



Australian Government

Department of Health

COMMUNIQUE

14 October 2016

Kimberley Roundtable – Suicide Prevention

A high-level Roundtable discussion today on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide in the Western Australian Kimberley region, chaired by Federal Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, emphasised the need for local, Indigenous controlled responses to the escalating rates of suicide in the community.

The Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull had committed the Government to this Roundtable discussion with key stakeholders in the Kimberley to understand what is working in the region and what is not and to find some agreement on ways to help shape a new landmark suicide prevention trial in the Kimberley.

The Kimberley region has been selected as an initial site for a suicide prevention trial in recognition of the high rate of suicide in the region, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In the Kimberley, the age-adjusted rate of suicide is more than six times the national average.

Minister Ley was joined by Indigenous Affairs Minister, Nigel Scullion, and Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ken Wyatt, who is an Aboriginal man from Western Australia.

Delegates to the Roundtable were given an advanced copy of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP) report, which was discussed by the project director, Professor Pat Dudgeon. The report evaluated the effectiveness of existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention services and programs and makes a number of recommendations that emphasise the need for community and culturally sensitive involvement in any suicide prevention activities. It was agreed that the recommendations of the Report form a blueprint for the suicide prevention trial and that the ATSISPEP Evaluation tool be used and implemented to guide the PHN and Kimberley Suicide Prevention Trial site.

Key outcomes from the Roundtable today included:

- Agreement for a shared commitment between the Australian Government, the community and service providers to reduce the high rates of suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Kimberley region.
 - A recognition that suicide is not just a health issue but must link to the social and cultural determinants of health.
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- a need to focus on family support
- that community based interventions are developed and implemented using a foundation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and in partnership with Indigenous communities, including the need to train the local Aboriginal mental health workforce and taking a family focussed approach as part of empowering the community.
- that the Kimberley trial will develop a suicide prevention model that can support the unique and culturally sensitive requirements of remote communities.
- that government funding and investment needs to be better targeted with more local involvement and streamlining between State and Federal funding arrangements.
- and that the Country Western Australian Primary Health Network (PHN) will work closely and collaboratively in partnership with Kimberley Aboriginal groups and organisations in the conduct of the trial. Minister Ley undertook to investigate how to extend Aboriginal community controlled health organisations representation on PHNs.

Outcomes from the Roundtable will help plan and inform the design of the trial, local suicide prevention activity, and inform the design of strategies in the national trial.

It was agreed that the next step is to establish a Working Group consisting of representatives from local organisations as well as Commonwealth and State Departments with the assistance of the Federal Department of Health to develop the next action items for the trial.

Minister Scullion also committed to returning to the Kimberley region in December.

Minister Scullion also committed to funding a youth forum coordinated by Nyamba Buru Yawuru.

Ministers undertook to hold further consultations on these matters with the local Aboriginal community and other stakeholders in the Kimberley region.

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