



Media Release

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beyondblue backs National Close the Gap Day campaign

Improving social and emotional wellbeing and access to mental health supports and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a vital step in closing the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

This National Close the Gap Day, *beyondblue* is working with Oxfam, Indigenous and health and wellbeing organisations to highlight how good mental health can improve people's resilience, physical health and happiness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are three times as likely to report high or very high levels of psychological distress compared with non-Indigenous people.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that the suicide rate among Indigenous Australians is more than two times the suicide rate in non-Indigenous communities.

The Bureau's latest Causes of Death report showed 162 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people took their own lives in 2016 – 23.8 deaths per 100,000 people compared to 11.4 suicide deaths per 100,000 in the non-Indigenous population.

The report confirmed suicide is the leading cause of death for Indigenous people aged 15-34 and the second second-highest cause of death among Indigenous people aged 35-44.

beyondblue CEO Georgie Harman said National Close the Gap Day was an opportunity for all Australians to add their voice to the growing campaign to improve health standards for Indigenous people.

"Life expectancy among Indigenous people remains ten years less than non-Indigenous people; this gap has not improved significantly in years and we cannot ignore that," Ms Harman said.

"We know there are a number of issues contributing to this gap, such as physical health conditions, education, employment and discrimination.

"We also know that the rate of anxiety, depression and suicide is high in Indigenous communities. The ability to access culturally sensitive, quality support services, when people need them, can make a significant difference and it can save lives."

Through its new [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) (RAP), *beyondblue* has made a commitment to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve their best possible mental health.

The RAP will guide *beyondblue's* programs, services and partnerships with Indigenous people and communities.

To find out more or to get involved in the Close the Gap campaign go to oxfam.org.au/nctgd

Mental health professionals are available 24/7 at the *beyondblue* Support Service – 1300 22 4648 or via beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3pm – 12am AEST) or email responses (within 24 hours).

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