



## AIATSIS Seminar Series 2012/2

12.30 pm, Monday, 17 September 2012

The Mabo Room, AIATSIS, Lawson Crescent, Canberra ACT 2601

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### **The Black Rubik's cube of social and emotional wellbeing for First Nations people in Australia—responsibilities in mental health care**

**Tom Brideson**

**Visiting Fellow, NSW Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health, University of Newcastle**

#### **Abstract**

This seminar will explore some concepts for improving the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people and identify responsibilities in mental health care. The complex issues facing Aboriginal people and the nation, including major historical developments and opportunities, are like Rubik's cubes, and the Aboriginal community is central to making improvements and finding solutions.

Some recent mental health developments are in need of robust accountability processes and report cards and would benefit substantially from an interrogation of the formal agreements between Aboriginal communities/services and mainstream services. Change could occur overnight if there were more rigorous performance monitoring of these agreements. There needs to be stronger accountability alongside the effective application of professional skills in diversity across all helping professions.

The presentation will also touch on the need for professionals to look inwards—to unpack themselves and their own histories—before embarking on the usual course of placing Aboriginal people under the microscope. Without genuine reflection on our own values base, we will continue the approach of doing things to communities instead of doing things with communities.

**Tom Brideson** is a Kamilaroi man who was born in Gunnedah, NSW. Since 2007 he has been the State-wide Coordinator of the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program. Tom has been actively involved in the Aboriginal mental health area since 1993 in a broad range of roles. He has a strong interest in areas that need to be improved for Aboriginal people—for example, health policy development, social and emotional wellbeing, clinical mental health care and suicide prevention—and in education and research across these areas.

Tom has published a number of journal articles on issues facing the Aboriginal mental health workforce and the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program. He chairs the Aboriginal Advisory Committee of the NSW Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health. He also chairs the management committee of the Mental Health Services Conference (TheMHS) and convened the TheMHS Summer Forum in 2008 on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health. In 2011 Tom was appointed to the first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Advisory Group and the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee for Suicide Prevention.

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