

## **Submission to the Productivity Commission**

**Re:** Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review – Interim Report

**Focus:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration Alignment

### **Overview**

We acknowledge the work of the Productivity Commission in progressing this interim review. However, we strongly recommend the final report elevate the distinct and urgent needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the mental health and suicide prevention system. The lack of systemic reform and clear accountability in the current Agreement has exacerbated existing inequities.

This submission responds directly to Draft Recommendation 5.1 and Draft Finding 5.1, supporting the creation of a standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schedule within the next Agreement. It also aligns with Recommendations 4.6, 4.7, and 4.3 regarding governance, data accountability, and the integration of broader policy environments.

### **Key Submission Points**

#### **1. Support for Recommendation 4.13 – SEWB Workforce Investment**

To meet future system needs and address current workforce gaps, we recommend:

- Dedicated funding for SEWB workforce pipelines, training, and leadership.
- Investment in ACCHO led models, including youth and on Country services.
- Measures to address workforce burnout, funding instability, and lack of cultural supervision.

#### **2. Support for Recommendation 4.6 and 4.7 – Strengthening Governance**

We call for:

- Mandatory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation at all levels of governance.
- Formalised roles for the SEWB Policy Partnership and Aboriginal peak bodies.
- Community-controlled data governance and transparent, disaggregated outcome reporting.

#### **3. Alignment with Recommendation 4.3 – Policy Integration**

The next Agreement must clearly articulate its alignment with:

- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- The National Suicide Prevention Strategy
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy
- The Gayaa Dhuwi Declaration

#### **4. Support for Draft Recommendation 5.1 – Establish a Standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schedule**

We strongly support the inclusion of a separate, fully funded schedule co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This must:

- Align with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (especially Priority Reforms 1 and 3).
- Include tangible actions to invest in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and the Aboriginal SEWB workforce.
- Formalise the role of the SEWB Policy Partnership as the governance body for this schedule.
- Require community-led evaluation and strengths-based outcome measures.

#### **5. Embed the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration**

We support alignment with Recommendation 5.1 to embed priorities highlighted by community. The Declaration's five key themes should:

- Be incorporated as cross-cutting principles throughout the Agreement.
- Inform the Gayaa Dhuwi Implementation Plan and related workforce and service delivery standards.
- Be demonstrably implemented by PHNs and LHNs in regional planning.

This alignment is necessary to avoid duplication, fragmentation, and inefficiency.

#### **Conclusion**

We reiterate that without Aboriginal leadership, governance, and cultural authority embedded at the core of the next Agreement, the mental health and suicide prevention system will continue to fail our people. The next phase must reflect truth, respect, and shared accountability, ensuring all services are culturally safe, community-led, and grounded in strengths-based frameworks.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission further and participate in future co-design processes.