

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **NATSILMH Call for Indigenous Mental Health Framework Action to Mark the Tenth Anniversary of the Apology**

Tuesday 13 February 2018

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health (NATSILMH) acknowledge the Stolen Generations' stories of survival and resilience against great adversity. It acknowledges their fight for justice that culminated in the 1997 *Bringing them home* (BTH) report, and the Apology in 2008, ten years ago today.

Indigenous Australia's story, overall, is one of great resilience and survival against the odds. Today, while many of our people, families and communities are thriving, a significant number are still challenged by psychological distress, trauma and mental health difficulties. Suicide among our peoples remains unacceptably high. It is clear that intergenerational trauma, including that of the Stolen Generations, underpins much of this.

Ten years after Apology, many of the BTH report recommendations remain unfulfilled. NATSILMH continues to support members of the Stolen Generations and their families' fight for compensation. While the recent ALP announcement of support for compensation for Northern Territory Stolen Generations is welcome, NATSILMH urges bipartisan and national support for compensation to all Stolen Generations members as a fundamental marker of justice in this area.

Healing, too, remains an ongoing need. NATSILMH supports the Healing Foundation in its exemplary healing work in Indigenous communities across Australia. It supports the Foundation's call for a further national response to heal intergenerational trauma.

To mark the Apology anniversary, NATSILMH calls for the development of targets and a funded implementation plan in partnership with Indigenous mental health leaders for the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017- 2023* (Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework).

This provides an Indigenous-developed roadmap to improving mental health and social and emotional wellbeing over the next six years. To have 'teeth', however, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework must be funded and implemented. It must not be allowed to gather dust on a shelf. This implementation must:

- Underpin the broader implementation of the *Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide*

*Prevention Plan* as it touches on Indigenous mental health, and, in particular, the role of Primary Health Networks in this area.

- Be a critical element in the COAG Closing the Gap Strategy 're-refresh'. We now have evidence of the major contribution of mental health issues to Indigenous health inequality. In particular, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 2011 burden of disease study reported that while chronic diseases as a group accounted for almost two-thirds of the Indigenous disease burden, the single disease group causing the most burden was mental health and substance use disorders (19 per cent of the total). Other major contributors to the total burden were injuries (which includes suicide - 15 percent).

NATSILMH's call aligns with Recommendation 5 of the Close the Gap Campaign's *Ten-Year Review* of the Closing the Gap Strategy.

Overall, NATSILMH call for the profile of Indigenous mental health and social and emotional wellbeing to be significantly raised across a refreshed Closing the Gap Strategy. In particular, the contribution Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services can make to improving Indigenous mental health and wellbeing must be acknowledged and funded, in line with the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework. Also critical is the training and/or upskilling of an Indigenous mental health workforce, and support for Indigenous mental health leadership in the mental health system in line with NATSILMH's *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration*.

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- For media enquiries and interview requests, please contact Mr Chris Holland on 0438 409 149.
- For the Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Framework see: <https://pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/indigenous-affairs/national-strategic-framework-mental-health-social-emotional-wellbeing-2017-23>
- For the *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration* see: [http://natsilmh.org.au/sites/default/files/gayaa\\_dhuwi\\_declaration\\_A4.pdf](http://natsilmh.org.au/sites/default/files/gayaa_dhuwi_declaration_A4.pdf)
- For more information about NATSILMH: [www.natsilmh.org.au](http://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