

# Media Release

10 December 2019



**KIMBERLEY**  
Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial

## Young Aboriginal leaders call for change

**Empowered Young Leaders in the Kimberley are calling for change, with the release of a powerful report and recommendations to embed and amplify the voice of youth in the consultation, co-design and delivery of programs and services for young Aboriginal people.**

The young people involved want action-orientated recommendations to come out of their work, to build a better future for themselves and future generations.

They have sent the report to a number of influential leaders, both federal and state, with an invitation to meet to discuss how they might lend their support.

The report came out of [Empowered Young Leaders forums](#) held in the East and West Kimberley, as part of the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial. It supports the development of an ongoing Kimberley Aboriginal youth peer to peer network, to inform and drive change.

Their key recommendations include;

- The need for a permanent forum to support that involvement and to amplify their voices, through the creation of a region-wide network of Local Aboriginal Youth Action Committees, who can continue to drive the recommendations of young people.
- Continued investment in systems and activities that build the strength and capability of Aboriginal young people as leaders in their communities, in order to drive change.
- Increased formal and informal training/learning opportunities around social and emotional wellbeing to enable young people to maintain their own self-care, and be better placed to support their peers and family members who may be at risk of suicidal ideation or self-harm.
- More collaborative working between service providers and agencies, especially when a young person is seeking support due to at risk behaviour, such as suicidal ideation or self-harm.
- Supporting young Aboriginal people to reconnect with their culture, country and heritage, to combat the generational gap, to heal the breakdown in traditional cultural structures and practices, and to help them cope with other issues such as anti-social behaviour, family violence and substance abuse.
- Embedding local Aboriginal culture into the school curriculum, cultural immersion training in the workforce and ensuring youth services and programs are culturally secure and safe.

The Empowered Young Leaders network also produced a powerful Collective Impact Statement signed by West Kimberley Empowered Young Leaders and endorsed by East Kimberley Empowered Young Leaders to strengthen their commitment to leading positive change.

“As Empowered Young Leaders, we commit to lead and action positive change to improve our future and the future of our next generations; and, in doing so, we acknowledge and accept our inherent obligation being passed on to us.

“We represent a generation of Change and Action. We accept this responsibility on behalf of our families and communities. The path laid before us by our Elders and Leaders past and present, has enabled us to become Actionists who walk proudly as Empowered Young Leaders in Two Worlds.”

The full report and Collective Impact Statement are available [here](#).

### Helplines

If you find yourself in an emergency, or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please contact emergency services on 000. Other 24-hour services include: Lifeline on 13 11 14 and Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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### Media Contacts

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### Interview Opportunities

#### Jacob Smith

Empowered Young Leader and Youth Representative of the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial  
<https://www.wapha.org.au/wot-na-wot-kine/jacob-smith-profile/>

#### Bianca Graham

Empowered Young Leader and Youth Representative of the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial  
<https://www.wapha.org.au/wot-na-wot-kine/bianca-graham-profile/>

## About the Empowered Young Leaders Project

The Empowered Young Leaders project is a vital component of the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial

“It supports the work that came out of an earlier youth suicide prevention forum and is a practical way to implement the recommendations that were made at that time by young people for young people. Working Group co-chair and Deputy CEO of Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (KAMS), Rob McPhee said.

Some of the key aims of the Empowered Young Leaders Project are the need to:

- move away from focusing on suicide and problems, and, instead, build on young people’s strengths and solutions;
- change the story about young Aboriginal people, both among themselves and among the wider community; and
- Invest in and empower the Kimberley’s young leaders, to be able to take action and walk away with resources for their own communities.

## About the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial

The Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial Site is one of 12 sites nationally identified by the Australian Government as priority areas for suicide prevention due to their high-risk populations. The Trial aims to identify the best approaches to doing this, which will inform a wider national approach.

This is due to the tragic over-representation of suicide in Aboriginal communities such as the Kimberley, where the age-adjusted rate of suicide is more than six times the national average.

The Trial is guided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP).

A strong cultural framework underpins all its activities. Community decision making on suicide prevention strategies in local communities is a priority.

The Trial is community driven through representation on the Working Group which is co-chaired by the Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt and Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (KAMS) Deputy CEO, Rob McPhee.

It is commissioned by WA Primary Health Alliance, Country WA PHN, in partnership with KAMS, who are coordinating on-the-ground activities.