

## New study to investigate drivers of Indigenous suicide

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The Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) will investigate the key drivers of suicide attempts and opportunities for prevention amongst Indigenous Australians in a new study.

Menzies was awarded more than \$290,000 by *beyondblue*, Australia's peak body for tackling depression, anxiety and related disorders in Australia, as part of a national funding round.

The funding will enable Menzies researchers to comprehensively investigate the healthcare provided to remote and urban Indigenous people hospitalised for attempted suicide in the Northern Territory over 12 years from 2000-2012. The exact number of cases is unknown, but could be as high as 400.

Associate Professor Gary Robinson said, "Suicide is a tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes, with national rates of suicide for Indigenous people around three times higher than for the general population. This highlights the need to take urgent action."

"Research indicates that people who attempt suicide are at much higher risk of further attempts and are at higher risk of death by suicide," he said.

"This funding will enable us to examine outcomes for people hospitalised for attempted suicide in the Northern Territory, for a number of years after the event.

"We hope to obtain critical information about healthcare received before suicide attempts and the follow up care provided after the attempt. This information should help us to better understand opportunities for prevention.

Assoc Prof Robinson thanked *beyondblue* for its support and said the announcement highlighted the body's commitment to research, particularly in the area of Indigenous mental health.

The project will be led by Associate Professor Gary Robinson, Professor Sven Silburn and Associate Professor Tricia Nagel and be conducted in a partnership with the Northern Territory Department of Health and with Aboriginal Medical Services in Darwin and Alice Springs.

The study will conclude at the end of 2014. Findings will be discussed with key Indigenous stakeholders to identify strategies and guidelines for prevention and follow-up care.

The Menzies team has over 20 years experience in Indigenous suicide research and the development of suicide prevention programs and more recently was funded by the Australian Government to help develop the nation's first Indigenous Suicide Strategy.

Assoc Prof Tricia Nagel was also successful in securing funding of more than \$82,000 for her project aimed at improving the delivery of health and wellbeing services to Indigenous youth in primary healthcare.

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**Background**

Menzies School of Health Research is a national leader in Indigenous and tropical health research. It is the only medical research institute in the Northern Territory, with more than 300 staff working in over 60 communities across central and northern Australia, as well as developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Menzies is also a significant contributor to health education and research training.