Joint Media Release

Minister for Indigenous Affairs
Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion
Minister for Health and Aged Care
The Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care
The Hon. Ken Wyatt AM, MP

Thursday, 10 November 2016

Community-led solutions for Indigenous suicide prevention

The Coalition Government today released the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP) report, *Solutions that Work: What the Evidence and Our People Tell Us.*

The report was released at a ceremony in Parliament House attended by members of the project team, key stakeholders, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, Minister for Health and Aged Care, Sussan Ley, and Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ken Wyatt.

The report sets out a new blueprint to improve suicide-prevention services and programmes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people based on the principle of prioritising community-led, culturally-appropriate services.

Minister Scullion said the Government welcomed the report, but did so with a very heavy-heart.

“The ATSISPEP report was commissioned by the Coalition Government to look into what is working and what is not working in the services we fund to help prevent suicide in Indigenous communities,” Minister Scullion said.

“It breaks my heart that almost every one of the communities I have visited has been touched by suicide. We know that Indigenous suicide rates are double that of non-Indigenous people, five times higher for young Indigenous Australians and the rate in the Kimberley is one of the highest nationally.

“This report is a critical first step in helping to understand what works in Indigenous communities to tackle what has become an epidemic in some places.
“It builds on the Coalition Government’s commitment to do things with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. To this end, we recently attended a roundtable in the Kimberley to work with the local community on the report’s findings and how to trial some of the approaches it recommends.”

Minister Ley said the Government had worked closely with the report’s authors to ensure recommendations could be quickly implemented on the ground.

“The Coalition Government has committed to trialling the community-led approaches recommended in the report,” Minister Ley said.

“This is reflected in our election commitment to invest $192 million in mental health and suicide prevention, which includes the establishment of 12 suicide-prevention trial sites, including one in the Kimberley.

“The Government is also establishing a Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention to continue to build the evidence base of what works to ensure we are continuously learning and adapting to what is working on the ground.

“The report’s findings will also inform future funding decisions for suicide prevention and mental health programmes and how best to deliver them for Indigenous communities.”

Assistant Minister Wyatt thanked the University of Western Australia’s School of Indigenous Studies for its work on the project.

“Your report shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians want to have their health needs met in ways that are tailored to their circumstances and that recognise their unique needs, including their cultural needs,” Assistant Minister Wyatt said.

ATSISPEP is one of several Indigenous-specific suicide prevention initiatives supported by the Coalition Government. Others include the Critical Response Project which is addressing suicide-related trauma in Western Australia and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid training which is being rolled out in more than 60 remote locations across Australia.


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