



Thursday 7 March 2024

## Suicide rates of First Nations people in Victoria still almost three times higher than state's non-Indigenous population

A new report released today by the Coroners Court of Victoria shows that from 2018–2023, suicide rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, on average, continued to be almost three times higher than that of the state's non-Indigenous population.

The report - *Suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, 2018–2023* – is the first release of full year 2023 data on suicides amongst First Nations peoples in Victoria and includes demographic and contextual information including potential stressors.

In the period 2018–2023, 134 Indigenous people passed by suicide compared to 4183 non-Indigenous people. This is a rate of approximately 28.4 suicides per 100,000 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, compared to a rate of 10.8 per 100,000 for non-Indigenous people.

The data also shows suicides are far more prevalent in younger age groups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For the period 2018–2023:

- 53.7% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide passings were people aged under 35 years, compared to 31.8% of non-Indigenous suicides.
- the average age of male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who passed by suicide was 37.4 years, compared to 45.9 years for non-Indigenous males.
- the average age of female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who passed by suicide was 29.3 years, compared to 45.8 years for non-Indigenous females.

Other key findings in the report include:

- In 2023, 28 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria passed by suicide compared to 18 in 2022 and 34 in 2021.
- Of the 28 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who passed by suicide in 2023, 22 were males and 6 were females.
- From 2018–2023, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides occurred more frequently in regional areas (55.2%) than metropolitan areas (44.8%). For non-Indigenous people, 65.9% of suicides occurred in metropolitan Melbourne.
- Over 2018–2023, suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men was most prevalent in those aged 25–34 (29.2%), 45–54 (26%), and 35–44 (21.9%).
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, suicides most commonly occurred in those aged 18-24 (36.8%) and 25–34 (34.2%) between 2018–2023.

The report also provides contextual analysis of 104 passings between 2018–2022, to better understand potential stressors. This information is obtained by coroners in their briefs of evidence; briefs for most of the passings in 2023 continue to be compiled.

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Analysis of the 104 passing showed potential contributing stressors included mental ill health, family conflict and violence, contact with the justice system and substance use.

This is the fifth 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 Acting State Coroner Paresa Spanos**

*It is concerning that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities remain disproportionately impacted by suicide loss in Victoria.*

*Suicide prevention requires a multifaceted approach – this issue cannot be addressed without safe and transparent conversations based on publicly available, up-to-date information.*

*In releasing this data, the Court continues to support prevention initiatives at every level – from community-led organisations to government services.*

A copy of the report can be found here:

<https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/suicides-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-victoria-2018-2023>

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