

MEDIA RELEASE
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Cutting Through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Policy Maze

On National Close the Gap Day, NATSILMH Launch Guidance on Implementing the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration and a Policy Concordance

The release of the *Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan* (Fifth Plan) and the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017–2023* (Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework) in late 2017 have set national direction in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention policy for the decade ahead.

NATSILMH member Professor Pat Dudgeon highlighted that:

For NATSILMH, the Fifth Plan's Australian government requirement to implement the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration (Declaration) is particularly welcome. NATSILMH launched the Declaration in 2015. It champions a 'best of both worlds' approach that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' choice of cultural and clinical treatment for mental health difficulties as the path to the best mental health outcomes. It further champions the presence and visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and leaders across the mental health system as a primary way of achieving this.

To mark National Close the Gap Day 2018, NATSILMH today launch a *Co-designing Health in Culture - Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration Implementation Guide* on its website. The Guide lists practical ways that all those working in the mental health system – whether at the national, state and territory, or Primary Health Network (PHN)/ Local Hospital Network –regional level – can implement the Declaration (and the Fifth Plan).

NATSILMH also launches a companion *Health in Culture - Policy Concordance* on its website today. NATSILMH member Ms Samantha Wild commented:

The value of the Policy Concordance is that it will now be possible to ascertain what documents as diverse as the Fifth Plan, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework, the Cultural Respect Framework and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan and the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration, among many others, require of Australian governments, PHNs and the mental health system overall. The Concordance aims to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the mental health space by giving them this important tool.

The Concordance also highlights the interconnectedness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention policy. NATSILMH Chair Mr Tom Brideson observed:

From the Policy Concordance, it is clear that a broad policy consensus has been achieved in the past decade, largely under Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and direction. As such, in the Concordance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have a clear source of guidance as to what to expect from Australian governments, PHNs and the mental health system, and – in particular - a comprehensive accountability tool.

At a time when the COAG Closing the Gap Framework is being refreshed, NATSILMH believe these two significant contributions to the social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention space will be a catalyst for significant action and investment to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and health outcomes.

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- For more information about NATSILMH see www.natsilmh.org.au.
- For the *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration* see: http://natsilmh.org.au/sites/default/files/gayaa_dhuwi_declaration_A4.pdf
- For the *Co-designing Health in Culture - Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration Implementation Guide* see <http://natsilmh.org.au/sites/default/files/Health%20in%20Culture%20GDD%20Implementation%20Guide.pdf>
- For the *Health in Culture - Policy Concordance* see <http://natsilmh.org.au/sites/default/files/NATSILMH%20Health%20in%20Culture%20Policy%20Concordance.pdf>
- For media enquiries and interview requests, please contact Mr Chris Holland on 0438 409 149.
- Available for media – NATSILMH Chair Mr Tom Brideson
- 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