



Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial

Stakeholder Update #1

Background

The Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial (the Trial) is helping to develop a model of suicide prevention that meets the unique and culturally-sensitive needs of the region's Aboriginal communities.

The Australian Government chose the Kimberley as one of 12 national Suicide Prevention Trial Sites due to the tragic over-representation of suicide in Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley, where the age-adjusted rate of suicide is more than six times the national average.

The Trial is guided by the recommendations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP). A strong cultural framework underpins all Trial activities and community decision making on suicide prevention strategies in local communities.

The Trial is led by the WA Primary Health Alliance, Country WA PHN, in partnership with the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (KAMS), who have been commissioned to co-design and co-govern the Trial.

The Trial's Working Group is co-chaired by the Minister for Indigenous Health, Ken Wyatt AM MP and the KAMS Deputy CEO, Mr Rob McPhee and has strong community representation from across the region. This group oversees the implementation of the operational plan.

The Trial also has a Steering Group, which has been nominated by the Working Group Members to make decisions that will progress the trial between the Working Group meetings.

The organisations who are involved in the Trial are:

- Community representatives from Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham
- Derby Suicide Prevention Network
- Empowered Communities (East and West Kimberley)
- Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre
- Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services

- Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Senator Pat Dodson's Office
- WA Country Health Services
- WA Department of Education
- WA Department of Health
- WA Mental Health Commission
- WA Police
- WA Primary Health Alliance, Country WA PHN
- WA Regional Services Reform Unit, Department of Communities

How long is the Trial and how will it be evaluated?

The Trial began in mid-2017 and recently received a one-year extension to June 2020. The planning phase was completed in December 2017, with the implementation phase beginning in January 2018.

The Trial is being evaluated on an ongoing basis by an independent organisation. The overall findings and outcomes will be evaluated by the Australian Government, as part of a national evaluation.

Which communities are involved?

Broome, Bidjardanga, Dampier Peninsula (including Beagle Bay, Lombadina, Djarindjin and Ardyaloon), Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra, Wyndham and the Kutjunka region.

The focus of engagement is to co-design, implement and evaluate a suicide prevention activity that is aligned to evidenced-based suicide prevention initiatives as outlined in the ATSIPEP. Sites can agree on the most pressing suicide prevention issue in their community and identify a discrete activity that can be implemented within a 12-month period and within a budget of \$130,000.

Community liaison officers are employed at each of the nine sites to work alongside the KAMS Project Coordinator to support each community with its chosen activity. The activities will be evaluated on completion with the insights gained to be used as an evidence base for successful Aboriginal suicide prevention initiatives.

Each site is encouraged to start a broader conversation about a longer-term approach to suicide prevention in their communities, so it remains a focus area for action beyond the timeframe of the Trial. Sites also have the option to opt out of the trial should they not wish to participate, or if meaningful community engagement proves difficult.

What has happened or is underway?

- Consulted and collaborated with community, government, health, social services and education sectors.

- Finalised an operational plan with community input, including these key activities:
 - Run a public campaign to raise awareness and encourage help seeking behaviour;
 - Support for grass roots promotion of suicide prevention and postvention;
 - Recruit nine community champions and develop nine community suicide prevention projects;
 - Develop project plans for at-risk groups, including youth; and
 - Undertake a cultural survey of Aboriginal organisations across the region.
- Appointed KAMS project trial coordinator to facilitate nine community consultations.
- Completed a memorandum of understanding between WA Primary Health Alliance and WA Country Health Service to ensure collaboration, coordination and optimisation of results.
- Appointed Prof. Pat Dudgeon of UWA's Centre for Best Practice in Aboriginal Suicide Prevention as chair of the Trial's data group.
- Undertook a media campaign during the end of year holiday period to ensure vulnerable people throughout the Kimberley were advised of where they could seek assistance.
- Appointed the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre to map cultural activities.
- Engaged the University of WA to conduct an analysis of suicide and self-harm trends in the Kimberley and to prepare a report, including recommendations for improving and standardising the collection of this data to support ongoing suicide prevention programs.
- Began community consultations in some of the nine selected communities.

What is planned?

- Identify paid community champions to help coordinate community consultations, develop funding applications and support each community to develop and implement community suicide prevention action plans. The champions will also commit to professional development for a career pathway in social and emotional wellbeing, beyond the duration of the Trial.
- Issue grants to implement the community action plans.
- Co-design a high quality, culturally appropriate clinical treatment for at risk individuals.
- Co-design a postvention approach.
- Responsible suicide reporting training by Mindframe for the media.
- Peer to peer suicide prevention training for young people in the East and West Kimberley.
- Awareness campaign to build the capacity of the community to support themselves and others, and recognise people who are at risk, as the Trial's implementation phase continues.
- Final evaluation.

Contact

To find out more about the Trial, or to subscribe to further updates, please contact: kaspt@wapha.org.au