



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network

## Indigenous leaders welcome \$5.5 million social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention initiatives

Indigenous leaders welcomed Health Minister Greg Hunt's \$4.5 million announcement of *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia* – a national independent and inclusive Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention leadership body – at a Parliament House Poche Indigenous Health Network (PIHN) breakfast this morning.

Further welcome was given to Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt's announcement of almost \$1 million towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network within the Black Dog Institute to provide a national representative voice for Indigenous people with lived experience of suicide.

PIHN Chair and Patron, and founder of the Close the Gap Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality, Professor Tom Calma AO said:

*"I thank the Prime Minister and Ministers Hunt and Wyatt for both announcements today and their recognition that the overall Indigenous health and life expectancy gap cannot be closed without significant focus on strengthening Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing and mental health, and on reducing our suicide rates"*

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health (NATSILMH) Chair Mr Tom Brideson said:

*"I add my thanks to the Australian Government for these announcements today. Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia will provide an inclusive, representative and complementary voice for the Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention sector. It will, in particular, focus on implementation of the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration developed by NATSILMH and that Australian governments are required to implement by the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.*

*Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia will be a national advocate for a 'best of both worlds' approach to our wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention, encompassing cultural and clinical elements to benefit all our diverse communities: remote, regional and urban, and including our young people, our LGBTIQ, and our Stolen Generations.*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network Head, Ms Leilani Darwin said:

*"The Black Dog Institute and I are excited to establish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network to inform, influence and enhance culturally-appropriate suicide prevention activities and mental health support programs that work for our First Nations people."*

*"The Lived Experience Network will be the conduit that links existing networks together and mobilises, connects and enables Indigenous people with lived experience of suicide to have a seat at*

*the national table and to help deliver culturally fitting and safe Indigenous -led suicide prevention and mental wellbeing reform.”*

Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association Chair Ms Tania Dalton said:

*“I am particularly pleased that the work of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia, supported by the Lived Experience Network, will include leading an inclusive development process for a dedicated Indigenous suicide prevention plan with a strong youth component. “*

In closing, Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATSISP) Director Professor Pat Dudgeon affirmed:

*“Indigenous leadership – inclusive and accountable to our communities - is critical if efforts to close the mental health outcome and suicide rate gaps are to be effective. With today’s announcements Indigenous leadership of Indigenous mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention is - at last - cemented into the national policy space,”*

*“I take this opportunity to pay tribute to 40-years and more of tireless work by Indigenous leaders in this space. In particular, I acknowledge the work of NATSILMH since 2013. The naming of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia after its Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration is a testament to NATSILMH’s influence.”*

*“Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia and the Lived Experience Network will also promote a new generation of leaders in this space to ensure indigenous leadership of the sector into the future.”*

**END**

- **For media enquiries on for Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia:** Tanja Hirvonen (CBATSISP) and Professor Tom Calma are available for and interview requests. Please contact Jessica Weiland, 0468969041 or via [Jessica.weiland@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Jessica.weiland@health.nsw.gov.au)
- **For media enquiries on The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network:** Leilani Darwin is available for interview requests. Please contact: Natalie Craig 02 9382 3712 or 0448 144 999 or via [Natalie.craig@blackdog.org.au](mailto:Natalie.craig@blackdog.org.au),
- For more information about NATSILMH and the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration see: <https://natsilmh.org.au/>
- For more information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Network see: <https://blackdoginstitute.org.au/lived-experience-network>
- For more information about CBPATSISP see: <https://www.cbpatsisp.com.au/>
- For more information about AIPA see: <http://www.indigenouspsychology.com.au/>
- The Poche Indigenous Health Network is a network of Poche centres, focused on closing the gap in life expectancy and seeking solutions to address the complex health issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For more information see: <http://pochehealth.edu.au/>
- For reporting guidelines around mental ill-health and suicide see *Mindframe*: [www.mindframe.org.au](http://www.mindframe.org.au)
- For information around national suicide prevention see *Life in Mind*: [www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au](http://www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au)

#### **Help-seeking**

- Lifeline: 131 114
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
- Mensline: 1300 78 99 78