

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health

Together we are strong

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Leadership in Mental Health
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 Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration 
A companion declaration to the Wharerātā Declaration
for use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Introduction

The Wharerātā Group of Indigenous mental health leaders from Canada, the United States, Australia, Samoa and New Zealand developed the Wharerātā Declaration in 2010. It comprises five themes on the importance of Indigenous leadership in addressing the common mental health challenges faced by Indigenous peoples around the world. Member countries of the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership endorsed the Wharerātā Declaration in 2010 and now promote it as a key part of their work.

Through the March 2013 Sydney Declaration, the Wharerātā Declaration was endorsed in Australia by key government mental health agencies including the National Mental Health Commission, the Mental Health Commission of New South Wales, and the Government of Western Australia Mental Health Commission. The Queensland Mental Health Commission, forming later, also supports the Wharerātā Declaration.

This endorsement underpinned the formation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health (NATSILMH) in 2013-2014. Guided by the Wharerātā Declaration, NATSILMH is an independent entity that is supported by the four Australian mental health commissions to provide national leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, and suicide prevention.

In December 2014, NATSILMH undertook to develop a companion Declaration to the Wharerātā Declaration for use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. After the release of a discussion paper and a consultation process, the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration was launched on the 27th of August 2015.

The Name of the Declaration

'Gayaa' means happy, pleased and proud, and 'Dhuwi' means spirit in the Yonakalayay and Gamilarayay languages of north-west New South Wales.

NATSILMH thanks the Dhimwaa Elders Group and Virginia Robinson for their agreement to use these words to name the Declaration. NATSILMH also acknowledges the late Mr George Ross OAM, the Honorary Chairperson of the Dhimwaa Elders Group, for helping to preserve the Yonakalayay and Gamilarayay languages to the present day.

NATSILMH was directed to the Dhimwaa Elders Group by Ms Pat Delaney (nee Swain) to seek a name for the Declaration. NATSILMH acknowledges her important contributions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional wellbeing as co-author of the landmark 1995 *Way Forward* report with Professor Beverly Raphael. The principles from that report are adopted by and appended to the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration.

Gayaa Dhuwi is the official name of this Declaration. In adopting these words, it is acknowledged that different meanings might be attached to these words in another Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language. The members of that language group should use other local words that reflect the spirit of the Declaration.

Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration

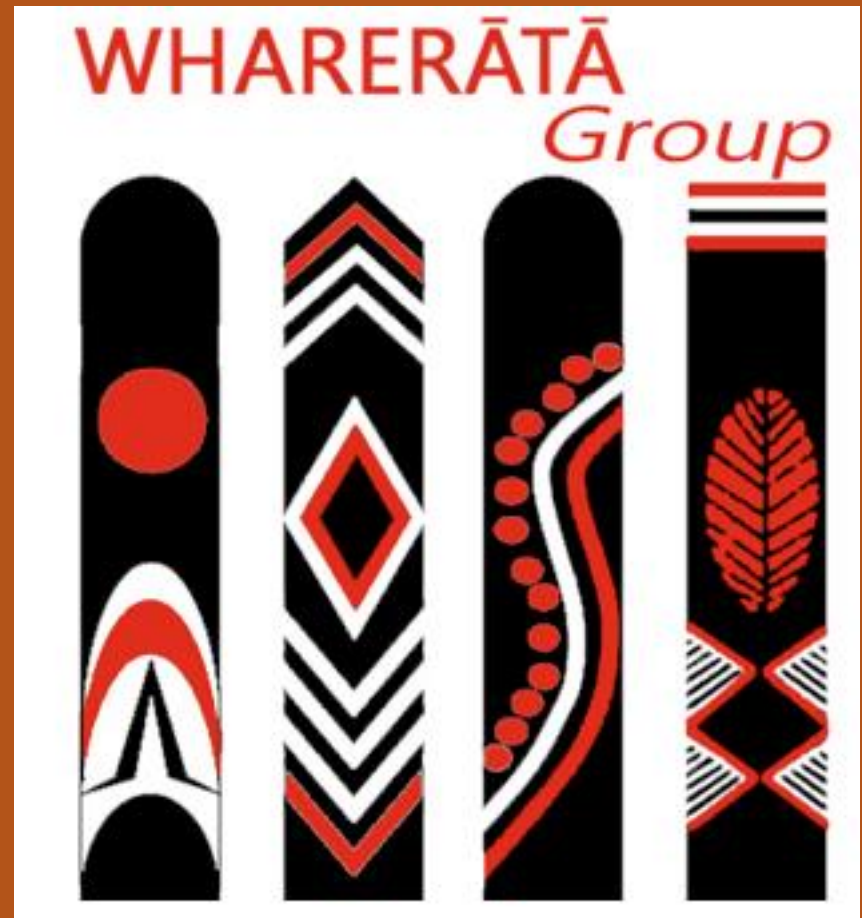
Origins and Support

National Mental Health
Commission

Mental Health Commission
of New South Wales

Queensland Mental Health
Commission

Western Australian Mental
Health Commission



Vision of the Wharerātā Group

“ the negative effects of colonisation on mental health are reversed, and Indigenous peoples have renewed pride in their culture and their ability to succeed in wider society, and have visibility as contributing members in their countries.”

NATSILMH members

- Professor Pat Dudgeon - Commissioner, National Mental Health Commission; and Co-chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Advisory Group (ATSIMHSPAG). WA
- Mr Tom Brideson, Mental Health Commission of New South Wales, Community Advisory Council; ATSIMHSPAG member. NSW
- Ms Sandy Gillies, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council. QLD
- Professor Tom Calma AO, Co-chair of the ATSIMHSPAG, National Coordinator Tackling Indigenous Smoking, Chancellor of the University of Canberra, Co-chair of Reconciliation Australia and an Ambassador for Suicide Prevention Australia. ACT
- Dr Robyn Shields, Mental Health Commission of New South Wales, Deputy Mental Health Commissioner. NSW
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

NATSILMH Members continued

- Professor Gracelyn Smallwood, Queensland Mental Health Commission's Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council QLD
- Ms Vicki Hovane, Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Reducing Violence Against Women WA
- Ms Adele Cox, Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Council
- Mr Richard Weston, CEO of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation ACT
- Mr Cliff Collard, Western Australian Government Mental Health Commission WA

Process of Adapting the Wharerātā Declaration

- Development of a discussion paper and early draft
- Circulation among the mental health commissions
- Submission process – key stakeholders
- Workshop hosted by the Queensland Mental Health Commission
- Feedback from the Wharerātā Group

Name and Meaning

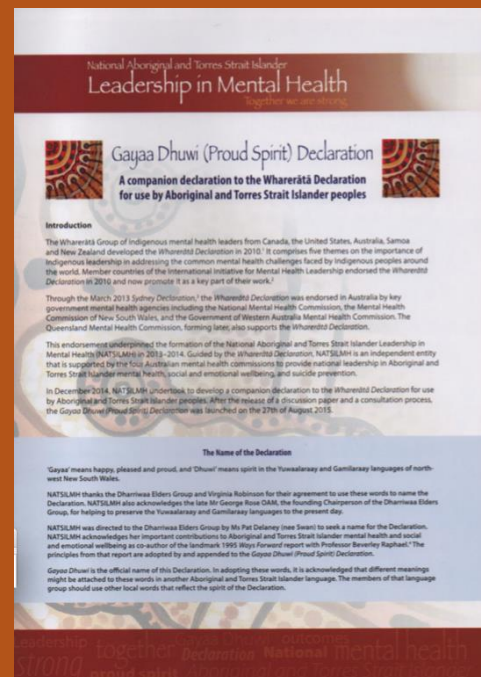
Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit)

The process of community ownership of *Gayaa Dhuwi* (Proud Spirit)

- Pat Delaney (nee Swan)
- Ways Forward Report, 1995
- Dharriwaa Elders Group to honour the late Mr George Rose OAM
- Yuwaalaraay and Gamilaraay Languages

Theme 1

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and healing should be recognised across all parts of the Australian mental health system, and in some circumstances support specialised areas of practice.



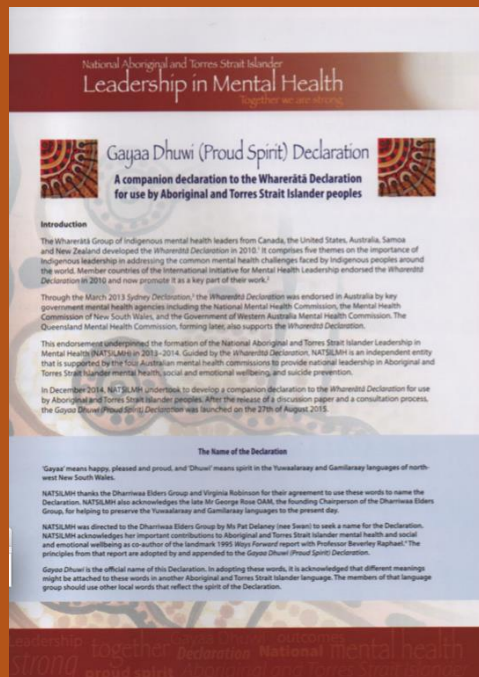
Theme 2

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and healing combined with clinical perspectives will make the greatest contribution to the achievement of the highest attainable standard of mental health and suicide prevention outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



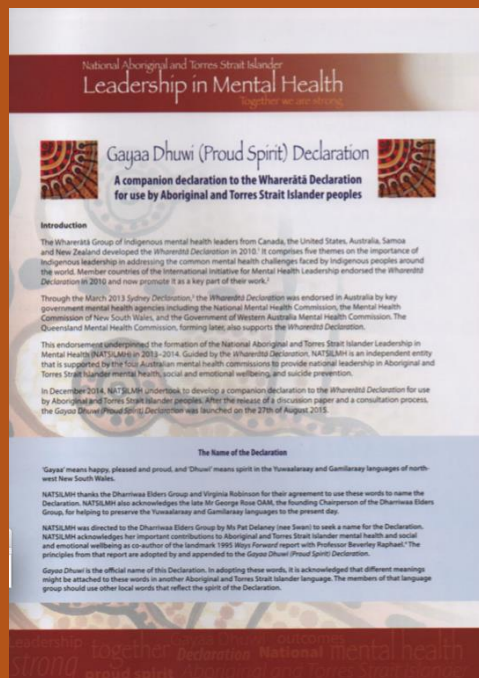
Theme 3

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values-based social and emotional wellbeing and mental health outcome measures in combination with clinical outcome measures should guide the assessment of mental health and suicide prevention services and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



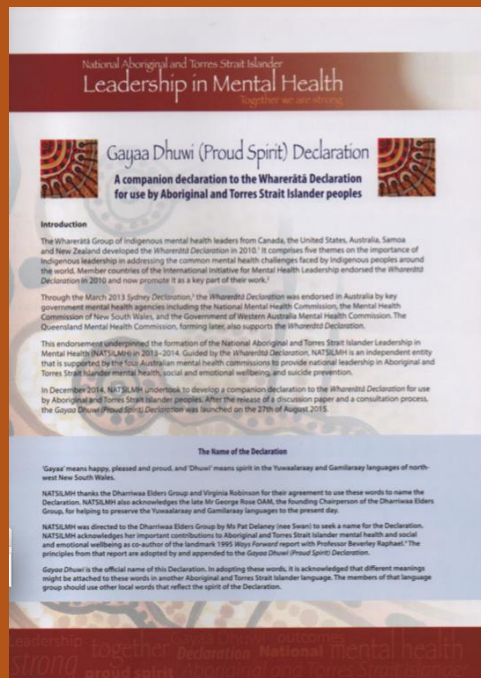
Theme 4

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence and leadership is required across all parts of the Australian mental health system for it to adapt to, and to be accountable to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the achievement of the highest attainable standard of mental health and suicide prevention outcomes.



Theme 5

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders should be supported and valued to be visible and influential across all parts of the Australian mental health system.



Calls to Action 1 and 2

- For all Australian governments in a bipartisan approach, and in particular their health and mental health departments, to formally adopt and commit to supporting the *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration* by the 30th of June 2016.
- For all Australian governments, and in particular their health and mental health departments, to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in mental health and related areas to develop an implementation component of the *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration* by the 30th of June 2017.

Calls to Action 3 and 4

- For all mental health professionals and professional associations, and educational institutions and standard-setting bodies that work in mental health (and also those in areas related to mental health, particularly suicide prevention) to formally adopt and commit to supporting the *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration* by the 30th of June 2016
- For all mental health professional associations, educational institutions and standard-setting bodies that work in mental health (and also those in areas related to mental health, particularly suicide prevention) to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in mental health and related areas to develop an implementation component of the *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration* by the 30th of June 2017.

Call to Action - Key elements of implementation components

- Building access to cultural healers and cultural healing
- Supporting the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values-based social and emotional wellbeing and mental health outcome measures
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are trained, employed, empowered and valued to work (and, where appropriate, lead) across all parts of the Australian mental health system
- Developing, and resourcing the implementation of, policies to ensure the Australian mental health system supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to practice culturally informed concepts of leadership

Pledge support

Pledging your organisation's or personal support for the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration is a first step in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in appropriate parts of the mental health system to improve our mental health and reduce suicide.

Follow the links on the main page of our website:

www.natsilmh.org.au

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health

Together we are strong

Thank you



www.natsilmh.org.au