



MEDIA RELEASE

How can a child of ten feel such despair that she would end her life?

Thursday 17 January 2019

Across Australia, suicide and self-harm among First Nations young people is on the increase. This is being driven by a deep sense of hopelessness and despair, by a lack of belonging and connection, and in some cases by the abuse they have experienced.

Five more young Aboriginal girls have taken their own lives in recent weeks, prompting a warning from suicide prevention researcher working at the coal face, Gerry Georgatos to indicate that First Nations children and young people could soon comprise half of all youth suicides.

In Australia, suicide remains a leading cause of death for young people and the suicide rate among First nations people remains unacceptably high at more than double the national suicide rate.

Culture is Life CEO Belinda Duarte is calling on all Australians to think about the devastating toll of Aboriginal youth suicide:

“My heart breaks for these girls and their families and their unimaginable pain. How can a child of ten feel such despair that she would end her life? What must she have seen, heard and felt in such a short life to destroy all hope? What has she lived? Imagine if this were your child, your family, your close-knit community. Wouldn't there be outrage, a wailing from the heart of overwhelming grief?”

Aboriginal young people today are living with the consequences of colonisation and of policies and laws through more than two centuries that have lead to trauma and

dispossession, compounded by the racism and ignorance they experience on a daily basis. The task of repair and healing requires a powerful counter-force to abuse, ignorance and apathy.

Looking to the solutions Belinda Duarte says:

“We can tackle this together as Australians. We can begin to repair these wounds through daily acts of love and hope in communities, schools, universities, and workplaces. Daily acts that send a message to our young people that there is belonging, strength and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. And by calling on government to listen and enact what our Aboriginal young people, their families and communities are telling us. They know the solutions. Let’s support our young people to thrive.”

Share it with #loveandhope #cultureislife.

Belinda Duarte’s opinion piece ‘Love and hope can save young Aboriginal people in despair’ is published in the Australian today, Thursday 17 January.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/love-and-hope-can-save-young-aborigines-in-despair/news-story/d35641520d5ee5f97950879130c250c1>

Culture is Life, is a not-for-profit that backs Aboriginal and Torres Strait led solutions to prevent youth suicide and to support young people to thrive. <https://www.cultureislife.org/>

For help or support contact: Lifeline 13 11 14 (24 hours-a-day), your local Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation <https://www.naccho.org.au/member-services/naccho-member-services/> , beyondblue 1300 22 4636 or Q Life <https://qlife.org.au/> 1800 184 527.

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