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## **Australia: alarming suicide rate among Aboriginal children under 17. Catholic Social Services Australia, “an indictment on our entire community”.**

According to the Report “Causes of Death” released in Australia, suicide was the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged between five and 17 during the period 2016-2020. In the last year alone, 70 aboriginal children (aged 5 to 17) took their own lives in Queensland. This figure is higher than in any other state and shows that suicide is the leading cause of death among indigenous youth across Australia. Also last year, 223 indigenous youths took their lives across the country. According to Catholic Social Services Australia Chair, Francis Sullivan, these figures are “an indictment on our entire community”. “Indigenous people are telling us what the problem is and we need to listen”, Sullivan said. In the Cherbourg community alone, 240 kilometres north-west of Brisbane, 10 people, mostly young men, took their own lives in the past year. “While causes of Indigenous suicide share some similarities to the rest of the population, including untreated mental illness and trauma from childhood abuse and substance abuse, Indigenous people also suffer the devastation caused by loss of land and culture, trans-generational trauma, racism, and social exclusion”, Sullivan remarked. Two years ago, Gracelyn Smallwood, a leading indigenous health academic and a professor of nursing and midwifery at Central Queensland University, described suicide among indigenous young people as “normalised behaviour”, a tragedy that deserves a national debate. It must be said, however, that the Federal Government has launched a new awareness campaign called “Take a step”, designed and developed by young Indigenous Australians, with the aim and hope to reduce youth suicide. The campaign encourages young people to recognise when they might need support and explores practical things they can do to improve their mental health. The Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt, said reducing youth suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is one of the highest priorities for Government.

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