



Tuesday 30 June 2020

New report aimed at reducing Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides

The Coroners Court of Victoria has today released a new report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides to support prevention responses across the state.

The report, *Victorian suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, presents an analysis of all Indigenous passings identified as suicides in Victoria between 2009-2020, including socio-economic demographics and contextual stressors.

Suicide rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria are twice that of the state's non-Indigenous population, with young Indigenous Victorians being most at risk.

Accessible, accurate and culturally responsive data is vital to inform actions across the Indigenous mental health and suicide prevention sector.

Today's report will establish the foundation for ongoing annual reporting on Indigenous suicides by the Court, with a view to build a comprehensive public dataset over time.

With this information, communities and organisations working to prevent Indigenous suicides will be able to effectively target resources and programs designed to reduce deaths.

The Court has also provided the report to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, to contribute to the statewide review of mental health services and models of care.

The report was developed by the Coroners Koori Engagement Unit (CKEU) and Coroners Prevention Unit, utilising data from the Victorian Suicide Register, a real-time database containing information on all suicides reported to and investigated by Victorian coroners since 1 January 2000.

Since the establishment of the Koori led CKEU in 2019, the Court has enhanced identification and accuracy of information regarding current and historic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reportable passings.

Key findings in the report include:

- Between 1 January 2009 – 30 April 2020, there were 117 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides in Victoria.
- Of these 82 were male and 35 were female.
- At risk age groups for males were 25-34 (24.4%), 45-54 (24.4%), 35-44 (23.2%) and 18-24 (19.5%).
- Over 65% of suicides amongst females occurred in the age groups 18-24 (34.3%) and 25-34 (31.4%).
- Rates of suicide were higher in regional areas (59.8%) than in metropolitan areas (40.2%).
- Compared to non-Indigenous Victorians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had experienced higher rates of contact with the justice system, substance use and interpersonal stressors prior to passing.



Quotes from State Coroner, Judge John Cain

“Every suicide is a tragedy. The Coroners Court is committed to contributing to the reduction of these preventable deaths.”

“This report provides valuable insights about the suicide risks and stressors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.”

“With today’s report, we establish an ongoing, publicly accessible resource to support prevention programs from local communities, Aboriginal-led organisations and government.”

“The Royal Commission will also consider this important data, as they look to find opportunities to make systemic changes to save Victorian lives.”

Quotes from Troy Williamson, Manager, Coroners Koori Engagement Unit

“This is valuable data. It can inform existing programs and strengthen our communities’ culturally safe responses to Aboriginal wellbeing.”

“The Coroners Koori Engagement Unit is uniquely placed in Victoria to produce this significant resource.”

“The public database allows us to use our data to the greatest benefit and assist the many organisations actively working to reduced suicides in our communities across Victoria.”

A copy of the report can be accessed at:

https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/Coroners%20Court%20of%20Victoria%20-%20Suicides%20of%20Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20people%20report%20-%2030062020_0.pdf

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