



The Centre of Best Practice in
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Suicide Prevention

'Empowering our Community'

Workshop on Empowerment and Accountability in Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention, Canberra

3 May 2019

The Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATSISP) co-hosted a workshop on preventing Indigenous youth suicide in Canberra on Tuesday. The workshop focused on empowerment and accountability as ways to reduce suicide among Indigenous people and young people. CBPATSISP Director Professor Pat Dudgeon commented:

The attendance of young people, those with lived experience of suicide, LGBTQI, emerging leaders and Elders was important at the workshop. It's critical that we listen to, and learn from them if we are to understand how to best respond. Empowering our young people and Elders to lead in suicide prevention activity particularly in their communities - was what the workshop was all about. It became clear to all present that we need to empower our incredible young people to lead in preventing suicide among their peers by 'getting out of their way', while also supporting them to lead.

The workshop made a number of Calls to Action. Professor Dudgeon outlined:

*The first Call was for a **dedicated COAG Indigenous Suicide Prevention Plan** developed by Indigenous leaders for nation-wide implementation within the COAG Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan implementation process. This plan requires to implement **a strong Indigenous youth component co-designed by our young leaders** into the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023. We, as leaders at the workshop, are committed to supporting our young people in this process as well as to an inclusive broader plan development process where all Indigenous voices are heard.*

A second Call was for **greater funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health services to be able to deliver mental health services according to need**. Professor Dudgeon continued:

Research has shown that communities who have high levels of self-determination have lower rates of suicide. Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services are the part of communities and know their local issues, so they are best to provide services.

Professor Dudgeon closed:

Underlying these complex issues are the need for empowerment, self-determination, culture and for community to heal at the national and community levels. In these are the ultimate and sustainable solutions to Indigenous suicide and youth suicide.

We need communities empowered with the mental health services and mental health education they need, communities empowered to address the dire conditions and challenges they face. For it is hope that is the greatest defence against suicide our young people and our Elders are our hope for our future.

This workshop demonstrated how incredible and ready they are to lead a national response to Indigenous youth suicide.

END

- For media enquiries and interview requests for Professor Dudgeon please contact Ms Barb Ahmat on 0424 433 429.
- For more information about CBPATSSIP see <https://www.cbpatssp.com.au/>
- For more information about Culture is life see <https://www.cultureislife.org>
- For more information on the appropriate reporting of mental illness and suicide see the Mindframe initiative: <https://everymind.org.au/suicide-prevention/understanding-suicide>
- Lifeline: 131 114
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
- Mensline: 1300 78 99 78