Closing the Gap Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership - Meeting 1 Communique, 30-31 March 2023

The first meeting of the Closing the Gap Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership was held on 30-31 March 2023 on Kaurna country in Adelaide. The Partnership brings together First Nations and government members to accelerate action to improve social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) and mental health outcomes and reduce suicide rates. The meeting was co-Chaired by Professor Pat Dudgeon, Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia and Tania Rishniw, Deputy Secretary, Department of Health and Aged Care.

The meeting was positive, open, and frank, with initial discussion focused on building strong foundations for culturally safe governance and ways of working for the Partnership, and the importance of defining SEWB for the purposes of the Partnership, to encompass mental health and suicide prevention. Policy priority area: SEWB –Background, Day one: 30.03.23

The Social and Emotional Wellbeing Model - Expression of Indigenous self-hood

Came from efforts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates –1989 meeting – “Working Together”

Suicide prevention lens (drug, alcohol and other contributing factors) – many implications

Indigenous data sovereignty 

Implement Indigenous governance 

We are publishing a paper and doing a study – Make sure it matters to our people
 
How do we measure SEWB?

“Truth telling” – We need to go through a process of healing and recovery

“What’s good for mob is good for everyone”

SEWB diagram at centre: adapted from Gee et al., (2014) – Expressions. Experiences – Cultural determinants. Social determinants. Historical determinants. Political determinants. Spirit, spirituality, and ancestors. Body and behaviours. Mind and emotions. Family and kinship. Community. Culture. Country and land.
Self (collective)

Where we break away from “mainstream”  

“The role of cultural healers”

#1– Refresh and implement the SEWB Framework

We have national Indigenous gatherings – Next: Darwin in July 

Racism: finally being recognised

Racism – Systemic, health system, sport, everyday, political – These don’t happen in isolation

Role of historical, political, social, and cultural determinants

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First Nations members brought forward priorities for consideration by the Partnership, including two key priorities for early action:

* a refresh of the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing* 2017-23 (including an implementation plan), and
* the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led commissioning framework.

Partnership priorities: First Nations members – Day one: 30.03.23

First meeting: 10 August

Immediate priorities – How to build evidence base?

1.  Renew the National Strategic Framework – Embed our ways within the Framework – Why was it never implemented? The will wasn’t there, the time wasn’t right, change in governments. Funding? Usually tied to specific actions – Alignment with how funding is allocated. But! The framework had positive impact without formal implementation. Paradigm of SEWB now recognised.

2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Commissioning Framework

SEWB sector not always well defined – Jurisdictional. No structure. Connected to court, correctional etc.

Some of us fall out of the ACCHO Model, e.g. Stolen Generation counselling

Strengths based approach

We need investment in capturing cultural information – Work with Mob 

Knowledge is being lost

Complexity of the system:
1. Justice, housing
2. Reporting requirements too onerous! Needs review and attention. Too much focus on admin. Make it easier. 
3. How each person travels: map journey – Interventions
4. See where money is going – No visibility/accountability

How can you use the money you had better?

Cultural shift needed: staff support priority – Looking after self comes last – needs funding

We need: more funding, more staff, less expectation (don’t fill up with more clients!)

Need implementation plan – Best practice – What’s working well? e.g. co-design in WA communities: self-determination

Workplace SEWB – Flexibility doesn’t exist. 9-day fortnights? “Wellbeing Day”

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Government members shared information on key priorities and actions underway in each jurisdiction.

Partnership priorities: Synergies across government priorities –  Day one: 30.03.23

Commonwealth
- Working with the sector to transition to community-controlled services.
- How do we build and support the SEWB workforce?
- Strategic frameworks for SEWB, mental health and suicide prevention 
- Growing and supporting the First Nations workforce
- Prioritising First Nations-led and community-driven responses

Northern Territory
- Legitimise workforce
- Reimagine primary care model of delivery
-Incarceration: What is the strength base that could be mobilised when they leave?

Western Australia
- Embedding SEWB in activities
- Partnership planning Group 9
- Kimberley Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing Steering Committee
- WA aftercare services program

South Australia
- Development of Aboriginal community suicide prevention networks with local communities
- SA Suicide Prevention Plan: Reducing the number of suicides and its impact on South Australians

Tasmania
- Suicide prevention policy
- Rethink 2020: Identify links between priority focus areas

Queensland
- Very exciting time
- New 5-year funding
- Deliver recommendations – “Better care together”
- Challenge: recruiting workforce
- “Making Tracks Together”: Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework

Victoria 
- We’ve had the Royal Commission: Benefit more broadly
- VACCHO/ DH partnership
- Tertiary scholarship program

New South Wales
- NSW Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020–2025  –Aboriginal-led evaluation
- Closing The Gap – Towards zero suicides building on Aboriginal communities’ resilience – 12–24 community-controlled organisations.
- Aboriginal mental health models of care

ACT
- Empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – ‘Train the trainer’
- We have more children being taken away
- What does community really want?

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Key decisions by the Partnership:

1. The refresh of the SEWB Framework is a critical priority for the Partnership. Planning for the refresh will be the focus of the second Partnership meeting to be held in Darwin in July, to coincide with the next quarterly SEWB Gathering.
2. The ‘Agreement to Implement’ (the formal document that establishes the terms of reference for the Partnership) was agreed pending a number of revisions.
3. Two First Nations SEWB PP members to be appointed the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials Group (MHSPSO) to provide policy advice and connection between and SEWB PP and MHSPSO and improve transparency and the embedding of the First Nations voice in mainstream services and systems.
4. Two First Nations representatives with lived experience to be appointed to MHSPSO. This will not only provide lived experiences from different cultures, but also provide cultural safety for these representatives.
5. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) will join the Partnership as a non-voting member in recognition of the important role the agency plays in SEWB services and policy.
6. The Partnership will be renamed the ‘Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership’, rather than ‘Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Mental Health) Policy Partnership’ in recognition that for the purposes of the Partnership, SEWB encompasses mental health and suicide prevention.