

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Australian Psychological Society calls for trauma support resources for indigenous communities

Psychologists at The Australian Psychological Society are offering their support to indigenous people suffering from a significant gap in services, such as counselling and support for primary and secondary abuse victims in remote communities. The recent exposure of abuse problems within indigenous communities has raised awareness of the significant support required.

“Suitably trained Aboriginal trauma counsellors are needed to service Aboriginal communities where child sexual abuse has been exposed in all its rawness,” said APS President Amanda Gordon.

Aboriginal counsellor, Vickie Hovane, is a member of the APS working in Western Australia. “Without long term supports, we are likely to see more self-harming, suicides, substance abuse and the development of trauma-related psychological disorders,” said Hovane.

“Government interest is welcome in the problems of abuse in indigenous communities, but the community needs on-going support, well beyond this election year. Communities require assistance in developing their own culturally safe support mechanisms and systems. This is likely to involve the training of a trauma workforce, and ongoing supervision and support for workers tackling this sensitive and complex issue in remote communities. The unacceptable alternative is to leave communities unsupported once the criminal and child protection investigators leave. Who or what will be available to assist communities to pick up the pieces?” said Gordon.

The APS calls on the Federal and State governments to provide adequate and appropriate training for indigenous health professionals. Long-term employment and professional support for these trained indigenous counsellors is required to engage them in the lengthy healing process in these remote communities.

The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 15,700 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples’ lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.

For media enquiries please contact: Elaine Grant

Communications Manager

Australian Psychological Society

T: 03 8662 3363 | M: 0412 683 068