



IAHA MEDIA RELEASE

Calls to support recommendations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples mental health during COVID-19

Available for Immediate Release

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The increases in positive COVID-19 cases is a strong reminder that we remain within the 'first wave' of the pandemic and that ongoing care for mental health and social and emotional wellbeing is crucial, particularly as parts of Australia cope with a reintroduction of necessary public health restrictions.

Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), the national organisation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce, are committed to supporting the good health and social and emotional wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, our people, families and communities, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The long-term impacts of COVID-19 on people's mental health and wellbeing will be significant and ongoing. Each individual has been uniquely impacted, with most Australians now having a COVID-19 related example of their studies, work or finances being impacted, not able to visit loved ones, attend funerals or attend celebrations, and the list goes on.

IAHA were among a number of individuals and organisations who contributed to the development of an independent and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led report highlighting how COVID-19 may exacerbate existing challenges to the good mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The **National COVID-19 Pandemic Issues Paper on Mental Health and Wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples** details five key recommendations focused on the right to self-determination; the health and mental health workforce; the social and cultural determinants of health; digital and telehealth inclusion, with immediate attention to an Indigenous helpline; and evaluation that includes Indigenous data sovereignty.

Each of the recommendations list several community-led and strength-based actions required to protect the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families, and communities.

IAHA Chief Executive Officer and contributor to the issues paper, Donna Murray, said:
"A consistent message from the report is the need for investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions. To date, government funding has largely been directed toward mainstream services and organisations, who are less able to provide culturally safe and informed care."



The growth, support, and ongoing development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing workforce, requires urgent attention and investment.

Access to culturally safe and responsive support is as essential for our workforce as ever, considering the range of challenges they are facing and the strength and support they provide our communities.

IAHA call for governments to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, our leading mental health and social and emotional wellbeing experts, and our organisations, to implement the recommendations of the Issues Paper in full.

The Issues Paper can be accessed [here](#).

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Enquiries:

Charlie Giles

P: (02) 6285 1010

E: charlie@iaha.com.au