

Media statement

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Toowoomba community forum to contribute to Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Action Plan

A plan to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders will be the focus of a community forum in **Toowoomba on Friday 20 May**.

The forum is part of a state-wide consultation by the Queensland Mental Health Commission and will contribute to its development of an Action Plan, due for release later in the year.

Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing would benefit all Queenslanders.

‘It requires taking into account unique historical factors which have had a trans-generational impact, as well as present-day circumstances that adversely impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,’ Dr van Schoubroeck said.

She said social and emotional wellbeing was a significant protective factor against the worst impacts of stressful life events and had enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to endure hardships and adversity.

A Discussion Paper released by the Commission noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to abstain from drinking alcohol (23 per cent) than non-Indigenous people. However, Indigenous people who report drinking alcohol do so at life-time risky levels (20 per cent). A larger proportion than the national average also report smoking tobacco daily (44 per cent) and using illicit drugs (23 per cent).

Research also identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders are almost three times more likely to suicide than non-Indigenous people.

Dr van Schoubroeck said: ‘We’ve already had extensive discussions with Indigenous leaders to get their perspective on the critical issues and map a way forward. Now, we’re going out and talking to community members to listen to their views.

‘Together we’re aiming to decrease the incidence, severity and duration of mental illness, reduce suicide and its impact, and prevent and reduce the adverse impact of alcohol and other drugs.

‘These goals cannot be achieved by a single organisation or group. It will require all levels of government, non-government organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and non-Indigenous communities to work together,’ Dr van Schoubroeck said.

The Toowoomba community is invited to help identify ways to support the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders at a forum to be held at the Jack

Martin Centre, 552-570 Anzac Avenue Toowoomba, from 10.00am to 2.00pm on Friday 20 May 2016.

Contact the Queensland Mental Health Commission on (07) 3033 0311 or email sewb@qmhc.qld.gov.au to confirm attendance.

The Discussion Paper can be found at: www.qmhc.qld.gov.au or [here](#)

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About QMHC: The Queensland Mental Health Commission was established to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders by driving ongoing reform.