

MEDIA RELEASE

HEADSPACE CAMPAIGN EMPOWERS ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER YOUNG PEOPLE TO MANAGE MENTAL HEALTH

19 August 2021

headspace Darwin and headspace Katherine are proud to join with communities across Australia in a landmark campaign that empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to take charge of their social and emotional wellbeing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 24 and under are three times more likely than other young people to die by suicide¹. Meanwhile, the Northern Territory has the highest rate of suicide in the country². Responding to this urgent need for support, the 'Take a Step' suite of resources encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to recognise the signs that's something's not right – and provides small, practical steps towards feeling better.

The materials have been developed in partnership with community members from across Australia, including a reference group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with lived experience of mental ill-health.

headspace Cultural Practice & Engagement Coordinator William Oui described 'Take a Step' as a unique and powerful approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing.

"This is a campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who understand that it's important to yarn up and seek help when you're not feeling too deadly," William, a Torres Strait Islander man, said.

"Take a Step understands the need to think about wellbeing holistically, considering the ways our culture, identity, place and spirituality can make us feel strong."

Anglicare NT offers mental health and wellbeing support through headspace centres in Darwin and Katherine. CEO, Dave Pugh wants more to be done for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

"The rates of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people dying by suicide is unacceptable. We are proud to be part of this campaign, so that more young people can identify the signs when things aren't right," said Dave.

Jade Gooding, Anglicare NT Executive Manager Mental Health said, "Listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and responding to community needs is a crucial part of our work."

"The current lockdown could be a potential trigger, but support is available. Both headspace Darwin and headspace Katherine are continuing to safely deliver services at the hubs and online to support young people during these tough times."

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/populations-age-groups/suicide-indigenous-australians>

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/populations-age-groups/suicide-indigenous-australians>

Ngarrindjeri woman Nikia Bailey, 21, was part of the headspace Wominjeka youth reference group that led the development of Take a Step. She said the campaign gives young people like her the tools to spot when something's wrong and start getting back on track.

"I know this will start some important conversations in my community and will hopefully encourage more young people like me to take the first steps towards better social and emotional wellbeing," Nikia said.

"There is still a lot of stigma about mental health in the community and that can make it difficult to ask for help.

"But I want people to understand how our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures can empower us to take care of our social and emotional wellbeing.

"When I am having a hard time, my connections with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples help me understand that I am not alone. We have a shared experience and can support one another."

headspace CEO Jason Trethowan said supporting the health and wellbeing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people was a priority for headspace.

"headspace is proud to deliver this important message to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples," he said.

"We are dedicated to supporting young people on their social and emotional wellbeing journey. We want to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to understand what social and emotional wellbeing means and when support might be needed.

"We commend Minister for Indigenous Australians the Hon. Ken Wyatt MP and the Department of Health for recognising the need for a dedicated initiative such as this and for trusting headspace to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to deliver this work."

From today, 'Take a Step' television and radio advertisements will broadcast nationally and in select cinemas.

A suite of print and online resources for young people, and for family and friends with a young person in their lives, are also available from today.

'Take a Step' is an initiative of headspace and funded by the Department of Health and Minister for Indigenous Australians.

To learn more, [visit headspace.org.au/takeastep](https://headspace.org.au/takeastep).

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If you, or someone you know, is going through a tough time, you can contact:

- headspace Darwin: 8931 5999
- headspace Katherine: 8912 4000
- NT Mental Health Line: 1800 682 288

Some other helpful resources include:

- eheadspace: <https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace>
- Lifeline (24/7): 131 114
- Kids Helpline (24/7): 1800 551 800
- Beyondblue (24/7): 1300 224 636
- Brother to Brother (24/7 Support for Aboriginal Men): 1800 435 799
- MensLine (24/7): 1300 789 978

Note to the editor

Take A Step campaign encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are to notice signs their social and emotional wellbeing needs attention. Those signs include:

- frequent feelings of stress, sadness and nervousness
- a lack of motivation
- restlessness
- interrupted sleep, a change in sleep patterns or frequent fatigue
- feeling disconnected from loved ones
- an inability to switch off from technology and social media
- using alcohol and other drugs more than normal
- changes in work or study habits

Among the steps the campaign encourages are:

- eating nutritious food and drinking enough water
- Limiting use of alcohol and other drugs
- Exploring the places, people and activities that make them feel dead.
- Yarning up with someone you trust
- Setting goals is a great way to start building a sense of purpose
- Physically being on or in your strong place: that might be on Country, returning to your hometown, even sitting in your room
- Connecting with a local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander health service
- Exploring your culture however you can: yarn with an Elder, learn from your family about your mob and their places, create traditional art, do research on the internet
- Finding ways to connect to nature

About headspace

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25-year olds. Each year, headspace helps thousands of young people access vital support through our headspace services in 138 communities across Australia, our online and phone counselling services, our vocational services, and our presence in schools. headspace can help young people with mental health, physical health (including sexual health) alcohol and other drug services, and work and study support. For locations of headspace services, as well as factsheets and resources for young people and their families and friends, please visit the headspace website: headspace.org.au

FOR COMMENTS OR INTERVIEWS

To arrange interviews with Jade Gooding, Executive Manager Mental Health, please contact Anglicare NT Media team.

MEDIA CONTACT

Lila Loveard – 08 8985 0000 or 0409 222 143

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