

Derbarl Yerrigan

12 participants

This consultation was part of a statewide consultation process to inform the development of a State Suicide Prevention Plan. Participants were also invited to make individual submissions to the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention at www.mcsp.org.au.

Organisations represented:

- AADS
- City of Melville
- DCP Aboriginal Support Worker
- Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service
- DHYS
- Outcare Inc.
- Yorgum – Building Solid families

1. WHAT ARE PARTICULAR FACTORS THAT MAY BE CONTRIBUTING TO SUICIDE RISK IN THIS REGION?

Group 1

- Lack of hope (what's the point?)
- Significant Loss (Close relations – family abandonment).
- Lack of support – (Grandmothers)
 - Social Isolation
 - Esp Culturally appropriate support.
 - e.g. ARAFMI – no Aboriginal equivalent.
- Stigma (?)
- Lack of sustainable funding.
- Not always chasing \$\$\$.
- Still a lot to do – needs sustainable continuous effort.
- Aboriginal agencies under resourced.
- Needs holistic approach which can be limited if funding is narrowly focussed.
- Boredom – drinking – thinking.
- Don't know how to cope with life.
 - Drug and alcohol
 - Not being loved
- Substance abuse
 - Speed
 - Ice
 - Heroin and speed (hot shot)

Group 2

- Marijuana (often rather than prescription drugs).
- Every person who suicides is different
 - Sexual abuse
 - Relationship breakdown
 - Dropping out of treatment (even with support)
- Tokenism leads to frustration.
- People feeling unloved.
- Broken relationships.
- Isolation – even in a crowd.
- Grief of death and dying overwhelms family and support capacity.
- Dealing with suicide.
- Conflict in families.
- Blaming.
- No support networks for men esp
 - Men often hold it in (pain))
 - Role of other men (uncles etc) very important)
Protective
 - Women’s role also important (men learn from women)
 - Shame can come from what men don’t know
 - Education)
 - knowledge needs to be practical)
 - skills) protective
 - and relate to life)
- Enormity of the loss
 - Land
 - Family
 - Respect
- Stolen Generation Shame –
 - You feel it even though it is Government shame.
- Having mental breakdown – shame in community.
- Colours/gangs – peer pressure.
- Drug use.
- Crime.
- Injustice of racism.
- Young People with poor skills to cope with distress
 - Internalise - mental health
 - Act out - corrections
- Denial.
- So much trauma – carers are overloaded.
- Racism is still rife.
- Comes from all kinds of families (big/small) (good/not good).

- Suicide 'glorified' – pacts.
- Daring/risk taking behaviour.
- Negative music and TV.
- Martyrdom.
- Loss of cultural identity – know where we belong.

2. WHAT'S BEING DONE?

Group 1

- Education Bus (AADS).
- Too solid program – being piloted TICHR.
- G.R.O.W. – Voluntary Self Help Program.
- Stolen generation counsellor positions vacant.
- Canadian Model –
 - Healing centres
 - Restorative justice process
 - Individual compensation
- Yorgum has 'healing' focus in counselling process.
- Koori court in Victoria.
- Changes to Centrelink need to be integrated with proactive approaches to engage Aboriginal people.

Group 2

"Protection"

- Even the smallest step to coping makes the difference.
- Education most important – children need to be encouraged.
- Knowing you are loved – unconditionally.
- Religion is a source of strength.
- Focussing on all the things you can be grateful for.
- Good friends – someone you can have a grizzle with.
- A network of people you can rely on.
- Family – extended family – kinship.
- Spirituality –
 - Sense of connection
 - Source of hope
- Aboriginal Workers.
- Good supervision –
 - Professional
 - Personal
- Religion –
 - Point of connection
 - Source of values/strengths
- Pride in Aboriginality – highly protective against racism.

- Being proud of what you are .
- Getting older and wiser, seeking professional help and good communication.
- Getting the whole family together when someone's having problems.
- Awareness of symptoms in the community.

3. WHAT MORE NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

Group 1

To make 'mainstream' services more effective.

- Often only hire one Aboriginal staff.
- Cultural awareness training often clashes with dominant culture.
- Consultation – ownership.
- Practical wisdom and skills are discounted by people with more bits of paper.
- Need to develop mutual understanding of different ways of working.
Working top down rather than bottom up – getting it so wrong!
- Rather than bring in the army should be putting people on the ground to work with communities.
- Need to be able to work from the heart.
- Need to work connected not as an 'industry'.

Group 2

- More support for parenting –
 - Babies having babies
 - Parenting 'interrupted' not passed on.
- Commitment – give it back!
- Aboriginal G.R.O.W.
- To identify drug dealers.
- Debarl Yerrigan should be responsible for Mental Health (Aboriginal).
- Aboriginal Court (Broader than Noongar) need to get community involved (whole of WA).
- Indigenous specific youth mental health. Mismatch between mainstream service models and indigenous youth mental health needs.
- More support for counsellors.
- Acknowledgement of trauma experienced by Aboriginal people.
- Healing process needed (similar to Canada).
- Need the bureaucrats to understand the importance of healing work.
Needs to be long term and stable funding basis.
- Vietnam Vets – similar impacts much better resourcing.
- Package –
 - Lobbying
 - Development link
 - Therapeutic services
- Safe Places.

- Healing places.
- Based on recognition of past traumas.
- Teaching to fish.
- People need to listen and respect people in the community and their wisdom.
- More money for wilderness programs
 - Men's camps
 - Family camps
 - Connection to country
 - Shifts to positive experiences
- More follow up after programs.
- 'Merit' certificates should be renamed 'cultural awareness'.
- Referrals need to be followed up.
- Healing centres (drop in) – somewhere you can go when distressed.
- Need to educate family members re mental health.
- Respite for families under stress. Recommendation: establish Aboriginal suicide prevention working G.R.O.W. or MCSP with strong grassroots representation.
- Aboriginal SP strategy required as a direct outcome of dispossession (land, family cultural spirituality).
- Starting points.