

## **Menzies launches distribution of AIMhi-Y app**

**28 October 2022**

Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) has launched a project which supports youth services in the Northern Territory and South Australia to use a newly developed early intervention digital mental health tool co-designed by young people, Aboriginal Elders and clinicians.

The Aboriginal and Islander Mental Health Initiative for Youth (AIMhi-Y) program began in 2018. Its development has been supported by the NTPHN and the Northern Territory Government, including through work with government school students.

The next phase of the program is a 3-year project, supported by a grant from the Australian Government. The funding will enable youth services to include the newly developed AIMhi-Y smartphone app in treatment and support programs for young people.

Services supporting young people in the Northern Territory and South Australia can join the project by getting in touch with [Menzies AIMhi Stay Strong](#) team or emailing [info.aimhi@menzies.edu.au](mailto:info.aimhi@menzies.edu.au)

A [pilot study of the AIMhi-Y app](#), supported by Suicide Prevention Australia, included 30 young people from Darwin and demonstrated the potential of the app as an early intervention mental health treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Developed in the NT, the AIMhi-Y app utilises a fun, engaging and gamified interface, and includes content which is grounded in cultural and medical knowledge. This ensures the app is responsive, relevant, clinically informed and empowers young people dealing with mental health challenges. An Indigenous Youth Reference Group and a Project Advisory Group have helped to inform the design to make sure the tool is fit for purpose.

This project has received wide support from many schools and health services in the Northern Territory.

For more information about the program, head to: [Aboriginal and Islander Mental Health Initiative for Youth \(AIMhi-Y\) - Menzies](#)

### **Quotes attributable to Menzies School of Health – AIMhi-Y Program Manager, Josie Povey:**

“Our team has been working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people over the past 5 years to develop an early intervention mental health tool that meets their needs.

“The young people aged 10 to 25 years we worked with have designed a tool that can now be used by other young people, and which makes sure that First Nations perspectives have been included.

“The support we have received from services and young people in the Northern Territory has been integral in the development of this new mental health digital tool.

“The Menzies School of Health Research AIMhi Stay Strong team looks forward to working with services and being able to support them to access to this new early intervention treatment approach.”

**Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Minister for Youth – the Honourable Lauren Moss MLA:**

“The Northern Territory Government is always open to innovative solutions in addressing the mental health of our community, especially our younger population.

“Menzies School of Health Research is one organisation leading the way to engage those with a lived experience in designing solutions to the challenges they’re facing.

“With a focus on Aboriginal and Islander youth, the development of this app is a great step forward in providing the necessary mental health tools to help youth support services across the Territory.”

ENDS.

**Media contact:** Menzies School of Health Research - Phone: (08) 8946 8658 | Email: [communications@menzies.edu.au](mailto:communications@menzies.edu.au)

**Menzies School of Health Research**

Menzies is one of Australia’s leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a leader in global and tropical research into life-threatening illnesses, Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

**Mental health statistics**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are twice as likely to experience high or very high levels of psychological distress, as their non-Indigenous counterparts, with females disproportionately affected.<sup>1</sup>
- Despite high or very high rates of distress, a large proportion (77%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people do not access professional help.<sup>2</sup> This is even more pronounced in remote jurisdictions. In the NT, only 4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 18-25 had accessed a mental health service in the previous year, compared to 20% nationally.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Psychological Society. Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services in Aboriginal Australia Melbourne 2018 [Available from: <http://www.sewbmh.org.au/page/3675>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health Welfare. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescent and youth health and wellbeing 2018. Canberra: AIHW; 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Health Welfare. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescent and youth health and wellbeing 2018. Canberra: AIHW; 2018

- Chronic and acute psychological distress contribute to significantly higher rates of suicide deaths among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (five times that of their non-Indigenous peers).<sup>4</sup>
- Approximately 60% of preventable deaths for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 15-24 years are attributed to intentional self-harm.<sup>5</sup>
- The greatest disparity in suicide rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is for those aged 5-14 years, with death rates 6.8 and 9 times higher than non-Indigenous males and females, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Over the most recent recorded 5-year period (2011-12 to 2015-16), the annual death rate attributed to suicide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has increased by 6.6% and 5.8% for males and females, respectively.<sup>7</sup> The rates of hospitalisation for suicidal behaviour involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have significantly increased over the past 12 years, highlighting a growing need for early intervention services.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ABS. The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Oct 2010 Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics; 2012 [ ACCESS TO HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES: BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES]. Available from:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs%40.nsf/lookup/4704.0Chapter960Oct+2010#Tele>

<sup>5</sup> Azzopardi PS, Sawyer SM, Carlin JB, Degenhardt L, Brown N, Brown AD, et al. Health and wellbeing of Indigenous adolescents in Australia: a systematic synthesis of population data. *The Lancet*. 2018;391(10122):766-82

<sup>6</sup> Australian Institute of Health Welfare. Indigenous injury deaths 2011–12 to 2015–16. Canberra: AIHW; 2020

<sup>7</sup> Australian Institute of Health Welfare. Indigenous injury deaths 2011–12 to 2015–16. Canberra: AIHW; 2020

<sup>8</sup> Leckning BA, Li SQ, Cunningham T, Guthridge S, Robinson G, Nagel T, et al. Trends in hospital admissions involving suicidal behaviour in the Northern Territory, 2001-2013. *Australas Psychiatry*. 2016;24(3):300-4