



GREAT SOUTH COAST
**Suicide Prevention
Place Based Trial**



Australian Government

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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ABORIGINAL SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM SET FOR GROWTH IN VICTORIA'S GREAT SOUTH COAST REGION

Aboriginal communities have responded positively to the expansion of a culture-specific suicide prevention program in the Great South Coast, paving the way for its sustained future.

The successful delivery of four **Ngootyoong Yarning Circle Group** programs as part of the Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial will see the program continued, enhancing access to headspace services for Aboriginal young people as a priority group for mental health intervention.

The use of a yarning circle is an important process within Aboriginal culture and Torres Strait Islander culture. It refers to a place to talk, share, discuss, educate and have a yarn together. It is a place to build respectful relationships, to preserve and pass on cultural knowledge, and a space to enrich students' learning experiences.

The **Ngootyoong (meaning 'safe place') Yarning Circle Group** program was originally developed in 2018 through a collaboration between headspace Warrnambool and Portland, Dhuward Warrong Elderly and Community Health Service (DWECH), and the Drug and Alcohol Responding Early (DARE) Program.

In 2021, the program was expanded as part of the **Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial** (GSCSPBT), a joint commitment between the Western Victoria Primary Health Network (PHN) and the Victorian Government recognising the benefits of collaborative approaches to suicide prevention.

Headed by a local leadership committee, the GSCSPBT comprised 12 community-based programs aiming to reduce the rates of suicide, reduce suicide attempts, build resilience and wellbeing and improve systems to prevent suicide in an ongoing way. The needs of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were identified through discussion with young people and their key supports to seek ways to improve the program through session structure, content, engagement strategies and evaluation measures.

Courtney Shiells, headspace Operations Manager said "Working with young Aboriginal people and their supports has built our learning and capacity as a service to provide culturally safe services".

The Ngootyoong Yarning Circle Group program's high level of engagement with young Aboriginal people and their key stakeholders has supported sustainability of the program beyond the GSCSPBT, establishing partnerships and opportunities to collaborate on initiatives and support the health and well-being of young Aboriginal people.

Anne Waters, headspace Regional Manager said "The successful collaboration underpinning the Yarning Circle Program has enhanced access to culturally safe mental health support and clearly identifies the need for more funding directed to 'close the health gap' for young Aboriginal in the GSC region".

At the request of stakeholders, the program will be integrated into the headspace Warrnambool and Portland annual service delivery plans, to be facilitated on a regular basis. Additionally, two new Yarning Circle workshops are scheduled for delivery in May 2022.



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Support Services

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au

Head to Health: 1800 595 212

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au

Suicide Callback Service: 1300 659 467

MensLine: 1300 789 978 or mensline.org.au

QLife: 1800 184 527 (support for LGBTI community.)

Emergency Services: 000 (triple zero)

SANE Helpline: 1800 187 263 (talk to a mental health professional weekdays, 10am-10pm)

-ENDS-

Available for interview:

- Rowena Clift, Chief Executive Officer - Western Victoria PHN
- Cr Anita Rank, Chair - Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trail Leadership Group and Mayor - Glenelg Shire Council
- Anne Waters, Executive Manager Health Service Division - Brophy Youth & Family Services

Photography:

Program photography courtesy of Headspace - [Click here to download.](#)

Further Information On The Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial:

The Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial is an initiative aimed at delivering activities to reduce the suicide rate in the shires of Corangamite, Glenelg, Moyne and Southern Grampians and the City of Warrnambool.

Coordinated by Western Victoria Primary Health Network (WVPHN) in partnership with the Federal Government and a range of health care service providers, the trial offers a coordinated approach to reducing the suicide rate in the Great South Coast with a range of community network support activities.

WVPHN Chief Executive Officer Rowena Clift said: "Many families across the Great South Coast are struggling to understand why their loved ones have taken their own lives. From teenagers to adults and both male and female; the suicide rate for Great South Coast is unacceptably high. We want to ensure that every single person who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide or has attempted suicide has support networks available to help them when and where they need it. These activities will help us achieve this by filling identified service gaps and giving the community the support it requires."

Information on the all of the individual activities in the trial can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3xCi9LL>

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION: **YARNING CIRCLE EXPANSION PROJECT**

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project expanded the delivery of the **Ngootyoong (safe place) Yarning Circle Group Program** across the Great South Coast. The Yarning Circle program is delivered to Aboriginal young people, particularly men, to build their suicide prevention and mental health literacy in ways that impact on the community.

The Yarning Circle Expansion project **enhanced the awareness of and access to culturally safe youth mental health and wellbeing services** for young Aboriginal people in the Great South Coast region.

It delivered **early-intervention information and activities** regarding mental health, alcohol and other drug use and physical health to Aboriginal young people, with the incorporation of cultural safety components.

The project indicated that the **Yarning Circle can provide an important opportunity for raising awareness of support services for participants.**

The project's key learnings were:

- Endorsement by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal Elders is central for the program success. Their endorsement also enables the identification of appropriate content and target groups in their communities.
- Enhancing access to services is a key component of the project, with a focus on providing in-reach services to Aboriginal young people in their community rather than clinical service settings.
- Embedding cultural safety principles through co-design processes and practice throughout all stages of the program is imperative to the engagement of young Aboriginal people and participation in the program.

This project was completed in March 2022 and was run by [Headspace Warrnambool and Portland](#), and [Brophy](#), in collaboration with Dhuward Warrong Elderly and Community Health Service (DWECH), and the Drug and Alcohol Responding Early (DARE) Program.

THE BACKGROUND

- The “Yarning Circle” Group program model was originally developed in 2018 through a collaboration between Headspace Warrnambool and Portland, Dhuward Warrong Elderly and Community Health Service (DWECH), and the Drug and Alcohol Responding Early (DARE) Program.
- The Yarning Circle session format has flexibility in its ability to adapt duration and content, depending on the needs of the cohort and community. The program can be facilitated in a 6 session format in full entirety, or can be adapted for a shorter duration, including one-off “workshop” style sessions.



PROJECT DELIVERY

headspace Warrnambool implemented the project, delivering a total of 4 x Yarning Circle group programs in collaboration with the DARE program and local Aboriginal services.

Completed Sessions

- This project delivered 4 x Yarning Circle group programs and supported a total of 24 Aboriginal young people, giving them access to culturally safe early-intervention health and well-being knowledge and support. 16 of the 24 Aboriginal young people participating in the program were male, representing 67% of total participants. Young Aboriginal males were the priority target group, due to higher risk of experiencing co-occurring mental health and harm from substance use, underpinned by intergenerational trauma, which is reflected in suicide statistics.
- The program involved cultural safety components such as:
 - reviewing of session plans and content by Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing workers;
 - incorporating artwork into the program and activities;
 - involving Aboriginal Elders;
 - having male only or female only groups and
 - having trauma-informed practices.
- Of the 16 male participants, 13 young males indicated that they had not heard about headspace or DARE or the services they offer prior to attending the session. This indicates that the Yarning Circle can provide an important opportunity for awareness-raising in the target cohort of support services.
- Participants were asked to rate the session overall, with scores ranging from 1 “Didn’t enjoy it” to a score of 5 “Really Good”. The program scored a 4.6 out of 5.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Please see below for additional mental health resources/support for this target group:

1. Connect with Headspace’s Yarn Safe <https://headspace.org.au/yarn-safe/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>.
2. Find out more about DARE: Drug and Alcohol Responding Early: <https://brophy.org.au/dare/>.
3. Connect with Dhauward Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service (DWECH): <https://www.dwech.com.au/>.
4. Learn the signs, find the words, connect to care. Participate in free* training suicide prevention training - LivingWorks START - here: <https://form.jotform.com/220807792455058>

**free for communities in GSC only.*