

Media release to mark the launch of the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017- 2023

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARE KEY -- INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP RESPONDS TO THE NEW SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH FRAMEWORK

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health (NATSILMH) welcomed today's launch of the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017- 2023*.

The Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework aims to prevent mental health problems by building on Indigenous family, community and cultural strengths. It also aims to improve Indigenous people's access to culturally appropriate primary and other mental health care in the context of a rapidly changing mental health system.

NATSILMH member Mr Tom Brideson said:

Our social and emotional wellbeing concepts connect the mental health of individuals to the health of their family, community and their connection to culture. Further, as a population group, we are more exposed to stressors including poverty and racism. NATSILMH welcomes the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework's dedicated response to our unique mental health and wellbeing needs, and that the Framework was developed under Indigenous leadership.

NATSILMH member Professor Tom Calma AO, a longstanding advocate for Indigenous health equality, noted the connection between mental health and other indigenous health issues:

We know that psychological distress, mental health problems and suicide are reported at far higher rates in our communities. And this year we learned through the AIHW's burden of disease study that mental & substance use disorders are the single disease group causing the most burden of disease among us. This Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework then is also a vital piece of the puzzle to closing the health gap.

Mr Brideson said the launch of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework was also an opportunity to address a 'missing piece of the puzzle' in indigenous disadvantage:

Indigenous imprisonment rates cannot be meaningfully addressed without our mental health and wellbeing being improved. Neither can sustainable improvements to Australian Government Indigenous Affairs priorities such as community safety, employment and school attendance. Without mentally healthy families and communities, any attempts to improve these areas is likely to come undone. This Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework provides us with a blueprint for helping to achieve these important related goals.

All welcomed the launch of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework as an important first step - but cautioned that without funding and an effective implementation and accountability strategy it would achieve little.

Professor Calma said:

It's vital that the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework is fully funded and implemented under Indigenous leadership, and for it to guide the implementation of the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. We urge Australian governments to sit down with Indigenous mental health leaders as soon as possible to implement the Framework as a priority task in Indigenous Affairs.

END

- For the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework see:
- <https://nacchocommunique.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/mhsewb-framework-17-23.pdf>.
- Professor Calma is also a Co-chair, and Mr Brideson is a member, of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Advisory Group.
- For media enquiries and interview requests, please contact Mr Chris Holland on 0438 409 149.
- Available for interview, NATSILMH members Professor Tom Calma AO and Mr Tom Brideson
- For more information about NATSILMH: www.natsilmh.org.au.
- For more information on the appropriate reporting of mental illness and suicide see the Mindframe initiative: <http://www.mindframe-media.info>.
- Lifeline: 131 114
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
- Mensline: 1300 78 99 78