

Policy Concordance: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health, Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



The Centre of Best Practice in
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
Suicide Prevention



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In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention, government policies are critically important because they influence what services are available and how they are delivered – with enormous consequences for people’s lives.

This Concordance is a collection of guides to policy and decision-making at national and State/Territory levels. It includes:

- profiles of key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, government departments and agencies and other organisations with an important role in policy processes
- formal policies that describe governments’ commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, and how they intend to deliver on them
- other essential documents – for example community submissions to policy processes and the most influential research reports.

The Concordance is for anyone seeking information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention policy in any part of Australia, including government and ministerial policy staff, researchers, service providers and community organisations. The focus is on current policy documents. However some older publications are

included where they have been particularly influential, and policies and strategies are included after their intended finish date if they have not yet been replaced and are still guiding practice.

Social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention are complex and multi-faceted and do not fall neatly into a single policy domain. This Concordance focuses on the organisations, processes and policies most directly related to these issues, acknowledging that important policy work also takes place in other domains – including education, justice and family services. The Concordance is a living resource and the CBPATSISP welcomes suggestions for additional inclusions.

This section of the Concordance focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention policy in Western Australia. Chapters on the other States and Territories, and national policy, can be found at cbpatsisp.org.au.

Key organisations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

Organisation	Purpose
Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia	<p>The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) is the leading authority for Aboriginal health in Western Australia, supporting and acting on behalf of 23 Member Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) across the state. It is WA's NACCHO affiliate and a Member of the Coalition of Peaks.</p> <p>Central to AHCWA's work is the promotion of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Model of Care, built around the delivery of comprehensive, holistic and culturally secure primary health care services that support Aboriginal people to enjoy the same level of health and wellbeing as all Western Australians. AHCWA leads and influences the state and national Aboriginal policy agenda and grows and advances the capacity and capability of AHCWA and its Members for long term sustainability.</p>

Government

Organisation	Purpose
Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia (AACWA)	<p>The Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia (AACWA) was established under Section 18 (1) of the <i>Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972</i> to advise the WA Government. Its purpose is to build genuine, respectful and reciprocal relationships between Aboriginal people and the WA Government to achieve better life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children.</p> <p>Secretariat responsibility sits within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the AACWA meets up to six times per year to provide advice on a range of policy matters.</p>
Aboriginal Health	<p>Aboriginal Health, a state-wide office within WA Health, is responsible for facilitating a collaborative and coordinated approach within WA Health's public health system to improve health outcomes for all Aboriginal people living in Western Australia. Aboriginal Health provides high level strategic leadership including advice for matters which directly and indirectly impact health outcomes.</p>
Mental Health Commission of Western Australia	<p>The Mental Health Commission was established in 2010 to plan and purchase mental health and drug and alcohol treatment and support services, health promotion campaigns and early intervention programs. It also has roles in research, policy and system reform. The Commission replaced the previous Mental Health Division of the WA Department of Health and later amalgamated with the Drug and Alcohol Office, recognising that drug and alcohol and mental health problems often co-exist. The Commission funds but does not directly provide services.</p>

Policy documents

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Date	Title	Organisation	About
2015-2030	WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030	WA Department of Health	<p>The Framework seeks to guide the approach that WA Health, other government agencies, non-government organisations and the community adopts to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. It recognises the need to respond in a coordinated, flexible and practical way to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people and the importance of community capacity to support prevention and early intervention.</p> <p>The Framework includes six strategic directions that support evidence-based best practice, re-empowerment of Aboriginal people, and a service system in which the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people is everybody's business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote good health across the life course • Prevention and early intervention • A culturally respectful and non-discriminatory health system • Individual, family and community wellbeing • A strong, skilled and growing Aboriginal health workforce • Equitable and timely access to the best quality and safe care. <p>It applies these directions across priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing risk factors • Managing illness better • Building community capacity • Better health systems • Aboriginal workforce development • Data, evidence and research • Addressing the social determinants of health. <p>An evaluation of the first phase of implementation of the Framework has been published: Build the foundations An evaluation of the first five years of the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030.</p>
2020-2030	Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal Health 2020–2030	WA Department of Health	<p>The Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal Health 2020–2030 seeks to build on the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030 by focusing on the effectiveness rather than the volume of interventions and services.</p> <p>The Framework is designed to guide the Department of Health and Aboriginal community-based health service providers to better design, deliver and evaluate programs and services through an outcomes focused model, and to build the overall capacity and responsiveness of the WA health system to meet both the clinical and cultural needs of Aboriginal people, families and communities.</p>
TBC	Western Australian Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy	WA Department of Health / AACWA	<p>The Mental Health Commission will coordinate and implement WA's first Aboriginal-specific suicide prevention strategy for Western Australia, which will include a series of regional plans that prioritise Aboriginal-led and locally endorsed initiatives based on a culturally informed social and emotional wellbeing approach.</p>

2021-2025	Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Regional Plan	Aboriginal Regional Governance Group (established as an interim mechanism to oversee the Regional Plan)	<p>The Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plan, aligned to the Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021–2025, identifies practical, place-based approaches to prevent and reduce the impacts of self-harm and suicidal behaviours for Aboriginal people and communities in the Kimberley region. The Plan sets out recommendations, with activities and next steps for implementation. They draw on the extensive work done by Aboriginal people and communities throughout the Kimberley over many years, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial (KASPT) • the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (2017) (ATSISPEP) • Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing (2020) • The Coroner’s inquest into the deaths of Thirteen Children and Young Persons in the Kimberley Region (2017) • The Elders’ Report into Preventing Indigenous Self-Harm and Youth Suicide (2014) • Kimberley Empowered Young Leaders Forums (2019) • Learnings from the message stick (2016) • Statement of Intent on Aboriginal youth suicide (2019).
2022	Infant, Child and Adolescent (ICA) Taskforce Implementation Program Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Model		<p>The Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Model is a contemporary workforce model that will inform the roles, responsibilities, career pathways and supports for AMHWs and Senior AMHWs. The model is needed to empower AMHWs in their role, including defining and guiding the care they will provide to Aboriginal children, their family and carers. AMHWs will be instrumental in championing the Infant, Child and Adolescent Culturally Safe Care Principles at the frontline and ensuring they are applied in practice. It is essential that the roles and 4 I Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Model responsibility are defined and aligned to the work that they perform. Learnings from current AMHWs have shown that in order to perform their roles effectively and best support Aboriginal children, their families, and the community, AMHWs must have confidence that they are valued for the expertise they bring and are respected by their peers and leaders within the sector. This model intends to support this and promote respect and partnership across the ICA mental health system.</p>

Whole of community

Date	Title	Organisation	About
2021-2025	Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021–2025	Mental Health Commission of Western Australia	<p>Building on existing programs and aligned with State and Commonwealth policy directions, the Suicide Prevention Framework 2025 supports the WA Government's existing commitments to tackling suicide and sets the direction for future action. It brings the voices of the community together to provide understanding and guidance for individuals, communities, private and non-government organisations and the government.</p> <p>The Framework includes a chapter on Aboriginal suicide prevention (p37) and a commitment to facilitate the development of a Western Australian Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy prioritising culturally secure approaches to social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention, with dedicated regional plans.</p>
2021-2025	Western Australian Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2021 - 2025 Consultative draft October 2019	Mental Health Commission of Western Australia	<p>The Western Australian Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2021 - 2025 was drafted to operationalise the Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021–2025. The consultative draft includes a section on suicide prevention for Aboriginal people (p27) strongly linked to SEWB principles and the Gayaa Dhuwi Declaration.</p> <p>However, stakeholders responded negatively on release of the consultation draft to the lack of clear targets in the document, which has not been finalised or released.</p>
2020	Think Mental Health	Mental Health Commission of Western Australia	<p>The Suicide Prevention Public Education Program's <i>Think Mental Health</i> Campaign is a key initiative of the State-wide suicide prevention strategy, Suicide Prevention 2020, under Action Area One - Greater public awareness and united action across the community.</p> <p>The Think Mental Health education campaign is part of a comprehensive approach in Western Australia that aims to build mental health and wellbeing and reduce mental health issues with a view to reducing Western Australia's suicide rate. It supports other initiatives to prevent and reduce suicide in Western Australia.</p>
2022-2026	Bilateral Schedule on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention	Western Australian Government, Commonwealth Government	<p>The Bilateral Schedule is the Western Australian agreement under the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, which sets out the shared intention of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to work in partnership to improve the mental health of all Australians, reduce the rate of suicide toward zero, and ensure the sustainability and enhance the services of the Australian mental health and suicide prevention system.</p> <p>The Bilateral Schedule include WA-specific commitments including funding allocations and sites for service expansion.</p>