

Thursday 20 January 2022

New report shows Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides nearly doubled in 2021

Concerning figures released today by the Coroners Court of Victoria show that the number of suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people increased by 75% in 2021.

The report - *Suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, 2018 – 2021* – presents comprehensive demographic data for the last four years and reveals that there were 35 suicides in 2021, compared to 20 in 2020, 21 in 2019 and 16 in 2018.

In Victoria, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently die by suicide at a rate three and a half times higher than the non-Indigenous population and are, on average, younger than non-Indigenous people who die by suicide.

Other key findings in the report include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides occur most frequently in regional areas.
- Suicide frequencies remain higher amongst males than females (66.3% male, 33.7% female).
- Males between 25–34 (27.9%), 45–54 (24.6%), and 35–44 (21.3%) continue to be most at risk.
- Amongst females, those aged 18–24 (38.7%) and 25–34 (25.8%) are the highest risk groups.
- The stressors are complex, including contact with the justice system, insecure access to accommodation, family violence, and difficulties in accessing support services immediately prior to passing.

This is the third data release on suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria by the Coroners Court. The reports aim to provide accessible, accurate and culturally responsive information to guide actions across the Indigenous mental health and suicide prevention sector.

Developed by the Coroners Koori Engagement Unit (CKEU) and Coroners Prevention Unit, the report utilises data from the Victorian Suicide Register, a real-time database recording all suicides reported to and investigated by Victorian coroners since 1 January 2000.

Since the Koori led CKEU was established in 2019, the Court has enhanced identification and accuracy of information for current and historic reportable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander passings – specifically with regard to data from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021.

The Court's December 2021 monthly suicide report presenting data on all suicides in Victoria for 2021 has also been released today. The report shows that suicides rates in Victoria overall decreased with 683 suicides in 2021, compared to 712 in 2020, 700 in 2019.

Quotes from the State Coroner, Judge John Cain

"It is deeply concerning to see the suicide rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria rise so sharply, while the overall Victorian suicide rate has gone down."

"In releasing this data today, the Coroners Court aims to support community-led organisations and government services that can strengthen prevention networks."

"Coroners are also currently conducting thorough investigations into these passings, to develop recommendations that can drive positive change."



Quotes from Troy Williamson (Yuin), Manager, Coroners Koori Engagement Unit

"The increase in suicides of Aboriginal Victorians is heartbreaking. It is a reminder of the systemic inequalities our communities face and this report needs to be used to drive change for our people."

"Our communities are hurting. Although confronting, I hope this report can start conversations that empower our people."

"Suicide is complex and has many layers. It is vital that barriers to seeking support are dismantled and culturally competent practices are put in place to save lives."

A copy of the Suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, 2018 – 2021 can be found here: <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/victorian-suicides-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-victoria-2018-2021>

A copy of the Coroners Court Monthly Suicide Report for December 2021 can be found here: <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/coroners-court-monthly-suicide-report-december-2021-update>