



Mental health inquiry – draft report

Factsheet: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

To improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, mental health and suicide prevention services should provide culturally sensitive and responsive supports that take account of historic experiences and social issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience far **higher rates of mental ill-health** compared to other Australians.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are **three times more likely to experience high levels of psychological distress**.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are **twice as likely to be hospitalised** for mental illness.

14 TIMES

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to die by suicide. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (up to 24 years old) are up to **14 times more likely to die by suicide** than other Australian youth.

There are unique risk factors experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that can increase their likelihood of mental ill health, including:

- Intergenerational trauma.
- Racism and discrimination.
- Disadvantage and social exclusion.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have an holistic concept of social and emotional wellbeing which includes: connection to culture, country, spirituality and ancestors; family and kinship; and community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare workers can play an important role in providing culturally capable mental healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be empowered to shape and control their futures to improve social and emotional wellbeing. Improving the mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people requires local leadership and local solutions.

The Productivity Commission's Inquiry makes a number of recommendations to address these issues:

- Expanding the role of Indigenous controlled organisations in the planning and delivery of mental health services and suicide prevention programs.
- Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to mental health supports that are culturally responsive in correctional facilities and upon release.
- Improving partnerships between traditional healers and mainstream mental health services.
- A broader recognition of the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the governance structures of the mental health system.



To see all of our recommendations and read our full draft report, or to access our other fact sheets please go to www.pc.gov.au or google search productivity commission mental health report.