



**Gayaa Dhuwi
(Proud Spirit)
Australia**



IAHA

**Indigenous Allied
Health Australia**

Peaks Call for Recognition and Resourcing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SEWB Workforce

Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia and Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) are calling for urgent national action to recognise, resource, and embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, suicide prevention and postvention workforce as a core pillar of Australia's mental health system. In a joint [position paper](#) released today, the two peaks set out clear, actionable recommendations to governments to deliver culturally strong, community-led reform as a blueprint for transformational change.

The call comes after the release of the Productivity Commission's *National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Interim Report*, which finds that the Agreement is "not fit for purpose" and failing to deliver systemic reform. The Agreement rightfully identifies workforce as a key enabler and pushes governments to empower the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce within this system, by implementing coordinated action, and reporting on workforce growth and distribution. The position paper's recommendations align with these commitments, supported by two existing national workforce strategies, the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021-2031* and the *National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022-2032*.

Professor Tom Calma AO, Patron of Gayaa Dhuwi and IAHA said: "The Productivity Commission's findings highlight that the current Agreement is not delivering the reforms, workforce or services our communities need. This position paper provides a clear pathway forward, one that puts the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, suicide prevention and postvention workforce at the centre of transforming our mental health system in ways that are culturally strong and community-led".

Rachel Fishlock, Chief Executive Officer of Gayaa Dhuwi said: "The evidence is clear, the policies are in place, and the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement give us the authorising environment. Now is the time to formally recognise, count, and sustainably fund our social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, and suicide prevention workforce as a core pillar of Australia's mental health system, ensuring culturally led, community-based care is at the centre of reform".

Donna Murray, Chief Executive Officer of IAHA said: "We need conditions that enable safe, effective and culturally responsive practice, with cultural governance and knowledge systems embedded and valued alongside clinical governance and biomedical understandings of mental health. This includes shared understandings of workforce roles and funding models that empower the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce – who possess unique knowledges and experiences - to operate in a culturally centred way. These proposed reforms build on the strengths of our workforce and our communities, and we are ready to work in partnership to implement them without delay".

The position paper calls for:

1. Formal recognition of the social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention workforce in national frameworks.
2. Investment in workforce development across community, lived experience, and professional roles informed by the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021- 2031*
3. Accurate and timely collection and reporting of disaggregated and comprehensive workforce data.
4. Collaborate commissioning and funding reform to enable cultural ways of working and to respond to the needs and preference of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
5. Investment in locally designed, interdisciplinary teams centred on cultural knowledge and community authority, supported by development of further knowledge and understanding of their value and impact.
6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance embedded in all workforce planning, funding, program delivery and evaluation.

Gayaa Dhuwi and IAHA remind the public and media outlets of the importance of responsible and culturally respectful reporting when it comes to issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This includes adhering to the [Good Yarn Guidelines](#) and ensuring that crisis support services are promoted effectively. 24/7 crisis helpline services available to the community include:

- **13 YARN (139276)** – a dedicated support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- **Brother to Brother crisis line (1800 435 799)** – providing support for men
- **Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800)** – for young people in need of support

For further information, and resources, or to access support services, please visit www.gayaadhuwi.org.au.

About Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia

Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, and suicide prevention. As a community-controlled organisation, it is governed and controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts and peak bodies, working to promote collective excellence in mental healthcare.

About Indigenous Allied Health Australia

IAHA is a national, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled and member-based allied health workforce organisation. As leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, training, and workforce development, IAHA support and elevate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce to lead transformative change across health and wellbeing systems, grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, for better health and social and emotional wellbeing.

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