



A message from  
**Coordinator-General  
Office for Mental Health  
and Wellbeing**



17 April 2020

This is the first in a short series of targeted newsflashes. Please distribute through your networks if you find it useful!

The potential mental health impacts from social isolation and restrictions is clear. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are highly mobile within their community circles, highly engaged with community events and strongly connected to family, land, and culture this is a prominent issue.

The strength of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT and surrounding areas, and the wealth of cultural knowledge they bring to this country is widely acknowledged and celebrated.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Partnerships team in ACT Health continuing to work with community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to raise awareness and ensure community understanding. Critical, culturally appropriate services continue to be delivered, including through flexible arrangements to support individuals to remain home and with family.

While COVID-19 is dominating the focus of community, it is important to remember health services are still running and it is critical that we all maintain our regular and ongoing health supports as we did before the public health emergency was declared. If you are having difficulties maintaining your past health practices, please reach out to your GP or Health Professional to discuss ways to continue your care.

**Tips for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for keeping mentally well and connected**

**Limit news and social media if you find it distressing** - Find a healthy balance in relation to media coverage –seeing/hearing a lot of negative information this can heighten these feelings.

**Maintain physical activities** - go for a walk and remember to follow the physical distancing advice. Visit <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/> for further information on physical distancing.

**Practice focused/deep breathing** – try breathing in for four counts and breathing out for four counts. Do this for five minutes.

**Practice mindfulness activities** - write down your thoughts, mindful eating, listen to music (<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/deep-listening-dadirri>).

**Be kind** to yourself and others around you as it could be stressful for your loved ones too.

**Find something you can do safely to still contribute to your community** – think about our Elders and families that are struggling. Give them a call or text to check in on them.

**Stay connected** with friends, family and colleagues via email, social media, video conferencing or telephone.

**Engage in healthy activities** that you enjoy and find relaxing.

**Keep regular sleep routines** and eat healthy foods.

**Remind yourself** that this is a temporary period of isolation to slow the spread of the virus.

## Contact Information

- Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services – 6284 6222
  - <https://www.winnunga.org.au/covid-19-coronavirus-precautions-for-winnunga-clients/>
- Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation – 6296 8900
  - <https://gugan-gulwan.com.au/>
- Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636
  - <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>
- Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800
- Lifeline – 13 11 14 <https://www.lifeline.org.au>  
(Deaf Canberrans can contact Lifeline’s Text Service on 0477 13 11 14)
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service – 6280 0900
- Victim Support ACT – 1800 822 272
- GriefLine – 1300 845 745
- Suicide Call Back – 1300 659 467
- National Coronavirus Helpline – 1800 020 080

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the frontline workers and the people who support them, who are going above and beyond to support our community.