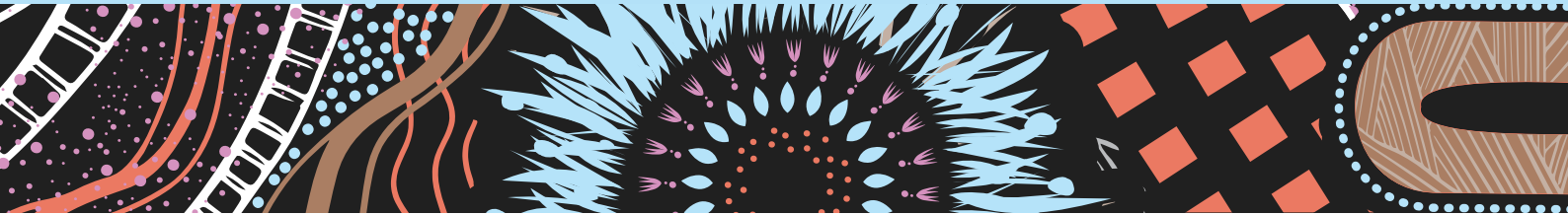# Employment and Indigenous mental health

Summary paper

This paper is a summary of the *Employment and Indigenous mental health* publication by Boyd Hunter, Yonatan Dinku, Christian Eva, Francis Markham and Minda Murray. This publication was commissioned by and published on the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Clearinghouse. It can be accessed online at <www.indigenousmhspc.gov.au>.

Some people may find the content of this report confronting or distressing. If you are affected in this way, please contact **13YARN (13 92 76)**, **Lifeline (13 11 14)** or **Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636)**.

Key findings

- Employment is a driver of better mental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Indigenous Australians). Adverse employment outcomes and financial insecurity are associated with mental health issues in adults and can also cause feelings of instability in children and poor mental health.

- Employment is not sufficient to ensure mental health, but it can provide essential support by reducing financial hardship and the resulting family and household stress.

- Labour market and economic policy can be effective in improving Indigenous labour market outcomes and indirectly enhancing Indigenous mental health.

  – Wage subsidies have historically been the most effective labour market program to secure Indigenous employment.

- For Indigenous employment policies and programs to be successful, Indigenous co-design is essential.

- Meaningful employment and work that facilitates Indigenous agency and economic self-determination improves mental health outcomes.

- Support for the Indigenous business sector is important for Indigenous employment: these businesses are more likely to hire Indigenous employees than non-Indigenous businesses and they provide an Indigenous-friendly working environment and a culturally safe space to work.

AIHW

Stronger evidence,
better decisions,
improved health and welfare

- Cultural safety is important at all stages of the employment process, including recruitment, engagement, retention and development of Indigenous workers. Employment that is not culturally safe can undermine workers' sense of cultural heritage and identity and can lead to poor Indigenous mental health.

  - Cultural competence needs to be addressed in many Australian workplaces if we are to enhance Indigenous access to the labour market.

- Insecure, casual and poorly paid work may have a limited positive effect, and may even have adverse consequences, for mental health.

What we know

Indigenous Australians are at a high risk of experiencing mental health problems:

- At 31%, the rate of high or very high levels of psychological distress experienced by Indigenous Australians is more than double the rate for non-Indigenous Australians (14%) (ABS 2019b).

- Around 30% of Indigenous Australians (aged 2 years and over) report or were reported to have been diagnosed with a mental health condition (ABS 2019a).

Indigenous suicide is the second leading cause of death for Indigenous males and the seventh leading cause for Indigenous females (ABS 2021).

Employment is generally a protective factor for mental health. Levels of mental health distress in Indigenous Australians who are employed are about half those of unemployed people or those outside of the labour force (21% as opposed to 41% or 40% respectively) (ABS 2019a). Almost all the studies reviewed point to poorer psychological health in the unemployed than the employed. However, some types of employment, such as casual employment, are associated with a higher prevalence of mental health issues.

Broader economic circumstances such as drawn-out recessions and economic inequality are also likely to exacerbate stress and mental health issues for Indigenous Australians.

This paper examines policies and programs that address Indigenous employment and mental health. It explores the evidence for a causal link between mental health outcomes and employment, and best practice in employment programs.
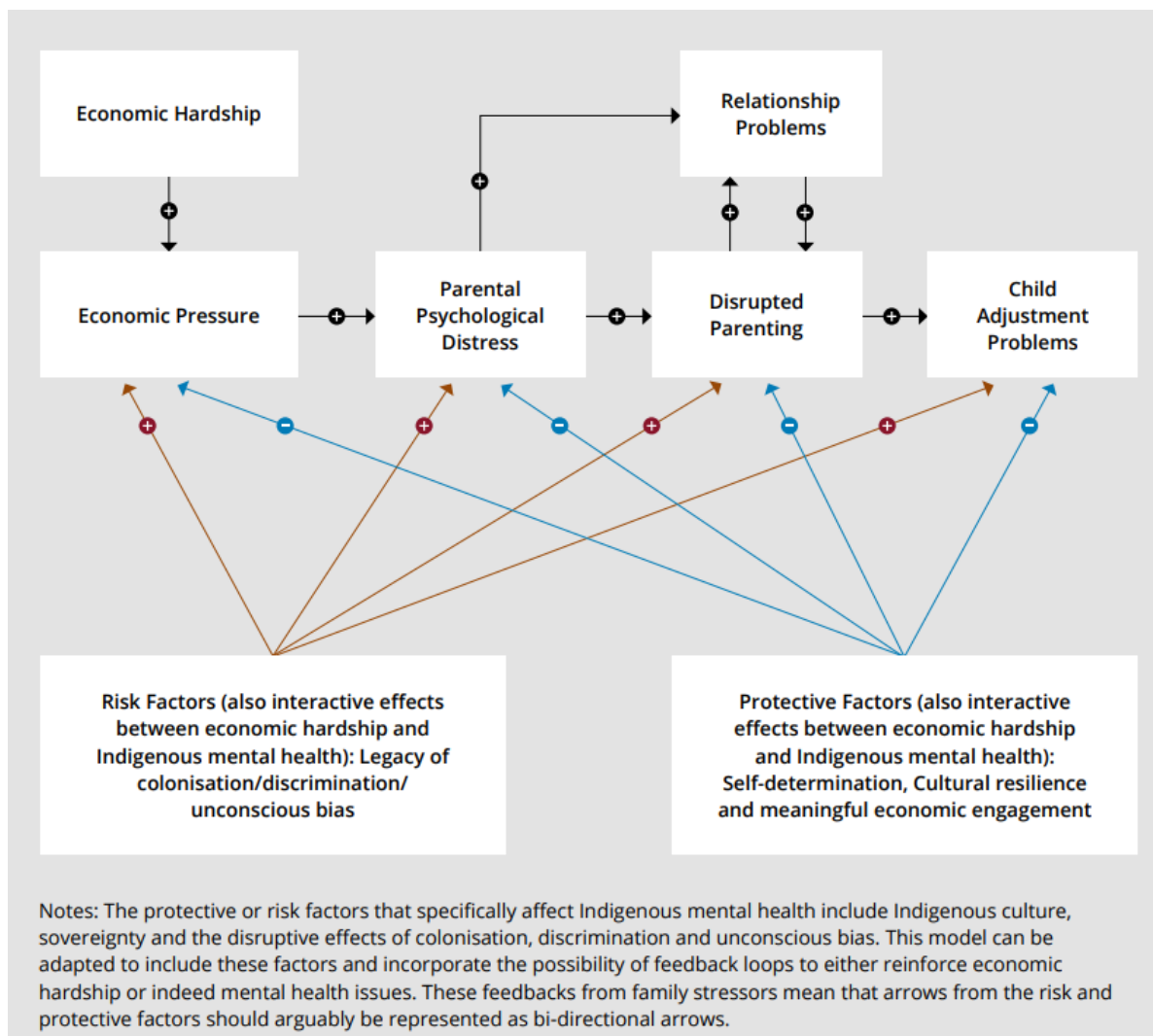
An augmented Family Stress Model

There are a range of social science models that provide insights into how employment and socioeconomic status can affect mental health. While there is a lack of a coherent theory for framing how and why employment and economic hardship affects Indigenous mental health, slight adjustments to social causation models such as the Family Stress Model can be useful. Augmenting the Family Stress Model aids understanding of how economic pressure can lead to psychological distress and broader social and intergenerational disruptions (Masarik and Conger 2017). Minor adjustments are made to the model to include some of the specific protective and risk factors that face Indigenous populations (Figure 1):

- The model was originally conceived in terms of nuclear families. For the Indigenous population, disruptive influences are considered in the context of extended families and larger porous households, which interact with the broader Indigenous community.

- Understanding social and economic context is important. The intergenerational nature of trauma from colonisation is an important aspect of Indigenous mental health.

- Adaptations need to include Indigenous-specific risk factors. The model uses the possibility of negative feedback loops to either reinforce economic hardship and mental health issues through effects of colonisation, discrimination and unconscious bias.

- Protective factors include self-determination, cultural resilience and meaningful economic engagement.

The model illustrates the complexity of factors driving Indigenous mental health and why programs need to involve complex interventions. It highlights the need for caution about reductionist forms of evidence on outcomes and program efficacy. The limitation of this schema is that it is a simplification in that it takes employment and economic hardship as given.

The risk factors that drive family stress can also drive social exclusion, economic hardship and mental health issues that span generations. Figure 1 shows these effects on parents and their children, but it is easy to see how interactions between family stress, risk and protective factors can be transmitted through the Indigenous community.

Figure 1: The augmented Family Stress Model and Indigenous mental health

Notes: The protective or risk factors that specifically affect Indigenous mental health include Indigenous culture, sovereignty and the disruptive effects of colonisation, discrimination and unconscious bias. This model can be adapted to include these factors and incorporate the possibility of feedback loops to either reinforce economic hardship or indeed mental health issues. These feedbacks from family stressors mean that arrows from the risk and protective factors should arguably be represented as bi-directional arrows.

Source: Adapted from Masarik and Conger (2017:86).

Research on mental health and employment

There is limited national and international Indigenous-focused research on the effects of employment on mental health. Securing employment and access to the labour market is likely to be important for mental health, but working conditions are also crucial for improving mental health. These include control over working environment, security in tenure and an absence of discrimination.

Many factors place Indigenous Australians at greater mental health risk and reinforce poor employment outcomes. The effects of colonisation, Indigenous exclusion from the market economies, racism and intergenerational trauma drive contemporary Indigenous economic disadvantage (Dinku et al. 2020) and reinforce poor employment outcomes.

Being marginalised within an already marginalised population is a compound jeopardy (Atkinson et al. 2014:300). Inadequate employment and poverty drive disengagement and resentment, which increase the probability of trauma-affected people not receiving the services they critically need (Atkinson et al. 2014:399).

Although employment status clearly affects mental health, the reverse may also be true. Mental ill-health can affect the productivity of people who are employed and be a barrier to people outside the workforce gaining and maintaining employment (Productivity Commission 2020). Frijters et al. (2014) analysed the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) data and found that diagnoses of psychiatric disorders and depression can reduce the probability of employment by between 13% and 26% across different cohorts.

The effects of unemployment on mental health cannot be explained purely by the negative impacts of unemployment on income (Clark 2003; Paul and Moser 2009). Unemployment has a greater negative impact on:

- younger workers (under 25 years of age) (Morrell et al. 1994; Morrell et al. 1998)

- older workers (over 50 years of age) (Paul and Moser 2009; Scutella and Wooden 2008)

- those who are psychologically vulnerable prior to unemployment (Mendolia 2009).

From international studies there is unequivocal evidence that economic recessions are associated with increases in suicide (Gunnell and Chang 2016). Deteriorations in mental health were particularly seen in people who experienced unstable employment or financial problems (Shi et al. 2011). The longer the duration of unemployment, the greater the negative impact on mental health (Warr and Jackson 1985). Although unemployment is a key risk factor for suicide, increases in unemployment account for less than half of the increase in suicide after a recession commences (Barr et al. 2012).

Similar findings are seen in Australian population studies. For example, work by Crowe and Butterworth (2016) demonstrated that unemployment and underemployment significantly predict depression, even after controlling for financial hardship and other key factors.

Indigenous-focused studies

Among the few studies focusing on First Nations people in Australia and other parts of the world:

- international work by Haar et al. (2014) highlighted the importance of cultural considerations in understanding the effect of employment on mental health

- Western Australian work by Shepherd et al. (2012) showed that improving employment and income of Aboriginal families can improve mental health outcomes of children

- the *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth)* report found a majority of Indigenous workers feel some 'identity strain' in the workplace and experiences of racism and culturally unsafe workplaces are common (DCA/Jumbunna Institute 2020).

Key issues

Indigenous people have been excluded from the Australian economy through colonisation, the resulting alienation of Indigenous lands and resources, and by policies of exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation. The ongoing consequence is that many Indigenous people have neither the education nor the work experience to be able to demonstrate they have the skills required to compete in the labour market.

Indigenous people also experience widespread unconscious bias making it difficult to find and retain employment and reducing the quality of experience in employment (Shirodkar 2020).

The Indigenous business sector has been growing strongly for several decades which is important for Indigenous employment as they are up to 100 times more likely to hire Indigenous employees than non-Indigenous businesses. They also provide an Indigenous-friendly working environment and a culturally safe space to work (Shirodkar and Hunter 2019; Hunter 2015).

Since 2015, the Indigenous Procurement Policy has been associated with a substantial growth in the number of Indigenous businesses (Shirodkar and Hunter 2019). This is a positive feature of the Indigenous policy that should encourage the supply of culturally safe jobs for Indigenous people.

Cultural safety in an Indigenous-friendly workplace

Cultural safety is emerging as an important constraint on Indigenous employment and engagement with the labour market. It is key at all stages of the employment process, including recruitment, engagement, retention and development of Indigenous workers. More than a quarter of workplaces are culturally unsafe (DCA/Jumbunna 2020).

Cultural safety refers to the provision of an environment that is physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally safe (Williams 1999). Culturally safe practices recognise and respect the cultural identities of other people, their values, beliefs, expectations and rights. A culturally safe workplace provides an environment safe for Indigenous workers where there is no challenge or denial of their identity and experience. In contrast, culturally unsafe practices disempower a person, challenging their identity and wellbeing.

Cultural competence among non-Indigenous workers is an issue that needs to be addressed in many Australian workplaces if we are to enhance Indigenous access to the labour market.

The underrepresentation of Indigenous Australians in the mental health workforce is a key barrier to Indigenous engagement with mental health services (Upton et al. 2021). Having Indigenous workers in the mental health sector greatly improves its effectiveness.

Indigenous labour market policy interactions with mental health and suicide prevention

Labour market policies can facilitate Indigenous economic participation. They can be grouped into 3 broad categories (Gray et al. 2012):

- Supply-side policies that get Indigenous people ready for work by enhancing skills or increasing the willingness of individuals to participate in the labour market.

- Demand-side policies that enhance the profitability of employers and create jobs that are suitable for Indigenous job seekers.

- Policies that provide information and support for businesses to create Indigenous-friendly workplaces and to reduce discrimination.

Longitudinal analysis from the recession in the 1990s found that wage subsidies to employers were the most effective in securing employment outcomes for Indigenous jobseekers. Subsidised labour costs were a component of the Community Development Employment Projects (see Box 1).

Box 1: Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) case study

The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme started operating in some Indigenous communities in 1977. The scheme allowed Aboriginal organisations to hire CDEP participants to work part-time, with wages funded by foregone unemployment payments (with an additional provision that allowed some investment in the enterprise). The scheme was arguably a positive and creative employment program that supported economic self-determination with community control over working conditions and an Indigenous-friendly workplace. The scheme was replaced after 2013 by the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) and then the Community Development Program (CDP). In May 2021, plans were announced to replace the CDP with a new co-designed remote jobs program in 2023.

A 1997 Office of Evaluation and Audit evaluation report identified that non-labour market outcomes for CDEP participants are substantially better than those for Indigenous unemployed (OEA 1997). The evaluation demonstrated that CDEP participation was associated with significantly better outcomes for the major social determinants of health.

Calma (2007) argues that Indigenous mental health is driven by 'real' employment (not just CDEP work) as well as income, education, housing, and functional communities. Hunter (2009) confirmed Calma's claim using the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, which demonstrated that both CDEP and non-CDEP employment are associated with positive socioeconomic outcomes, but non-CDEP jobs were associated with significantly better outcomes.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP 2016) Report summarises the main factors associated with successful Indigenous suicide prevention. Education and preparing for employment were seen as particularly important for young people. Measurable reductions in suicidal behaviour for the Indigenous community, and higher-risk groups in that community, were identified with a policy intervention that involved substantial self-governance, cultural activity, physical health, employment, community safety and school attendance.

The *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth)* report outlines the workplace experiences of Indigenous Australians across the country. In addition to identifying the importance of cultural safety at work, being able to share their cultural background and avoiding 'identity strain' were important for a happy work life. Poor employer practices in the workplace, coupled with the consequences of pervasive racism, had a substantial effect on the overall health and wellbeing of Aboriginal employees, including a notable detrimental impact on mental health (DCA/Jumbunna Institute 2020).

The *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future Report* (Australian Human Rights Commission 2020:48) highlights Indigenous women's voices. The report describes employment as a 'key vehicle through which we can emancipate ourselves from entrenched cycles of poverty' and notes the emotional distress that women experience with unemployment or economic insecurity (Australian Human Rights Commission 2020:48). The report concludes that unemployment perpetuates cycles of poverty and trauma that Indigenous women face, standing as a key determinant of poorer outcomes for Indigenous people across Australia.

Relevant policies, programs and initiatives

Policies

Policies, strategies and frameworks that focus more generally on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention have been covered elsewhere (see AIHW 2021a, 2021b; Dudgeon et al. 2021; Upton et al. 2021).

Most mental health policies and related frameworks make only brief references to employment. As a rule, if the policies do mention employment, it is only to acknowledge that employment and economic resources are indirect factors associated with poor mental health and access to services.

Labour market policies and mental health polices suffer from a similar deficiency: they acknowledge that mental health issues can be an impediment to achieving effective employment outcomes, but there is rarely specific mention of a mental health focus in employment policies and programs.

Policy frameworks generally have only a limited understanding of the role of employment in suicide prevention. The augmented Family Stress Model (see Figure 1) suggests a broader range of possible ways employment can affect mental health outcomes.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (CATSIPO and Australian Governments 2020) was developed in partnership between Australian Commonwealth, state and territory governments and Indigenous peak organisations. The objective of this agreement is to enable Indigenous Australians and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Indigenous Australians so they can achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians. Target 8 is to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 who are employed to 62% (from the baseline of 51% in 2016). There are separate targets in other outcome areas, including health and wellbeing. This approach – of having separate targets for employment and health – creates policy silos that do not address the root cause of the interaction between priority areas and targets and the intersection of domains (Hunter and Stephenson 2013).There are 5 priority policy areas in the agreement: mental health is included as part of social and emotional wellbeing, but employment is not included in any of the 5 areas (CATSIPO and Australian Governments 2020, 7–8).

Each party to the National Agreement has developed its own implementation plan (developed with Indigenous partners). Although employment and mental health are listed as separate targets in the National Agreement, implementation plans can and do acknowledge interactions between policy domains. The agreement acknowledges that employment post-release from prison is an important driver of incarceration (AIHW 2021b).

OCHRE, which stands for opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility and empowerment, is the NSW Government plan for Aboriginal Affairs. It is unusual in that it includes both economic participation and healing as a focus (Aboriginal Affairs NSW 2013). The plan is premised on the principle of overcoming the causes of ongoing Indigenous trauma by addressing its underlying causes in government policies.

Programs and initiatives

Evaluations of programs addressing Indigenous employment and mental health were examined to understand the interaction of employment and mental health outcomes. Several themes emerged from this work:

- the reliance on administrative data in place of evaluations to assess programs (for example, the '1000 jobs package')
- the lack of published transparent and independent peer review
- the lack of Indigenous involvement in evaluations.

Of the programs designed to improve Indigenous employment outcomes, none had direct information about mental health outcomes (Table 1). The lack of Indigenous co-design in policy and program development was frequently nominated as a contributing factor to poor outcomes (NIAA 2020; Deloitte 2021; SVA Consulting 2021; Inside Policy 2021). The reviews also flagged other important considerations:

- Employment programs frequently overstate effectiveness by not considering how many participants would have got a job anyway. This is known as 'deadweight loss', which requires controlling in evaluations (Hunter et al. 2000).

- Evaluations should also control for the 'job displacement' effect: employers included in a program expand at the expense of employers who are not involved in the intervention.

- Pilot programs need to gather evaluation data before widespread implementation (PM&C 2018).

- Alongside the importance of cultural safety in employment, restrictive conditions and inflexibility were flagged as leading to burn-out of some participants (NIAA 2020).

- A Deloitte (2021) review of several programs identified a disconnect between policy makers and Indigenous people in the definition of meaningful employment.

- The mental health of participants affects the uptake and success of employment programs (Deloitte 2021).

- Work that is meaningful for an individual and their community – and for which people feel respected, appreciated or appropriately remunerated – is fundamental to wellbeing.

Table 1: Program descriptions and evaluation information, employment programs

Name and brief description	Location / Indigenous-specific?	Evaluation
1000 jobs package Program aims to invest $50 million to help create 1000 job opportunities by subsidising employment.	Remote areas of Australia Indigenous-specific – MCDP job seekers, most of whom are Indigenous.	No formal evaluation. Analysis of administrative data, NIAA submission to Senate Estimates 2021
Employment Parity Initiative Operating since 2015, this program aims to achieve Indigenous employment parity in large Australian businesses. It is to be replaced by a new Indigenous Skills and Employment Program from 1 July 2022.	National Indigenous-specific – yes	No formal evaluation. Analysis of program data, NIAA Submission to House of Representatives based on administrative data Deloitte Access Economics (2021)
Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG) and the Indigenous Cadetship Support (ICS) The TAEG provides large grants to support flexible work opportunities for Indigenous Australians; the ICS provides paid cadetships for Indigenous university students to do degree-relevant work.	National Indigenous-specific – yes	NIAA (2020) Deloitte Access Economics (2021)
Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTECs) VTECs link jobseekers with guaranteed work after they complete their training.	National Indigenous-specific: No	Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research (2019) Deloitte Access Economics (2021)
The Community Development Program (CDP) The CDP replaces the CDEP and RJCP (see Box 1), pays jobseekers to work, and encourages employers to take in employees and provide training due to subsidised labour costs.	Remote Indigenous-specific – largely	OEA (1997) – relates to the CDEP review ANAO (2017) PM&C (2018)

Name and brief description	Location / Indigenous-specific?	Evaluation
Time to Work Employment Service This is a national, voluntary in-prison employment support program targeted to adult sentenced Indigenous prisoners. It aims to better prepare participants for employment and community re-integration.	73 prisons across Australia Indigenous-specific – yes	SVA Consulting (2021)

Programs that significantly improve mental health outcomes in an employment context were also examined (Table 2). All of these featured benefits to mental health and/or wellbeing. Some supported participants in talking about feelings, mental health and suicides of people they know (Almeda et al. 2019; Tighe and McKay 2012). A retrospective evaluation of the Yuendumu Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation reported that 92% of participants who graduated from the Night School/Jaru program in 2006 were still employed almost a decade later (Shaw 2015).

Table 2: Program descriptions and evaluation information, mental health programs involving employment

Name and brief description	Location / Indigenous-specific?	Evaluation
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) MHFA is a training program focused on mental health awareness and modelled on conventional First Aid training. Youth MHFA was launched in 2007 to teach adults who work with youth and in 2007 MHFA for Indigenous Australians was launched, which is a cultural adaptation.	Australia and 25 other countries Indigenous-specific – no, but there is an Indigenous-specific training course.	Kitchener and Jorm (2008) Kelly et al. (2011) Hart et al. (2009)
Yiriman Project This project develops culturally appropriate strategies to address self-harm and suicide in youth in the West Kimberley Region.	Fitzroy Valley, Western Australia Indigenous-specific – yes	Palmer (2016)
Ibobbly The ibobbly mobile app is a social and emotional wellbeing self-help application designed by the Black Dog Institute for young Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over.	Australia Indigenous-specific – yes	Tighe et al. (2017)
Red Dust Healing Program Red Dust Healing is cultural healing program in the form of workshops with specialised facilitators.	National Indigenous-specific – yes	Jo Thompson Consulting (2019)
Alive and Kicking Goals aims to reduce suicide among Indigenous youth around Broome through educational workshops, one-on-one mentoring, and professional counselling in a culturally appropriate environment.	Kimberley region Indigenous-specific – yes	Tighe and McKay (2012)
Deadly Thinking provides a 'Train-the-trainer' workshop that aims to increase emotional health and wellbeing literacy, improve help-seeking behaviours, and decrease the stigma surrounding mental health.	Location: Rural and remote Australia Indigenous-specific – yes	Orygen: The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health (2018)
Stronger Smarter Yarns for Life is a suicide prevention program that was developed with and for Indigenous people.	Location: Queensland, Northern Territory and ACT Indigenous-specific – yes	Almeda et al. (2019)

Name and brief description	Location / Indigenous-specific?	Evaluation
Yuendumu Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation programs include the Warra-Warra Kanyi, a counselling and mentoring service that combines formal, tertiary counselling skills with a local Warlpiri approach.	Location: Warlpiri region Indigenous-specific – yes	Bowchung Pty Ltd (2015)

International evidence about recessions and suicide prevention interventions

International approaches to mitigating the impact of economic downturns on suicide were explored. This analysis signalled that funding for active labour market programs both supports employment and reduces the average number of suicides. Support for unemployed and people experiencing economic hardship is also protective in terms of suicide prevention.

In the Indigenous context, the emphasis of training of front-line service staff in recognising and responding to the mental health of clients is consistent with the emphasis on cultural safety and cultural awareness discussed in this paper.

What works

International and national studies confirm that better mental health outcomes are the result of employment and financial and income security. These studies found that:

- Labour market programs are associated with better employment outcomes and retention of employment for sustained periods (Gray and Hunter 2005). Wage subsidies have historically been the most effective labour market program to secure Indigenous employment.

- Having a job is crucial, but the type of job is also important. Security of tenure, better-paid employment, and having some control over working conditions enhances the stability of Indigenous households by providing economic security and hence reducing family stress.

- Whatever form of job an Indigenous worker has, it is crucial that it is in a culturally safe environment.

- Policies aimed at encouraging the Indigenous business sector will encourage the number of jobs that are culturally safe.

- Optimising Indigenous employment in mental health and the Indigenous community sector will contribute to cultural safety for workers and service recipients.

Indigenous workers are disproportionately discouraged from labour market participation during economic downturns because of:

- social exclusion and low attachment to the labour market

- racial discrimination in the labour market

- unconscious bias in broader society.

In the long run, Indigenous self-determination and community control over policy or programs established to realise Indigenous priorities and goals is needed to ensure the full and equitable participation of Indigenous people in the social, economic and political life of Australian society (Jordan and Hunter 2009).

Conclusions

Economic policy has a substantial impact on mental health outcomes and suicide prevention for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The international evidence is clear: funding for active labour market programs both supports employment and reduces suicides. It is reasonable to assume that improving the economic situation of Indigenous people will improve Indigenous mental health and suicide outcomes.

Policy needs to reduce the barriers to employment and provide positive work environments for those with mental health issues. It is especially important to invest in employment opportunities for the Indigenous workforce.

Economic hardship and employment are often listed as issues that policies are seeking to address, but there are no clear claims made for the specific effect of employment on mental health, so they are hard to evaluate. There is lack of a coherent theory for framing how and why employment and economic hardship affects Indigenous mental health. Collecting longitudinal information on both economic hardship and mental health should allow us to unpack some of the economic drivers of Indigenous mental health.

More research is required into what makes an Indigenous-friendly workplace and what factors facilitate mental health in non-Indigenous workplaces. Improvements in mental health are likely to be associated with a broader notion of meaningful work that connects psychologically and spiritually distressed individuals to their communities. Practice-based evidence and evaluations are required for mental health interventions involving employment. Indigenous Australians must be involved in, and own, the research and evaluation process and program design and delivery of service. The *Gari Yala* report is a good example of research into Aboriginal experiences in the workplace from an Indigenous point of view. Data instruments and assessments should always consider the Indigenous worldview and use culturally sensitive language and protocols. Mental health data must be meaningful for Indigenous peoples.

The long-term structural issues will not disappear overnight because of the legacy of social exclusion from mainstream social networks and political and economic institutions, driven by unconscious bias, explicit discrimination, and the failure to recognise cultural barriers to inclusion.

Ultimately, employment is just one of many factors associated with mental health, especially in the Indigenous community. Employment is not sufficient to improve Indigenous mental health, but facilitating the right sort of jobs can provide essential support through the reduction in economic hardship and so a reduction in family and household stress.

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