



THIRRILI

MEDIA RELEASE

At breaking point: suicide rates among First Nations peoples are at crisis levels.

Date: 14 March 2025

Urgent action is required to address the increasing rates of Aboriginal and Torres suicides.

First Nations communities throughout Australia are facing an escalating suicide crisis. The latest Productivity Commission on the [Closing the Gap Targets dashboard](#) states that in 2023, the suicide age-standardised rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was 30.8 per 100,000 people. This is the highest rate over the period from the baseline in 2018 (23.6 per 100,000 people),

The suicide rates are distressingly high, more than double those observed among non-Indigenous Australians.

Summer May Finlay, Thirrili Chair, welcomed the recent release of the [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy](#) in 2024. “For too long, suicide prevention programs and policies have been developed and coordinated in ways that do not reflect the needs of the communities they aim to support,” she stated. Summer May noted that if the strategy is implemented effectively and adequately resourced, it could serve as a vital tool for reducing suicide.

Target 14 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap—aiming for a significant and sustained reduction in suicide among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples towards zero—remains out of reach. Alarming, current data shows that suicide accounts for 4.6% of all deaths among First Nations people in Australia, with nearly a quarter of all fatalities among those aged 24 years or younger are attributed to suicide.

[Research](#) reports that when a child loses a parent to suicide, they are at heightened risk of ending their lives to suicide. This evidence underscores the urgent need for targeted, culturally safe postvention supports and interventions to help mitigate the long-term adverse effects on both children and adults who have experienced such a profound loss. The existence of critical windows for support underscores why postvention supports are so essential.

“The tragic aftermath of suicide is what we know our communities are facing every single day. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have lost a loved one to suicide. And right now, many families are desperately trying to support a loved one who is at risk to dying by suicide,” shares Tanja Hirvonen, Interim CEO of Thirrili.

First Nations communities consistently stress that solutions must be designed and led by First Nations people. They advocate for approaches that incorporate cultural knowledge and place-based approaches that prioritise healing and connection to Country rather than solely relying on Western mental health frameworks.

While suicide remains a crisis in our communities, viable solutions exist. Governments must address this issue with the seriousness it demands by increasing and targeting investments. Indigenous led solutions are essential for progress. Without Aboriginal governance and genuine co-design, funding alone will not reverse the current crisis.

About Thirrili: Thirrili is a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that is led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing. As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation, Thirrili recognises the strengths of our communities and our strong responsibility to support communities in the aftermath of suicide or unexpected fatal incidents. We uphold protective boundaries for individuals, families, and communities that allow self-determination in their ways of bereavement and healing.

Thirrili provides essential support to First Nations individuals, families, and communities affected by a traumatic incident or the loss of a loved one by suicide. This support is vital for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and individuals, preventing feelings of isolation, despair, and trauma leading to prolonged and more intense grief.

For media inquiries: For further details feel free to reach out to Ben Speare – Director Communications & Strategy communications@thirrili.com.au or 0407 126 985

Support services

[Lifeline:](#) 13 11 14 or text 0477 13 11 14 for 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services

[13YARN:](#) 13 92 76

[The Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention\(CBPATSISP\)](#)

[Suicide Call Back Service:](#) 1300 659 467

[Kids Helpline:](#) 1800 55 1800

[MensLine Australia:](#) 1300 78 99 78

[Beyond Blue:](#) 1300 22 4636

[StandBy Support After Suicide:](#) 1300 727 247

[Headspace:](#) 1800 650 890

