



# A First Nations guide for truth-telling about suicide

This guide supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to talk publicly about suicide in a way that is safe for you, your family and others in the community.

## Reasons some people share their stories

- Improve understanding and support for those who are distressed
- Reduce fear, shame and loneliness around talking about suicide
- Encourage others to reach out for help when they need it
- Highlight what is needed in a community
- To help reduce suicide rates in First Nations communities
- Reduce racism and stereotyping of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Help change how media tell these stories.

## What truth-telling can look like

- Sharing your own experiences and thoughts about what has happened
- Advocating for better support or services
- Telling the stories of loved ones you have lost to suicide
- Sharing what's working in your community
- Sharing unmet community need.

## Questions to consider before sharing your story



### Is it the right time to be sharing my story?

It's not always the best time to share a story right after someone has passed as you may be doing Sorry Business, or supporting loved ones. Consider whether the media should talk to an Elder or community spokesperson instead.



### Do I have the information I need?

Ask the journalist what the story is about, where it will be seen and how long it is. It is also important to ask if they will use images of you or your community.



### Do I feel safe with the journalist?

Make sure you feel that the journalist is respectful, sensitive, makes you feel comfortable and that they agree to take the time needed to understand the context of your story as well as cultural protocols.

Other media organisations may quote your words or share a recording. In most cases, they don't have to ask permission to do this.



### Am I looking after myself?

Draw on the strength of your community, country and culture, and plan time with your family, friends and Elders to debrief. If you need more support, contact a support service like [13YARN](#).

## Why are the voices of young people important?

### Young people: Our next generation

Sharing stories in a culturally safe space can be a healing experience. Young people should be encouraged to speak their truth and share their lived experiences, to build their confidence for the future.

*“A lot of our mob keep a lot of stuff bottled up, especially our young ones. And that's where we see suicide, suffering in silence.”*

- WA training session participant

## How can I prepare for an interview?

- Find out who is going to do the interview, and what type of interview it is (e.g. is it live or pre-recorded?).
- Remember, talking about suicide will not put the idea of suicide in someone's head.
- Make sure you've spoken with family and have their permission to speak. Alternatively, help the family chose a spokesperson. Suicide is a whole of community issue, and you are sharing a story that belongs to many people.
- To help feel more confident talking to the media, practice telling your story with someone you trust.
- Keep your message simple and reinforce the main point you want to make, as the media may only use a few seconds from your interview.
- Remember, it's up to you which details you share about your story. It's okay to say no to a question.
- Let the journalist know of cultural rules, such as whether they can post a photo or use a person's name.

### Support and help-seeking information

It's not easy to share a story about suicide and it may help to draw on the strength of community, country and culture, and plan time with family, friends and Elders. If you need more support, think about calling a service like [13YARN](#), a free crisis support line run 24/7 by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### Mindframe resources

The media might not include some details from your story. This is because they usually follow guidelines based on research that says sharing certain details, such as the way the suicide happened and where, might lead to further suicides. Read the [Mindframe media guidelines](#) to better understand these decisions.

## About this resource

This resource was developed out of a media training program co-designed and delivered by Aboriginal media expert and social justice advocate, Megan Krakouer (Director of the National Suicide Prevention and Trauma Recovery Project).

We acknowledge the strength and resilience of the 18 Aboriginal community members who participated in this pilot program, sharing their stories and deep knowledge gained through lived and living experience of mental health concerns and/or suicide.

The project was led by the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention ([CBPATSISP](#)), with support from Everymind and Gerry Georgatos, mentor of the National Suicide Prevention and Trauma Recovery Project.

Everymind acknowledges the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This resource provides general advice only. We recommend seeking further specific advice from Elders or community leaders as needed.

