



## First Nations suicides remain high in Victoria according to new coronial report

A report released by the Coroners Court of Victoria today reveals that, despite a slight decline in 2022, the number of suicides amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria continued to be high.

The report - *Suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, 2018–2022* – is the first release of full year 2022 data on suicides amongst First Nations peoples in Victoria and includes demographic and contextual information including stressors.

In 2022, 18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria passed by suicide - a reduction compared to 34 in 2021. However, in the context of longer term data, this remains a troubling rate.

As the report shows, 108 Indigenous people have passed by suicide between 2018 and 2022 compared to 3429 non-Indigenous people. This represents a rate of approximately 27.4 suicides per 100,000 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the time period, compared to a rate of 10.6 per 100,000 for non-Indigenous people.

Other key findings in the report include:

- In 2022, the majority of suicides occurred in the first half of the year - following on from the elevated frequency in the second half of 2021.
- During 2018–2022, suicides were more prevalent in younger age groups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with 58.3% of the passings being people aged under 35 years (compared to 32.1% in the non-Indigenous people).
- The average age of male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who passed by suicide was 36.1 years, compared to 46 years in non-Indigenous males; for female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the average age was 29.8 years, compared to 46.1 years in non-Indigenous females from 2018–2022.
- From 2018–2022, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides occurred more frequently in regional areas (52.8%) than metropolitan areas (47.2%). For non-Indigenous people, 65.7% of suicides occurred in metropolitan Melbourne.
- Over 2018–2022, suicides were most prevalent in males between 25–34 (22.2%), 45–54 (22.2%), and 35–44 (16.7%).
- For females, suicides most commonly occurred in those aged 25–34 (27.8%) between 2018–2022.

The report also provides contextual analysis of passings between 2018–2021 to better understand potential stressors. This information is obtained by coroners in their briefs of evidence; briefs for most of the passings in 2022 continue to be compiled.

In the period 2018–2021, there were 90 passings. Analysis shows that stressors contributing to these passings included contact with the justice system proximal to passing, family conflict and violence, substance use and mental ill health.

This is the fourth Coroners Court data report on suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria – the first report was released in June 2020. The reports aim to provide accessible,



accurate and culturally responsive information to assist program design in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention sectors.

Developed by the Coroners Aboriginal Engagement Unit (CAEU) 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 Aboriginal led CAEU was established in 2019, the Court has enhanced identification and accuracy of information for current and historic reportable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander passings from 1 January 2018 to the present.

### **Quotes from the State Coroner, Judge John Cain**

*While it is encouraging to see a reduction in the number of passings by suicide in 2022, the overall suicide rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remains worryingly higher than that of the state's non-Indigenous population.*

*Many of these passings are preventable– we will continue releasing this data to support targeted approaches to suicide prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.*

### **Quotes from Jessica Gobbo (Wardandi & Bibbulmun) Acting Manager, Coroners Aboriginal Engagement Unit**

*The findings of this report highlight that more needs to be done to strengthen approaches to Aboriginal health and wellbeing.*

*While the content of this report is highly distressing, this information gives agency to our community and Aboriginal-led organisations to understand the issues contributing to passings by suicide and develop culturally safe supports to save lives.*

A copy of the *Suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, 2018 – 2022* can be found here: <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/suicides-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-victoria-2018-2022>