a strong Aboriginal woman with lived experience of suicide)
- Vickey Hill – profiled in our last newsletter, Vickey Hill has joined as the Regional Implementation Manager who directly leads the service delivery team

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**NIPS
Incident
reports
updated
each issue**

Sadly, since our last newsletter, we have had 4 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	56	2	23	21	16	13	15	8	8	81

	17 and younger	18-30 inclusive	Older than 30	Not known at this time	Total
Completed suicides	11	38	28	4	81

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- National Indigenous Postvention Advocates:
 - ⇒ Chenoa Dowling, Brisbane (who has been with us for some time and it is terrific to have Chenoa in the team supporting our new members to become proficient in their Advocate roles)
 - ⇒ Christine Elliott, Kununurra (joined two weeks ago and will be the National Indigenous Postvention Advocate for the Kimberly, and will work as part of the collaborative Kimberley Postvention Service with the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service and Standby (delivered by Anglicare)
 - ⇒ Robert Binsiar, Meekatharra (joined three weeks ago and is the Advocate for the Midwest, Murchison & Gascoyne region of WA)

Those who joined last week are:

- ⇒ Karen Dodd (Townsville)
- ⇒ Cheryl (called Shelley) Ward (Adelaide)
- ⇒ Amanda (called Mandy) Collie (Victoria)

Welcome to our new team members. **If you need to contact our Service, please call 1800 805 807 – calls will be answered by our National Indigenous Postvention Advocates and we are available 24/7 to provide after suicide support.**

A stronger partnership: Wellways and Thirrili

Thirrili has also partnered with Wellways to deliver the National Indigenous Postvention Service in NSW – this partnership was originally a trial from March to June of this year. Due to success of the Partnership, Thirrili entered into a new contract with Wellways for the period 1 September to 31 December 2020. The fabulous Advocates working within Wellways to deliver the service are Jay Little and Steve Smith. Welcome to the team Jay and Steve. Wellways deliver a range of services in the areas of suicide intervention, prevention and now, postvention. We are very pleased to continue our partnership with them to help our families and communities.

Thirrili Scholarship Program

Our inaugural Thirrili Scholarship Program was a great success and we are currently planning our next Program. I express my thanks to the following people for their outstanding contributions to our program:

- Tanja Hirvonen – who designed and delivered the program to Participants.
- Prof Gracelyn Smallwood – a very strong, long-time Advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as holding various roles within Thirrili (and will shortly join our National Reference Group) who presented to the students and provided invaluable advice and understanding about the National Indigenous Postvention Service

- Prof Pat Dudgeon – Aunty Pat has long been a strong advocate of the service, and Thirrili, and graciously gave of her time and expertise to share with our participants. Prof Dudgeon will also be a member of the National Reference Group
- Leilani Darwin – Head, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre, Black Dog Institute: Leilani shared her lived experience, but also her research and experience across many communities.

Interested in becoming a Thirrili Scholarship Program

Participant? Please email angela.t@thirrili.com.au and we will provide you with the Application Forms when the next round of applications opens.

Thirrili Development Grants

We had a large response to our Development Grants round. Unfortunately, many applications did not align specifically with the work of The National Indigenous Postvention Service and the funding provided the NIAA. These projects were all worthwhile, and it was unfortunate that funding was not able to be provided to those projects. However, I am very pleased to advise that the Evaluation Panel chose the following projects for this Grant Round and we will share more information on the Projects in future newsletters:

Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative: You Can Talk to Me social media project – a project that will develop a short film, interviewing family members who have experienced suicide, and promoting the need to connect, and to reach out for mental health services and supports. The film will be shown on various social media platforms

Aboriginal Wellness Foundation, Victoria: Connected Mobs project, focusing on connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in both Government and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations to help build connectedness across services, and to provide supports for the Indigenous workforce, and to enhance the capacity of services to work with Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Allied Health Australia: Social and emotional wellbeing supports (inclusive of suicide prevention education and activities) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students (and including those students in the Aboriginal Health Academies). The resources will be provided to Thirrili to share with organisations.

I urge all our readers to consider their role in suicide prevention – asking R U OK? But remember, there's more to say after R U OK? Please care for yourselves, your families, communities and friends.

Warm regards

Jacqueline

Jacqueline McGowan-Jones
Chief Executive Officer

TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE: OUR STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Thirrili delivers the National Indigenous Postvention Service (funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency), but we also deliver the Standby Service for the NT; and work in partnership with the South Australian Government to deliver an Indigenous-specific Virtual Support Network for Aboriginal South Australians as a key part of the SA Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A critical part of our continuous improvement is to seek Stakeholder feedback about your experiences in engaging with Thirrili; the National Indigenous Postvention Service; Standby in the NT and the Virtual Support Network in SA. I strongly encourage everybody to provide their feedback – all comments are welcome as they will help us identify what we are doing well (and should do more of), as well as enable us to identify areas for development. Please help us to improve our services and supports, which are critical to our families and communities, by completing the Survey when you receive it.

Thirrili will shortly be sending a link to our Stakeholder Survey to everybody on our contact list. If you would like to add people to this list, or think it would be helpful to share the Survey, please contact peter.s@thirrili.com.au. Please do not forward the Stakeholder Survey to others as we have a number of categories of stakeholders and need to ensure that each person is coded to the correct grouping.



Thirrili Strategic Plan

The Thirrili Board has recently undertaken a series of (virtual) planning workshops to develop our new Strategic Plan. As Australia’s only national Indigenous postvention service, we are uniquely positioned to support our families and communities.

We are an Aboriginal led and controlled organisation, established to support families post the traumatic death of a family member, focusing on suicide involved families, to support them through their bereavement and healing journeys. We do this through the provision of cultural supports, through care planning and evidence informed

practice advice when and where our families need.

Our Vision

All our families and communities have healed from trauma and choose to live their lives in acknowledgement of our deep ancestral connections, drawing on cultural ways of knowing, being and doing and supporting our people to thrive and flourish in this and future generations.

Our Purpose

The principal purpose of Thirrili is to provide crucial supports to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples suffering grief, loss and trauma due to the loss of a loved one through suicide and other fatal critical incidents.

Our Commitments

In line with our vision we will:

- Include and respect suicide-involved family’s voice, needs and aspirations.
- Ensure local and regional cultural protocols and practices are evident in all that we say and do.
- Demonstrate positive changes for suicide-involved families.
- Promote the criticality of Indigenous-led suicide postvention services.
- Deliver postvention suicide services co-designed with community and delivered by a trained, competent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.
- Invest in strengths-based approaches; and
- Invest in using our extensive knowledge base to create opportunities through cultural, innovation and entrepreneurial agendas.

Our Strategic Priorities: 2020-2021

Our new Plan has four key priority areas:

Priority 1: Delivery quality culture led services

Priority 2: Facilitate collective impact

Priority 3: Pursue a Sustainability Agenda

Priority 4: Grow our local workforce and the capabilities of our community

The new Strategic Plan can be found on our website at:

<http://thirrili.com.au/about-us/mission-value-statement>

World Suicide Prevention Day: There's more to say after RU OK?

Thursday 10 September was World Suicide Prevention Day, with many organisations highlighting the need to “Shine a Light” on suicide and how to improve our suicide prevention approaches in Australia.

NITV hosted a special episode of ‘The Point’ that evening, with interviews with a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples talking about the data and the crisis affecting Indigenous Australians. There were several personal stories that bring to light the critical need for all of us to either reach out for help, or to reach out to help others.

It was both heart-warming and heart-breaking to hear the personal stories of our young people affected by mental health problems, and we commend each of them for sharing their very personal journeys in a bid to assist others in our communities.

We also commend NITV for dedicating their show to this critical issue affecting our peoples. Our very own CEO Jacqueline McGowan Jones joined former CEO Adele Cox on the show’s panel, as experts in the field of suicide prevention/postvention.



Current and Former Thirili CEOs Jacqueline McGowan –Jones and Adele Cox share their insights on The Point 10/9/20.

To watch the show, click the link and create a login if you don’t have one already (it is free as part of SBS On Demand). It is a powerful show, dealing with a difficult and emotional subject with some courageous stories of resilience and hope. Click here:

<https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/program/the-point>

A word from the National Suicide Prevention Advisor

The National Suicide Prevention Advisor to the Prime Minister, and CEO of the National Mental Health Commission, Christine Morgan spoke about the need to reach out and support each other through tough times (see Media Release: <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-national-suicide-prevention-adviser#message>).

Ms Morgan talks about the critical factor of linking people to support rather than waiting for them to seek help. She also highlights the challenges faced by Australians this year – the bushfires, floods, drought, and COVID-19 pandemic: stating that “these events have exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities – including increased levels of

distress, financial pressures and unemployment, disruption of education and young careers”.

We all are aware that these additional stressors may result in people feeling they are unable to see a clear path to the future. We need to be aware and seek out to support everyone in our community – not just on World Suicide Prevention Day, but every day.

After asking RU OK?

RU OK has highlighted that there is more to say when you ask the question R U OK? In particular, they focus on the difficulty faced when someone says they are not ok, and have released an interactive conversation roleplay video to help you learn what to say – the process is to:

Ask: Notice any changes in behaviour and pay attention to events that may be impacting on people around you and ask, R U OK?

Listen: It is important not to try to solve the problem or diminish their concerns, but be present and listen without judgement so they feel heard.

Encourage Action: Support the person to take the next step – whether that is asking them who else they feel comfortable telling; making an appointment with their doctor, or getting more information from a service online.

Check-In: Follow-up with them tomorrow, or in a few days to keep that connection.

Click here to gain access to RU OK’s video:

<https://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask>



Thirili Induction program

Last week was a full week of induction for new members of our team. Our newest members of the team learned about the organisation’s policies and practice, including our service model and all things postvention.

Early results from our evaluation has shown that while all information was seen as useful, respondents identified loss and grief, trauma and suicide, working with vulnerable children as the most useful topics. All respondents agreed the program was very well run, the topics were extremely relevant and well presented and overall they rated the training as very good to excellent.

A special shout out to Angela Threlfall for her amazing efforts in organising this massive undertaking – from the development of the Induction Program; through to sorting out logistics; and providing participants with all the necessary information – this was a mammoth task and could not have been achieved without her huge commitment to the task. Well done Angela!

Meet Christine Elliot

Christine has recently started with us as a National Indigenous Postvention Advocate: welcome to the team Christine!



I am from the Jaru Nation located in the desert area near Halls Creek, and my skin group is Nagarra.

I have lived in Halls Creek, Geraldton, Perth, and recently relocated to Kununurra. I have mainly worked in government, but also worked in several community organisations. I have an Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Community Management and Development from the Curtin University of Technology, Perth.

My family background includes my Grandfather and Father being drovers; having both done the droving trek from the East Kimberley Region to Queensland. My mother was a co-author and a voice active in social justice; and was involved at the very early stages of setting up, and continued to be involved in the key Aboriginal organisations that operate in the Kimberley region today. The remnants of lives of my parents and grandparents became the shoulders on which the next generation could stand on.

I was drawn to Thirrili as I previously worked as the Manager of a Residential Care Home. The residential care homes worked under the Sanctuary Framework, being trauma informed. Living and working in harsh environment we are confronted with the trauma our people endure on a daily basis. Having previously worked in the space with children. Thirrili has opened the door and given me the opportunity to now work with individuals, families and communities.

On a lighter note I enjoy travelling and visiting new places, as well as visiting our favourite places on country. Last year I had the pleasure of travelling with my daughter to the United States. We did a road trip covering 6000 kilometres, as well as flying within the country, We visited many places of interest. There were many special moments, but one in particular is visiting Monument Valley, and meeting our new Navajo friends and families.



In the news

The National Indigenous Times reports on a program focused on supporting and empowering young Aboriginal women in Armidale, NSW. The program, Gemiga Yarning, connects girls to culture, family and one another and is the brain child of youth worker and Gamilaroi woman, Jusinta Collins. Says Jusinta, "I didn't grow up understanding my Aboriginality at all." "I grew up very disconnected, with a lot of identity issues not knowing who I belonged to and how I was connected."

To read the full story, go to:

<https://nit.com.au/gemiga-yarning-taking-girls-on-cultural-journey/>

Mood foods

There exists a large body of evidence to suggest that what we eat impacts on how we feel. Healthy eating can aid good mental health. Foods that get a mention in the research include (not in any order of benefit):

- Berries including blueberries, raspberries, blackberries and strawberries are all antioxidants and help to repair cells
- Nuts, especially walnuts.
- Fish, especially cold water/oily fish like Salmon and Tuna. They contain DHA which is an Omega-3 fatty acid, which helps improve contribute to optimal brain health. and boost feelings of mental health and wellness and reduce levels of anxiety.
- Avocados not only help improve digestion, but protect against cancer and decrease risk of depression
- Coffee: who would have thought!
- Greek yogurt: we now know that probiotics found in cultures such as yoghurt can also impact a person's mental health, assisting in lowering levels of stress, anxiety and depression.
- Leafy greens: full of Vitamins A, C, E, K, and B complex, minerals, fibre-all the good stuff.!

COVID-19 information updated

It appears that COVID-19 cases continue to steadily reduce in Victoria, while other jurisdictions are seeing very few cases, if any. It has been relatively good news in the last 24 hours in Victoria, with just 42 new cases and no deaths in that period. Four new cases were recorded in NSW during the same period, while QLD has one.

To continue to be informed about the impact of the virus including restrictions in your state or territory and public health advice, go to the relevant link 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 805 801 | ⇒ 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) |

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