

FREE
EVENT

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

Building strong identity and community control: social and emotional wellbeing in Indigenous communities

Emeritus Professor Michael Chandler, internationally recognised academic in the field of Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention, Dr Tom Calma AO, Professor Pat Dudgeon, Professor Fiona Stanley AC and Professor Helen Milroy, discuss research and issues around cultural continuity and suicide prevention in Aboriginal communities.

This discussion will highlight the importance of the engagement and empowerment of Indigenous communities in developing their own approaches to social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention, and in the public debate and formation of policy.

There is overwhelming evidence that Australian Indigenous peoples' mental health and social and emotional wellbeing is well behind non-Indigenous Australians and is a key contributor to the health gap. The cumulative effect of intergenerational trauma and 'malignant grief', combined with social and economic disadvantage, has resulted in high rates of psychological distress, substance abuse and self-harm. These problems have a widespread and devastating effect on physical and mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Suicide rates among Indigenous Australians are a national tragedy. The extent of mental illness and mental health problems has been recognised as 'a major difficulty for most Indigenous communities'.

In Canada Indigenous youth suicide is a serious problem. Research by Emeritus Professor Chandler amongst Canada's First Nations communities has found that youth suicide is not necessarily an "Aboriginal" problem per se, but may be a problem for only some communities.

The communities that take steps to preserve their cultural past and control their lives tend to have fewer suicides. Importantly, a sense of identity and 'cultural continuity' can help Aboriginal people, and especially youth, to see that they have a future.

It is vital there is a dialogue between Aboriginal leaders in mental health, governments, policy makers, service providers and researchers to inform not just the research and work around the immediate cultural continuity for Aboriginal communities, but generate, as well as sustain, the existing momentum addressing Indigenous Australians mental health including social and emotional wellbeing.

"Aboriginal communities that have succeeded in affording their members a sense of a shared past and a promising collective future are less vulnerable to suicide. People who see their personal and cultural identity as something that persists over time are less inclined to take their own life when facing hardships."

E/Prof Michael Chandler

DATE:

Friday 24th August

TIME:

10:00am (for 10:30am start)
– 12:30pm

VENUE:

Department of Education,
Employment and
Workplace Relations
(DEEWR) Theatre,
50 Marcus Clarke St,
Canberra ACT

Access to the Theatre can be gained via the side entrance door on Marcus Clarke Street (opposite the child care centre), look out for a banner to identify the entry point.

Light refreshments will be provided.

Please RSVP by

Monday 20th August 2012 to
community@healingfoundation.org.au
or call (02) 61244409
to RSVP for catering.



This event is hosted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation. Established on the first anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations the Healing Foundation supports culturally strong, locally run Indigenous healing programs around Australia, and funds education and research on Indigenous healing.

More information is available at
www.healingfoundation.org.au



HealingFoundation

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Building strong identity and community control: social and emotional wellbeing in Indigenous communities



Emeritus Professor Michael Chandler
Emeritus Professor Michael Chandler is an

internationally eminent academic in the field of Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention. Currently a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, he was (until 2004) Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia, Canada, and continues as a Distinguished Investigator at the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) and Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR). He has been a prominent invited speaker to international audiences, including Australian audiences, on culture and mental health, and has an extraordinary number of publications in his field.

Professor Chandler has long-standing involvement and profound understanding of social and emotional wellbeing and mental health issues of Aboriginal Australians. He has presented to senior government officials, academic audiences, and the general public on Indigenous suicide and mental health, and has developed well-respected connections and collaborations with many Australian researchers.

Professor Chandler is in an ideal position to inform not just the research around the immediate cultural continuity for Aboriginal communities, but generate and sustain the existing public interest in Indigenous Australian mental health and wellbeing.

This is important at a time when Australian governments at all levels are showing concerted effort to develop comprehensive policies and programs which deal with social and emotional wellbeing and tackle the underlying social and economic determinants of Indigenous health, such as employment and education access.



Dr Calma AO is an Aboriginal elder from the Kungarakan tribal group and a member of the Iwaidja tribal

group whose traditional lands are south west of Darwin and on the Coburg Peninsula in the Northern Territory of Australia, respectively. He has been involved in Indigenous affairs at a local, community, state, national and international level and worked in the public sector for 40 years. Dr Calma was appointed National Coordinator, Tackling Indigenous Smoking in March 2010 to lead the fight against tobacco use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The 2012 Queen's Birthday Honours awarded Dr Calma an Officer (AO) in The General Division "for distinguished service to the Indigenous community as an advocate for human rights and social justice, through contributions to government policy and reform, and to cross cultural understanding."

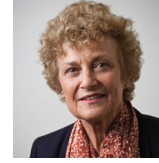


Professor Pat Dudgeon (PhD) is from the Bardi people of the Kimberley in Western Australia. She was the

first Aboriginal psychologist to graduate in Australia and has made outstanding contributions to Indigenous psychology, leadership and higher education.

In recognition of her many achievements, Professor Dudgeon was inducted into the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Hall of Fame in 2009 and in the same year was made a Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society (first Aboriginal Fellow).

Professor Dudgeon is currently a research fellow at the School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia.



Professor Fiona Stanley AC is Patron of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research; Distinguished

Research Professor, School of Paediatrics and Child Health at The University of Western Australia, Vice Chancellor's Fellow at The University of Melbourne and Director of the 2013 Festival of Ideas. Trained in epidemiology and public health, her major contribution has been to establish the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. She has over 300 publications, books and book chapters and was named Australian of the Year in 2003.



Professor Helen Milroy is a descendant of the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia but was

born and educated in Perth. She studied Medicine at the University of Western Australia, worked as a General Practitioner and Consultant in Childhood Sexual Abuse at Princess Margaret Hospital for children for several years before completing specialist training in Child and Adolescent psychiatry.

Helen is currently Winthrop Professor and Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health at the University of Western Australia; and a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist with the Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Service. She is Lead Investigator of the Australian team on the NHMRC International Collaborative Grant "Educating for Equity" exploring how health professional education can reduce disparities in chronic disease.

Emeritus Professor Michael J. Chandler's Australian visit is sponsored by

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation

Centre for Research Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

University of Western Australia: School of Indigenous Studies, Institute of Advanced Studies, and the Centre for Social Impact at the UWA Business School

Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre
Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council
WA Commissioner for Children & Young People
WA Mental Health Commission

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More information is available at www.healingfoundation.org.au