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## Mental Health Programs and Services

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### OVERVIEW

A number of organisations offer support to people who are dealing with issues that affect their social and emotional wellbeing.

This chapter lists mental health services and programs that provide specific assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the practitioners who work with them. There are different programs and services for different groups and types of mental health issues. The information has been supplied by the organisations or has been gleaned from their websites. The services listed in this chapter are not the only ones available but the chapter does provide a starting point for people looking for information or a place to go.

Please consult the websites of each organisation (provided below) to find more information about their programs and services, and links to other relevant sites.

### **1 *beyondblue: The National Depression Initiative***

*Short description of core business*

*beyondblue* is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related substance misuse disorders in Australia. The organisation is a bipartisan initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments and has a key goal of raising community awareness about depression and reducing stigma associated with the illness. *beyondblue* works in partnership with health services, schools, workplaces, universities, media and community organisations, as well as people living with depression, to bring together their expertise around depression.

*beyondblue's* five priorities are:

- 1 increasing community awareness of depression, anxiety and related substance misuse disorders and addressing associated stigma
- 2 providing people living with depression and their carers with information on the illness and effective treatment options and promoting their needs and experiences with policy-makers and healthcare service providers
- 3 developing depression prevention and early intervention programs
- 4 improving training and support on depression for GPs and other healthcare professionals
- 5 initiating and supporting depression-related research.

### *Programs and services relating to Indigenous mental health*

Relevant programs and activities include:

- the NT Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Program ‘Working Both Ways’
- ‘Ngaripirriga’ajirri’, an early intervention for children and parents on the Tiwi Islands
- developing Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Standards
- supporting action research into ‘Indigenous Men’s Sheds’
- working with Hip Hop performers to take mental health messages to young Indigenous people
- developing health professional training online with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

### *Other relevant information*

*beyondblue* has strong reciprocal partnerships with a wide range of organisations. Partner relationships are invaluable for the delivery of *beyondblue*’s information and program objectives and for addressing shared goals.

Website: <[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)>

## **2 headspace**

### *Short description of core business*

*headspace* is Australia’s National Youth Mental Health Foundation. The *headspace* mission is to deliver improvements in the mental health, social wellbeing and economic participation of young Australians aged 12–25. To this end, *headspace* aims to be the focal point for youth mental health issues across the country. This includes providing funding to improve services for young people who may be experiencing mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues and the latest information about these important health matters for young people.

*headspace* is aiming to achieve this through funded *headspace* services located in each state and territory in Australia. These services provide an entry point for young people to access a broad range of services that are available in their local community. All services have a focus on providing a more integrated service response.

### *Programs and services relating to Indigenous Mental Health*

*headspace* seeks to deliver improvements in the mental health, social wellbeing and economic participation of young Australians aged 12–25, including Indigenous young people. To this end, *headspace* sites are located all over Australia, giving Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth access to mental health services designed specifically for them. Sites are described thus:

- a youth-friendly, community-based health service for young people and their families
- a place where young people can receive help for health, education, work, mental health and alcohol and other drug issues
- staffed by a range of workers including doctors/GPs, psychiatrists, mental health workers (psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, nurses), and other workers (youth workers and alcohol and other drug workers, vocational) who have specific expertise in working with young people
- a confidential low-cost or free service dependent on situation
- a locally run initiative established by organisations that understand the community
- a place where young people and families are encouraged to become involved.

### *Other relevant information*

With mental health being the single biggest health issue facing young Australians, developing services that are responsive and able to offer early treatment is essential. The current mental health system is not resourced to deal with young people who have mild to moderate mental

health issues. This often means that young people do not obtain timely treatment or they have difficulty finding a service that can respond to their needs.

Delays in obtaining a service are also caused because young people do not necessarily know the best place to seek assistance. Young people are most likely to talk to friends or family members as the first step in their help-seeking journey. These key people are often also unsure how to find best possible support options for their friends or children. As Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation, *headspace* is tackling the issues that stand in the way of young people's access to accessible and appropriate health services.

Website: <[www.headspace.org.au/](http://www.headspace.org.au/)>

### **3 Kids Helpline**

*Short description of core business*

*Kids Helpline* is a free, 24-hour counselling service for young people aged 5–25 years. Counselling is offered by phone, email and over the web. *Kids Helpline* counsellors are fully qualified professionals who undergo additional accredited training at *Kids Helpline*.

*Kids Helpline* exists to assist children and young people to develop strategies and skills that enable them to more effectively manage their own lives.

*Kids Helpline* is a service of BoysTown.

*Programs and services relating to Indigenous mental health*

In 2007, *Kids Helpline* initiated an Indigenous project with the aim of increasing the access of Indigenous callers and improving the delivery of services to Indigenous children and young people.

This project involved:

- counselling training to improve response and intervention techniques to Indigenous children and young people in culturally sensitive ways
- building and enhancing relationships and networks with Aboriginal groups and communities
- consulting with Indigenous young people to raise awareness of the service and better target the service to meet the needs of young Indigenous people.

During 2008, *Kids Helpline* responded to 1562 contacts from Indigenous children and young people aged 5–25 years. Nearly one in every 20 contacts received is from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

*Other relevant information*

The five most common reasons for which Indigenous young people seek help are the same as for their non-Indigenous peers (family relationships, peer relationships, partner relationships, bullying and violence). However, the other issues concerning this group vary considerably with higher rates of family relationships, homelessness, grief, drug and alcohol use and violence.

Of greatest concern is the increased proportion of counselling sessions about health-related issues, especially mental health, which has proportionally increased sixfold over the past four years, along with emotional issues, especially emotional/behavioural management, which proportionally has almost doubled since 2005.

Website: <[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)>

### **4 Mental Health First Aid Training and Research Program**

*Short description of core business*

In 2000, Betty Kitchener and Professor Tony Jorm began writing a mental health first aid (MHFA) manual and an accompanying course, with the aim of improving the mental

health literacy of members of the Australian community. Since then, the *MHFA Training and Research Program* has been developed, evaluated and disseminated nationally and internationally. The philosophy behind this Program is that mental health crises, such as suicidal and self-harming actions, may be avoided through early intervention with people developing mental disorders. If crises do arise, then members of the public can take action to reduce the harms that could result.

The MHFA program has developed specialised MHFA courses. In early 2005, three culturally and linguistically modified MHFA courses were launched for Croatian, Vietnamese and Italian communities in Australia. In early 2007, two more specialised MHFA courses were launched, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island MHFA course for urban and rural aboriginal community members, and a Youth MHFA course suitable for adults working with adolescents.

Since April 2005, the MHFA Program has been under the auspices of the ORYGEN Research Centre at the University of Melbourne.

#### *Programs and services relating to Indigenous Mental Health*

In 2007, the *Mental Health First Aid for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program* was launched. This culturally relevant version of the MHFA course runs for 14 hours. Instructors in this course are Aboriginal people with training and experience working with Aboriginal people with mental health problems. Instructors complete a five-day Instructor Training course before teaching the materials in their own communities.

Len Kanowski has developed the course materials with a team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and with extensive input from stakeholders in Aboriginal mental health. The materials include DVDs developed by and with Aboriginal people, and a manual containing information that has been tailored to the needs of Aboriginal people, particularly those living in rural and regional areas.

In addition, guidelines for providing MHFA to Aboriginal people have been developed by the team. These guidelines were developed using the consensus of a team of Aboriginal people who have training and experience in treating Aboriginal people with mental health problems. At present, the following guidelines are complete and available on the MHFA website <[www.mhfa.com.au/Guidelines.shtml](http://www.mhfa.com.au/Guidelines.shtml)>:

- MHFA Guidelines for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples—Cultural Considerations
- MHFA Guidelines for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples—Depression
- MHFA Guidelines for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples—Psychosis
- MHFA Guidelines for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples—Suicide
- MHFA Guidelines for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples—Trauma and Loss
- MHFA Guidelines for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples—Problem drinking.

These guidelines may be accessed and used by members of the public, and their content will continue to guide the development of the program. They can be freely printed and distributed for non-profit purposes as long as they are not altered and the copyright notice remains intact.

#### *Other relevant information*

Those who have completed MHFA courses have been very positive about the knowledge and skills they have acquired. Course participants have been very varied, including teachers, police, nurses, case managers, support workers, social welfare staff, employment agency staff, personnel staff, members of the general public, and staff from many Australian and local government departments.

The mainstream MHFA course has been thoroughly evaluated using randomised controlled trials and a qualitative study and been found to be effective at improving the course participants' knowledge of mental disorders, reducing stigma, and increasing the amount of help provided to others. To disseminate the course, MHFA instructors are trained from across Australia to conduct the 12-hour MHFA course autonomously in their local region. Instructors work for NGOs (e.g., Red Cross, Lifeline, Relationships Australia), social welfare services (e.g. employment, housing), local area health services, places of employment, or as private practitioners. In view of the innovation and quality of the Program, it has won a number of prizes and has spread to a number of other countries, including Scotland, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand and the USA.

Website: <[www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au)>

## 5 *MindMatters*

*Short description core business*

*MindMatters* is a national mental health initiative for secondary schools funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and implemented by Principals Australia (formerly APAPDC).

*MindMatters* uses a whole-school approach to mental health promotion based on the principles of the World Health Organization's Global School Health Initiative and the Australian National Health Promoting Schools Framework.

*MindMatters* aims to:

- embed promotion, prevention and early intervention activities for mental health and wellbeing in Australian secondary schools
- enhance the development of school environments where young people feel safe, valued, engaged and purposeful
- develop the social and emotional skills required to meet life's challenges
- help school communities create a climate of positive mental health and wellbeing
- develop strategies to enable a continuum of support for students with additional needs in relation to mental health and wellbeing
- enable schools to collaborate better with families and the health sector.

*Programs and services relating to Indigenous mental health*

*MindMatters* has a range of school environment and community-based resources and activities relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Promotion, including the following:

- *The Community Matters Resource Booklet* offers schools professional support and development to enhance and implement whole-school approaches to diversity, with a specific location for young Indigenous Australian students, their families and their communities.
- *Professional development activities: MindMatters Level (1) and Level (2) workshops* are offered nationally to support the use of the resource, within the school and external community environments.
- *Communities Do Matter* is a significant *MindMatters* activity aimed at developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander whole-of-community development approach for engaging and strategically aligning external-to-school community resources, agencies and members to become active facilitators with schools to progress and sustain the health and wellbeing activities generated.

*Communities Do Matter* activities and support are provided for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (Feeling Deadly not Shame)
- their parents and caregivers (Community Yarning)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers (Professional Development)
- community leaders seminar (Consultation Seminar)
- community agencies professional development (Professional Development).

*Other relevant information*

*MindMatters* has a Mental Health Links page with direct links to several relevant sites, and a page with Indigenous and transcultural links.

Website: <[www.mindmatters.edu.au](http://www.mindmatters.edu.au)>

## **6 Gatekeeper Training Program**

The Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Training Unit at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research provides the *Gatekeeper Training Program*.

Gatekeeper training is based on the premise that individuals at risk of suicide come into contact with a range of community people who have the capacity to direct them towards help. The Gatekeeper training is based on a biopsychological model of suicide: that suicide has many causes and is based on a lifetime of risk factors. The amount of time or emphasis on particular modules depends on the identified training needs of participants.

The purpose of Gatekeeper training is not to train people to act as counsellors but rather to raise awareness of people at risk and refer for professional treatment. This linkage to professional help is fundamental to the success of Gatekeeper training as a suicide prevention strategy.

Further information is available on the Gatekeeper Training website of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research.

Website: <[www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/preventingsuicide/prevention/gatekeeper](http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/preventingsuicide/prevention/gatekeeper)>

## **7 Indigenous Psychological Services**

*Indigenous Psychological Services* (IPS) is a private company founded in late 1998 by Dr Tracy Westerman, an Indigenous psychologist originally from the north-west of Western Australia. She is of the Nyamal people from Port Hedland and Marble Bar area. Dr Westerman developed IPS primarily to address the inequities that exist for Indigenous people in relation to appropriate levels of access to specialist and culturally specific mental health and psychological services.

*Indigenous Psychological Services* provides a range of services including whole-of-community intervention programs such as Whole of Community Suicide Prevention Forums and Trauma Management in Aboriginal Communities.

Website: <[www.indigenouspsychservices.com.au](http://www.indigenouspsychservices.com.au)>

## **8 Australian Integrated Mental Health Initiative in the Northern Territory**

The *Australian Integrated Mental Health Initiative in the Northern Territory* (AIMHI NT) has been working with people in both remote and urban areas to learn more about the experience of Indigenous people with mental illness. AIMHI has studied the journey of Aboriginal people through mental health services, and explored strategies to facilitate the journey of clients and their carers from community to primary care to specialist mental health services and home again.

Website: <[www.craah.org.au/research\\_progam\\_areas/downloads/SE63AIMHIFact\\_Sheet-0308.pdf](http://www.craah.org.au/research_progam_areas/downloads/SE63AIMHIFact_Sheet-0308.pdf)>

## 9 Other programs and services

A range of community-based mental health and wellbeing programs and initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are available. Most of these programs are listed on the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet website.

The HealthInfoNet is a 'one-stop info-shop' that aims to contribute to closing the gap in health between Indigenous and other Australians by informing practice and policy in Indigenous health by making research and other knowledge readily accessible. The HealthInfoNet website also supports 'yarning places' (electronic networks) that encourage information-sharing and collaboration among people working in health and related sectors.

The HealthInfoNet website provides a specific Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing web resource for people working, studying or interested in addressing issues that influence the social and emotional wellbeing (including mental health) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Programs listed here include ones that address issues presented in chapters in this book.

Websites:

<[www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au](http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au)>

<[www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/other-health-conditions/mental-health](http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/other-health-conditions/mental-health)>