

Menzies centre tackles Indigenous youth suicide this World Suicide Prevention Day

Tuesday, 9 September 2014

A Northern Territory-based research project aimed at curbing high rates of Indigenous youth suicide will expand its critical work following a funding announcement made to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day (Wednesday, 10 September).

The Menzies Centre for Child Development and Education (CCDE) has received a \$1.74M grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to continue its groundbreaking work in Indigenous suicide prevention through the Life Skills program.

The Life Skills program aims to build resilience and social-emotional skills among middle school aged youth in remote Indigenous communities.

Announced by the Health Minister, the Hon Peter Dutton, the grant is just one of four issued nationally as part of the Australian Government's Mental Health Targeted Call for Research into Indigenous youth suicide.

The additional funding will extend the work currently being undertaken in Maningrida with the school and youth centre and will enable other communities, and possibly urban colleges to join the project.

In welcoming the announcement Menzies Director, Professor Alan Cass said the funding would address an urgent public health priority.

"Australia's Indigenous youth have the highest reported rate of suicide across the country and these figures continue to rise," Prof Cass said. "This alarming trend highlights the need for continued investment in Indigenous health and wellbeing."

Co-director of CCDE and project leader, Associate Professor Gary Robinson said that the funding would enable his team to continue its work to address a profound problem which causes enormous distress and sees a terrible waste of human potential in Aboriginal communities.

"Our work helps youth in communities to assess their own level of social and emotional wellbeing," Assoc Prof Robinson said.

"Being a teenager is tough, and young men and women face quite different challenges. In developing our strategies we are careful to consider gender as well as the social and cultural relevance of the approach to life skills.

"We look to empower young people to communicate effectively, to develop social and emotional skills and to make healthy, non-destructive choices. We hope that the curriculum we are developing can be taught by community members as well as by staff in schools and boarding colleges."

The NHMRC grant will see the youth suicide prevention program continue into a second phase which will run for a further five years.

View the NHMRC release here: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/media/releases/2014/new-research-prevent-indigenous-youth-suicide>

Media note:

Prof Gary Robinson is the co-director, Centre for Child Development and Education. View his profile at: http://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Our_People/Researchers/Gary_Robinson/

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Menzies Background

Menzies School of Health Research is Australia's only Medical Research Institute dedicated to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. We have a 28-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, partnering with over 60 Indigenous communities across Northern and Central Australia. We collaborate to create resources, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.