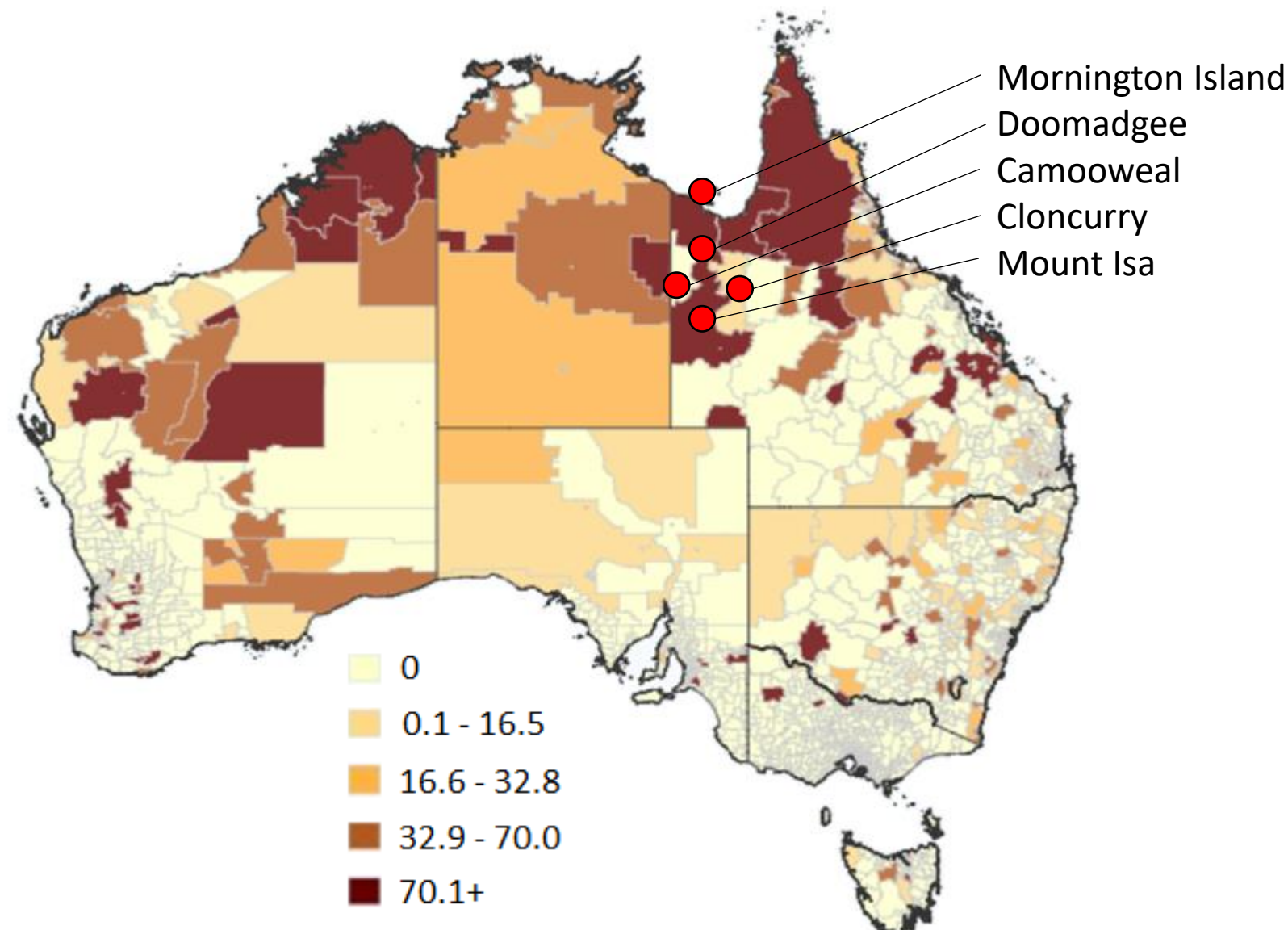


Indigenous Suicide in Rural and Remote Australia: Are All Suicides Preventable?

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INTRODUCTION¹

- Indigenous suicide in Australia continues to be a major public health issue.
- **95%** of Indigenous Australians are directly or indirectly affected by suicide.
- **5x** risk of suicide in Indigenous males aged 15-24.
- **6x** risk of suicide in very remote areas.



OBJECTIVES

- Review current literature on Indigenous Suicide.
- Interview current Mental Health Workers in North West Queensland: **Consultant Psychiatrists (3), Mental Health Nurse Clinicians (5), Indigenous Support and Liaison Officers (4) Indigenous Mental Health Social Workers (4)** from multiple locations (Image 1).

METHODS

Review Current Literature

Develop Semi-structured Interviews

Conduct Interviews with Mental Health Workers

Thematic Analyses

Recommendations

RESULTS

Major themes identified from the currently literature



Additional theme identified and emphasised by current mental health workers



DISCUSSION

- **Health Worker's Burnout:** Unique employment issues: difficult and emotionally challenging work, geographical isolation, lack of support and training opportunities.
- **Alcohol Induced Psychosis:** Acute intoxication frequently causes serious depression and psychosis, including auditory hallucinations frequently with a strong suicidal theme.
- **Indigenous Cultural Variation:** There is a wide cultural variability between different Indigenous communities, even within the same family groups.
- **'Slow Suicide':** Suicide by chronic self-neglect and apathy towards medical management of chronic conditions especially from early onset diabetes, chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular disease.

CONCLUSIONS

- Indigenous suicide is a complex, multifactorial interplay between social, cultural, spiritual, emotional and health risk factors.
- Alcohol appears to have a profound mental health effect in Indigenous people causing severely depressed mood as well as psychotic symptoms.
- There is no single, simple solution for the prevention of suicide.
- Unique solutions may be required for different communities.
- In theory, suicide should be preventable, however in current circumstances, Indigenous suicides are NOT ALL preventable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further research is required to identify improved models of care which focus on individual and population based interventions and which will extend beyond health services to include early education, employment, housing and the development of leadership from within the Indigenous community.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

- Semi-structured format
- Single interviewer
- Clinical perspectives
- Currently working
- Deeper personal insight

- Single data set
- Small sample size
- Selection bias
- Qualitative data
- No External validity

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