



THIRRILI  
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National Indigenous Postvention Service Call 1800 805 801

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## CEO Update

Recently, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) published the summative evaluation of the first three years (2017-2020) of development and implementation of the National Indigenous Crisis Response Service (NICRS).

Renamed the National Indigenous Postvention Service (NIPS) earlier this year—to better reflect the intent and operating model of the service — the program was found to be providing valuable postvention support to individuals and families who have recently experienced a suicide or other traumatic incident in their close family network.

The evaluation found areas for us to improve upon and the Board and

Staff team have been unflinching in their commitment to make the required improvements so that we can not only deliver valuable postvention services to our communities that are required, but also to be a leader in suicide postvention and prevention knowledge and practice.



To do this, we need a strong and resilient, evidence based organisation; one in which every board and staff member will

continue to challenge each other and the manner in which we do things so that we can be the best organisation we can be.

All of Thirrili's people have worked extremely hard to implement a continuous quality improvement approach to our work.

A recent progress audit undertaken by the evaluators of the summative evaluation has found that "...there has been a strong commitment to addressing the feedback received as a result of the evaluation and that the Board, management and staff have embraced the evaluation's recommendations for improved practice".

*Continued on page 2*

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\*

	Gender		State or Territory*							Total
	Male	Not known at this time	Female	QLD	WA	NT	VIC	NSW	SA	
Completed suicides	72	2	30	26	22	18	17	12	9	104

	Age range		Older than 30	Not known at this time	Total
	17 and younger	18-30 inclusive			
Completed suicides	16	48	36	4	104

**NIPS  
Incident  
reports  
updated  
each issue**

## CEO message

*Continued from page 1*

This comment from the audit team recognises the hard work that has been undertaken by everyone within the organisation and I wholeheartedly thank the Board of Directors and our wonderful staff team for their work — in a time which has been made much more difficult through the impacts of COVID-19 and the restrictions on movement and face to face contact which have applied.

I look forward to continuing to update you further as we make good on our promise to be the leading non government organisation in this space.

Best wishes

Jacqueline

*"...I thank the Board of Directors and our wonderful staff team for their work— in a time which has been made much more difficult through the impacts of COVID-19 and the restrictions on movement and face to face contact which have applied".*

### Board seeking Expert Technical Directors

At our Annual General meeting in December there will be vacancies for Technical Expert Directors.

We are inviting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with relevant experience to consider joining our Board for a term of three years.

Copies of the expression of interest forms are available on our website at:

<http://thirrili.com.au>

If you would like further information about the positions please contact : Jacqueline McGowan Jones on (03) 8578 1410

Applications close Friday 27 November.

**Send applications to [adelle.m@thirrili.com.au](mailto:adelle.m@thirrili.com.au)**

## Key achievements made since the initial evaluation report

A significant number of achievements have been made to strengthen service delivery and governance arrangements. These include:

- \* A service redesign process to provide additional strength and coverage to support families and communities affected by suicide. This has included aligning the necessary skills and qualifications to the SCHADS Award and preparing new Position Descriptions to embed community capacity restoration functions to strengthen the way we work in and with communities
- \* A review of our Model of Care and embedding Throughcare Planning into our service delivery approach
- \* A new strategic plan has been developed following a series of workshops with the Board
- \* Board renewal process
- \* CEO embedding a performance development planning process for all staff
- \* Reviewing all policies, including governance arrangements, to ensure they are up to date and that all staff are provided with policies to ensure they understand them including acknowledgement of receipt and compliance (as well as introduction to the policies as part of induction)
- \* Introduction of a comprehensive induction program for all new staff
- \* Introduced the first Scholarship Program focussed on workforce development and enhancement – many of the participants are now Ambassadors for Thirrili and we are working towards embedding a “lived experience” reference group for the program
- \* Expanding and embedding the clinical and professional supervision arrangements, as well as an Employee Assistance Program
- \* Modified the way in which cultural support (or supervision) is provided – with funding allocated to ensure we are able to contract local expertise as may be required to ensure our people are able to work within the cultural protocols and processes as may be relevant to the communities in which we work
- \* Focused on expanding, building and refreshing our partnerships: a new service delivery partnership has been established in NSW (Wellways); and a National Partnership Agreement has been signed with Standby (YouTurn) which focuses on enhancing our collaboration on workforce development; shared approaches to working with Indigenous families and communities; service co-design; database analysis and adaptation; sector development through a Postvention Conference; Advocacy including a national approach to Coroner referrals; joint MOUs with jurisdictions; potential for co-location and joint media.
- \* the CEO has written to all jurisdictions to refresh current arrangements; and is meeting with various National, State and Territory community controlled health service peak bodies to approach collaborative working; as well as the Healing Foundation with a view to building a cohesive approach to cultural healing

A copy of the audit report is at : <http://thirrili.com.au/events-media/news/nicrs-post-evaluation-report>

# CELEBRATING NAIDOC WEEK

Despite the postponement of NAIDOC due to Coronavirus, there have been plenty of events to get involved in. Go to <https://www.naidoc.org.au/get-involved/naidoc-week-events> to see what's happening.

We highlight some of these events below:

**Until 20/11/20: [Online Free Exhibition] Zhou Xiaoping: Spiritual Bonding between Land and People.**

Zhou Xiaoping has spent the last 30 years travelling to and from remote Arnhem Land communities, getting to know Aboriginal culture first hand and learning from and collaborating with Aboriginal artists such as Jimmy Pike and Johnny Bulunbulun. To view the exhibition, go to:

[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/aciac/exhibitions2/zhou\\_xiaoping\\_spiritual\\_bonding\\_between\\_land\\_and\\_people](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/aciac/exhibitions2/zhou_xiaoping_spiritual_bonding_between_land_and_people)

**The Iconic Blak Markets at The Rocks Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th of November from 10:00am – 5:00pm, on Tallowolladah Lawn**

Free entry: The Rocks, Circular Quay, Sydney. For more information, go to: <https://www.naidoc.org.au/get-involved/naidoc-week-events/blak-markets-rocks>



**'Healing'**

'Healing is a large scale digital art installation created by Aboriginal artist Mandi Barton, a Yorta Yorta woman who lives in Melbourne's west. Mandi was commissioned by Melton City Council to address health and wellbeing messages related to the COVID-19 crisis and explore the impact on Indigenous connections, narratives and identities.

**Event Venue**

CS Gallery, 193 - 201 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs



Open 9am – 5pm  
Monday to Friday  
**Free Admission**

**Reflections**  
Connecting to Country through Art

**26 October to  
27 November 2020**

Ira Raymond Exhibition Room, Barr Smith Library  
University of Adelaide, Karna Country

# What's happening?

## In the news

### Court hearing on sacred trees

The Victorian government has agreed to pause its destruction of culturally significant trees in western Victoria after the supreme court agreed to hear an application for an injunction from traditional owners. The injunction was sought by Marjorie Thorpe, a Gunaai and Marr woman.

A number of trees, including at least one identified as culturally significant, were cut down near Buangor, about 180km west of Melbourne, on Monday as part of a \$157m project to duplicate the Western Highway.

To read the full story, go to the Guardian Australia at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/oct/28/djab-wurrung-trees-destruction-on-hold-as-victorian-supreme-court-agrees-to-hear-case>



### ASIST Training

Wednesday 18 November 2020 - Thursday 19 November;  
Katherine Town Council  
Lot 1865 Stuart Highway, NT 0850

Tuesday 1 December 2020 - Wednesday 2 December 2020;  
60 Winnellie Road  
Winnellie NT 0820

The Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first-aid. ASIST teaches participants to recognise when someone is at risk of suicide and work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety.

People from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and/or anyone who works with or has



connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are invited to attend.

Participants do not need any formal training to attend the workshop, however full attendance for the entire two days of the ASIST workshop is essential.

For more information, go to:

[https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/conferences/4844/?title=The%20Applied%20Suicide%20Intervention%20Skills%20Training%20%28ASIST%29&contentid=4844\\_2](https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/conferences/4844/?title=The%20Applied%20Suicide%20Intervention%20Skills%20Training%20%28ASIST%29&contentid=4844_2)

### 2020 NSW Aboriginal mental health and wellbeing workforce webinar series

Online: Wednesday 18 November 2020

This webinar series aims to bring



together the Aboriginal mental health and wellbeing workforce from New South Wales Health (NSW), Aboriginal community controlled health services, and community-managed organisations to showcase innovation and achievements and to share expertise in the delivery of services that improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The free, online forum will take place over four days in November.

Time: 10:00am - 12:00pm (AEST)

- Thursday 19 November 2020
- Wednesday 25 November 2020
- Thursday 26 November 2020

To learn more about this webinar series, go to: <https://www.ahmrc.org.au/contact/>

# Farewell



After 22 editions of the newsletter, this will be my last. I am taking the opportunity to retire for a third time; the last of which was in December 2017.

At that time I was a Ministerial Adviser and after 42 years in the workforce, including doing a trade, almost a decade in the Army, and after many, many other roles in government, health and community services, education and trade unionism, I was washed out.

But along came a 'feeler' to consider doing some work for Thirrili. When I was approached and I realised the critical importance of the organisation's mission, I could not say no.

Fast forward to 2020 and it is now more than 45 years since my first full time role and I don't have a lot more to give.

It has been a pleasure working with; and learning from the many wonderful people who have played a role with Thirrili, from the Board to each and every staff member.

I hope you have enjoyed reading these newsletters: a task that I came late to, but have thoroughly enjoyed.

But now is the time for my many hobbies: cooking, gardening, breeding budgies, fishing and playing guitar including a Gibson Les Paul and a Maton electric acoustic which has such a beautiful sound (more when someone else is playing it)!

I wish you all well and hope there will be a time in the not too distant future where organisations like Thirrili are not needed.

A disclaimer: all errors in previous editions are my own.

Peter Stephenson

## Click the link

### Deadly story

For children and young people, Deadly Story provides a range of information including historical information; culture and events; and a service directory.

Deadly Story's stated aim is: "A place for Aboriginal Culture, Country & Community. A place to grow my knowledge & be proud."

The site also includes an interactive map of Victorian Aboriginal Country as well as the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia. To take a look, go to: <https://www.deadlystory.com>

### Honour their service

On Remembrance Day (formerly Armistice Day) on 11/11/2020, it was fitting to pause and reflect on the service of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who served in Australia's military in every conflict since federation (and some even earlier).

According to the Australian War Memorial, it is impossible to determine the exact number of Indigenous individuals who participated in each conflict, but this research is ongoing.

What is known is that in both world wars, Indigenous soldiers were paid less than their white counterparts; on return they were denied access to soldier settlements; and the Returned Services league wouldn't even let Indigenous service personnel in; except for ANZAC Day. For more information and links to other sites about Indigenous service, go to:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/indigenous>



## Worth a read

### Award winning fiction

Song of the Crocodile was the winner of the 2018 blak&write! writing fellowship, which serves to find and develop outstanding unpublished manuscripts by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander writers.

Published in September 2020, this work by first time Novelist Nardi Simpson follows the lives of three generations of the Billymil family who live in a fictional town, thought to be in New South Wales. Reviews are all positive for this award winning book. All good bookstores will stock and your local library will no doubt soon have a copy or two.

### Recent Journal article

Well worth a read is *Addressing Inequities in Indigenous Mental Health and Wellbeing through Transformative and Decolonising Research and Practice*.

Written by Pat Dudgeon, Maddie Boe & Roz Walker and published in the Journal of Research in Health Science, Volume 5 No 3 of 2020, the paper examines the current mental health and social and emotional wellbeing in Indigenous Australian mental health and wellbeing, gaps in research, the need for transformative and decolonising research and practice, and the opportunities and recommendations to address existing mental health inequities.

As well as key policy documents and frameworks, the paper examines relevant literature documenting current decolonising strategies to improve programs, services and practice and draws on earlier work of the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATISIP) builds on the substantial work of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP).

To access the full paper, [click here](#)

## On the small screen

### Overview on the health status of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This 19 minute *Youtube* video is a webinar hosted by the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet and presented by Neil Drew and Christine Potter. The Webinar covers information on:

- the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet
- the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet's commitment to knowledge exchange
- why the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet writes the Overview and its new look
- Data Sovereignty and its importance when providing data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.

The webinar also includes a link to a presentation by Professor Maggie Walter who outlines Data Sovereignty, the challenges faced and progress made in this field.

The slides from this webinar are available for download as a PDF. To access the webinar, [click here](#).

### Better late than never

I can't believe it took me 14 years to see it, but *Ten Canoes* is well worth a look. Streaming on Stan, this film is spoken entirely in language. If you missed it, check it out, you won't be sorry.

