



THIRRILI

Thirrili Ltd

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Release of National Mental Health Pandemic Plan

The Mental Health Commission released its National Mental Health Pandemic Plan on Friday 15 May 2020.

The Plan recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are likely to be at high risk for both physical and psychological complications from the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific concerns include:

- lack of accessible, culturally appropriate mental health services
- the potential impact of the loss of Elders on knowledge,

culture, heritage and community well being

- Specific challenges for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce, including those living with high-risk individuals
- Inequalities within the health system that may affect access to care, particularly in the move to digital and telehealth
- Loss of remote community services including fly in fly out mental health care
- Potential poor outcomes if poorly trained community members are left to manage mental illness

- Heightened impacts on those in (or with connection to) remote communities where isolation and freedom of movement are more restricted, those who cannot access traditional lands, or those who cannot attend to cultural and sorry business .

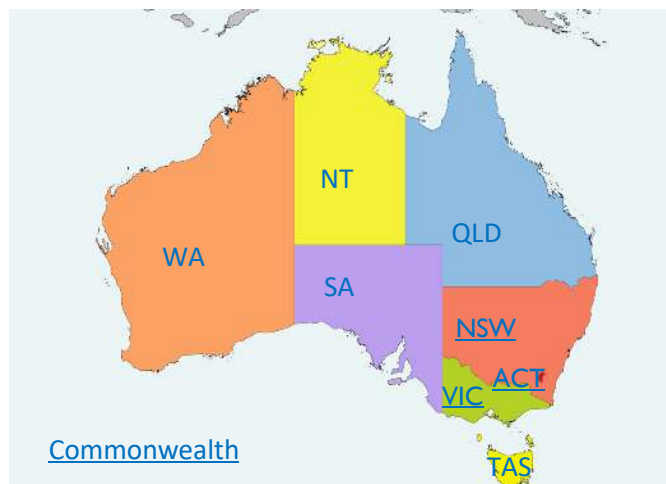
Importantly, the Plan noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need to take leadership of and be involved in decision making regarding mental health supports to ensure they are culturally competent, safe and sustainable.

Continued back page

COVID-19 information updated 18 May 2020

'Stay at home' and other restrictions are easing at different stages across each of the states and territories. To be informed of what is happening where you live, click on the links on the map below which will take you to the latest information from that respective government.

For dedicated resources/information for our mob provided by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) on Covid-19 , [click here](#) .



“The prevailing policy position for several decades has been to systematically underinvest in, and to close down, homeland communities... Now we’re being told it’s easier to keep us safe on Country. ...”

COVID-19: Lessons and ironies

In an opinion piece published in the Age online this past weekend, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Fitzroy Crossing Native Title Holder June Oscar highlighted the irony of Aboriginal people returning to communities to be safer from exposure to COVID-19, where these communities have not been supported for many years.

She claims that this means, in some instances, returning to communities where water and electricity has been cut off.

Added to that, Aunty June notes that people returning to communities has put pressure on scarce resources in some instances and led to greater stress; particularly where food security, inadequate housing and issues of domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse are already prevalent.

Aunty June notes further the irony in a situation where “The prevailing policy position for several decades has been to systematically underinvest in, and to close down, homeland communities... Now we’re being told it’s easier to keep us safe on Country”.

To read the original article, go to:

[https://amp-abc-net-au.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.abc.net.au/article/12245728](https://amp-abc-net.au.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.abc.net.au/article/12245728)

Responses to National Mental Health Pandemic Plan

While responses to the National Cabinet announcement of \$48.1m to support a National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan have generally been positive, there have been questions as to whether the plan goes far enough.

For example, the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association (AIPA) has called for



the introduction of a long awaited Indigenous mental health and suicide prevention helpline.

Chair of the AIPA Tania Dalton stated: “Many people think an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) phone helpline already exists, but in fact it’s a major gap in the mental health space. AIPA have identified and long called for such a helpline and want this gap to close, as there has never been a more acute need than now”.

“Even though social isolation is easing, tens of thousands Indigenous people including Elders and those who are vulnerable to the virus due to chronic disease are still having to live with social distancing and – with the threat of second and third waves – the prospect of returning to isolation.

For them, anxiety, loneliness, cumulative trauma, and depression have never been a greater challenge”.

To read the AIPAs media release in full, click [here](#).

Former National Mental Health Commissioner and Brain and Mind Centre co-director, psychiatrist Ian Hickie, said Friday’s announcement was a step in the right direction but was not at the “right scale of investment” to address the nation’s mental health challenge.

He argued that as a result of COVID-19, suicides in Australia could increase by 25% at least as a result of the 600,000 Australians out of work as a result of the Pandemic.

He suggested an overhaul of the current system of Medicare rebates for 10 psychologist sessions a year, arguing that “We’ve got stuck in a very 1950s model of psychology delivery and psychiatry delivery of individual sessions.”

Beyond Blue’s CEO Georgie Harmer is quoted in the same Sydney Morning Herald article as saying the mental health system was in need of “profound” change and called on government to “reshape the system so the people who need support have options that match their needs”.

See the full article [here](#).

OUR FRIENDS AT GAYAA DHUWI (PROUD SPIRIT) AUSTRALIA HAVE RELEASED FIVE FREE POSTERS TO DOWNLOAD

Aimed at Staying Strong and Healthy During the Coronavirus Outbreak, these posters collectively contain 20 tips and are produced to be downloaded and be put up in homes, health services and anywhere else they might be of help.



For more information or to download these posters, please go to <https://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/coronavirus> A tip from us: bookmark their site as they have a wealth of information about Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention , policies and data links

Want to be included on our mailing list?
Something relevant you'd like us to share with our readers?
Email:
peter.s@thirrili.com.au

Upcoming dates of significance (and links to some background)

- 26 May:** [National Sorry Day](#)
- 27 May:** [Anniversary of 1967 Referendum](#)
- 27 May to 3 June:** [National Reconciliation week](#)
- 3 June:** [Mabo Day](#)

Closing date extended

THIRRILI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM 2020

Spaces are still available on the Thirrili Scholarship Program. This Scholarship was developed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop skills to support families who have experienced traumatic events, including suicide; and work with organisations involved with families during this sad time. Over the six-week training period, participants will receive \$6,000. Conditions do apply, but they are not onerous.

Applications now close on 1 June 2020 with the first course scheduled to commence mid June (TBC).

If you are interested, or know of someone who may be interested, please download the guidelines and application form here:

<http://thirrili.com.au/events-media/news>

For further information, please contact Shannon Kearing at: shannon.k@thirrili.com.au

We are so excited by this initiative and look forward to your applications!



Face to face work set to recommence

The past two months or so has seen us transform the way we work to ensure the safety of not only our staff team, but also those people we work with and for.

While we have adapted, the type of work we do means we can never replace the face to face, human contact that is so important when people are hurting.

That is why we are excited to announce that our CRSAs will soon be back in communities and doing the practical work we have become known for, in person.

There are of course a few provisos and our team leaders and managers are working with our health and safety advisor to ensure that any work we do will be done with a minimum or risk to any individual, but also in accordance with state or territory guidelines and social distancing rules in place in each jurisdiction.

And don't forget, we are only a phone call away for After Suicide support on **1800 805 807**.

PATHWAYS TO CARE – AFTER A SUICIDE

Top end training: free community workshops

Join **Thirrili** and our postvention partner **StandBy** in our upcoming free workshops to be held in both Darwin (10 June) and Katherine (17 June).

These full day workshops are aimed at engaging organisations to participate in a planned approach within their community to support those bereaved or impacted by suicide.

The workshops will discuss:

- ⇒ the StandBy Service Model
- ⇒ what is suicide and its impacts
- ⇒ crisis, trauma and grief
- ⇒ what makes suicide different from other sudden deaths
- ⇒ self-care, and
- ⇒ will work through a case scenario to determine how the community may respond.

For further information including start times and venues, download the Darwin flyer [here](#), or Katherine [here](#), or contact:

Joan Washington *StandBy* Coordinator
M: 0418575680

E: joan.w@thirrili.com.au



Worth a look



Fake boomerang artwork scores prize win for Indigenous artist Amala Groom

The artist created a sculpture featuring a fake boomerang balanced on a stack of gold coins, painted with ochre and the words "Come back home". It has now won its creator the prestigious Wyndham Art Prize for 2020!

Created to highlight the lack of copyright entitlements for indigenous artworks, the sculpture won the \$12,000 Wyndham Art Prize.

Proposed legislation to ban the selling of fake 'Indigenous-style' artworks has been rejected by Parliament. See the full story [here](#).

NICRS notifications 2020: updated every issue

Updated 18 May 2020. It has been pointed out, rightly so, that only a coroner can determine whether or not a death is as a result of by suicide or other cause. Therefore, we would like to point out here, for the record, that the statistics below represent what we have been advised at the time of notification.

For example, we may receive a call to say that a person has died in what appears to have been a suicide. While we will report it below as a completed suicide, that refers to the notification: of course once the respective coroner has made their finding, those confirmed statistics will have changed.

For another example, we may receive a report of a suicide of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander person, but the coroner determines that person was not indigenous. Again, the figures below represent the notifications our team receive. Please continue to provide your feedback: it is welcomed and it is valuable.

	Gender			State or Territory*				Total
	Male	Not known at this time	Female	QLD	WA	VIC	All other	
Completed suicides	36	1	11	15	13	6	14	48

Age range	17 and younger		18-30 inclusive		Older than 30	Not known at this time	Total
	Completed suicides	7		23		14	

							Total
All other incidents include attempted suicides and/or traumatic incidents with or without fatalities							26

Note: to ensure that individual cases cannot be identified:

*Figures for states and territories with less than 4 completed suicides have been aggregated into 'All other'

Crisis contact numbers

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

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T H I R R I L I

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National Mental Health Pandemic Response Plan

Continued from front page

The individual, intergenerational and community trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be considered in all aspects of care. Issues such as cultural safety are essential to enable a system or service to meet the mental health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Australian Government Department of Health has developed an 'Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' mental health and social and emotional wellbeing pandemic response plan should be developed and implemented through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership.

To download the plan, go to:

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/getmedia/1b7405ce-5d1a-44fc-b1e9-c00204614cb5/National-Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing-Pandemic-Response-Plan> .

New program initiative (and call for volunteers!)

Last week we mentioned that a number Thirrili staff have been busy planning new initiatives to both broaden the service offering to our communities and to improve the way we do things as an organisation. Several of these new initiatives have been 'socialised' within the team and gained approval to proceed.

One of these projects is the production and distribution of backpacks for children and young people facing trauma. Similar initiatives have been implemented with success in circumstances where children have been placed in care, or who need to quickly leave their homes due to family violence. We believe this initiative will be a valuable tool and complement our work in

suicide postvention.

The backpacks will help to relieve some of the uncertainty children may face in circumstances where they have to leave home and/or are separated from their family after a death or other major trauma (for example where the home cannot be used due to Sorry business). In these traumatic situations, the children may not be able to take any personal belongings with them.

The backpack will be full of a mix of age appropriate practical

items e.g. toothbrush, toothpaste, hairbrush, other toiletries and pajamas; but will also contain items of a therapeutic nature. Over the coming weeks, the team will be sourcing the packs and their contents.

Call for volunteers!!



One element that we hope to add to the backpacks is something that we can't really source commercially. We would love to be able to add to each backpack a knitted blanket, made by community members across the country. To this end, we are looking for volunteers to do the knitting and we'll cover the cost of the yarn. Perhaps there is a group of Aunties who meet in a Yarning circle who might want to do some knitting for us while they meet?

Imagine how special a young person would feel knowing that the blanket they got in their bag was knitted by a deadly Aunty just for them!

If you are part of group or know of a group that might see this as a possibility, contact the editor at: peter.s@thirrili.com.au and he will forward your details to the backpack team.



National Volunteer Week

Did you know that this week is National Volunteer Week?

The theme for this year (Monday 18 May – Sunday 24 May) is "Changing Communities. Changing Lives"

To all of our wonderful; volunteers across the country, it is you who keep communities going. A big thank you!

<https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/get-involved/>

