NATIONAL PEAK BODY CALLS FOR AUSTRALIA TO STEM THE TIDE OF SUICIDE

8 March 2016

Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) Chief Executive Sue Murray today calls for Australia to take drastic action to stem the tide of suicide, in light of the report released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that 2,864 Australians died by suicide in 2014 (2,160 males and 704 females).

This is an increase of 342 deaths following the previously reported 2013 figure of 2,522. For the past 10 years, the suicide rate in Australia has not dropped.

“Suicide costs the community dearly – economically and socially. It causes immense grief and loss for those who are bereaved by suicide as well as the suffering and pain experienced by those who attempt or think about suicide,” Ms Murray says.

“These numbers indicate that our exposure to and the impact of suicide is on the rise. One death by suicide is one too many so seeing an increase is extremely concerning. We must change the way we approach prevention if we are to have any chance of reducing suicides in this country.

Those working in the field of suicide prevention have formed a National Coalition for Suicide Prevention, made up of individuals, organisations, government and business people who agreed to work collaboratively towards reducing deaths by suicide by half in ten years.

In particular, we need to learn from those with personal experience of suicide. People who’ve lived through suicidal crisis have unique insights that will help build our knowledge and understanding. What drove them there? More importantly, what helped them live?”

SPOKESPEOPLE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

- Alan Woodward – SPA Board Director and head of Lifeline Research Foundation
- Tom Calma AO – SPA Ambassador and Indigenous Leader
- Matthew Tukaki – Chair of National Coalition for Suicide Prevention
- Kim Borrowdale – Head of Communications
- Lived Experience Network members with personal stories of suicide
We should be learning more from those with personal experience of suicide

- Suicide is a human behaviour, a response to unbearable psychological pain
- We must humanise these numbers and seek to understand the drivers behind the decision to take one’s own life as well as what can help those feelings subside before they reach crisis point and help carers/loved ones
- Government reform that is community driven and puts people at centre of care is a start but this needs to be backed with true lived experience consultation, a public health approach and sustained funding.

We should seek to understand the drivers for suicide across spectrum of ages

- We are seeing an increase in deaths by suicide across all ages and need to invest in understanding the drivers for each age group.
- The rates of suicide for both males and females have increased to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} highest peak since 1997.
- Men represent approximately 75% of suicide deaths with particularly vulnerable periods of life being the middle years (40-44 and 50-54) and later years (80+).

We should listen to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples are almost twice more likely to die by suicide than non-Indigenous people and there were 143 deaths due to suicide (102 male, 41 female).
- These numbers indicate the critical need to close the gap in social and emotional wellbeing for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- As of yet there are no clear indications on the implementation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy. $17.8m was allocated to this strategy over four years in 2006.
- We are pleased to see the Inaugural National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Conference being held in May this year showcasing community driven suicide prevention programs.

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APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL HEADLINE STATISTICS AND SUPPORT INFORMATION

- While suicide rates are lower than the most recent peak in 1997 (14.6 per 100,000) they have increased between 2013 (10.9 per 100,000) and 2014 (12.0 per 100,000)

- The highest rate for males was in those aged 85 years and over (37.6 per 100,000) followed by the 40-44 and 50-54 year age groups (29.9 per 100,000 and 29.2 per 100,000 respectively)

- The lowest age-specific suicide rate for males was in the 0-14 year age group (0.3 per 100,000) and the 15-19 year age group with 12.1 per 100,000 compared to 14.9 per 100,000 in 2013)

- The highest age-specific suicide rate for females in 2014 was observed in the 35-39 age group (9.2 per 100,000). The lowest age-specific suicide rate for females was observed in the 0-14 age group (0.7 per 100,000)

For more information, including graphs and key summaries of data visit: http://www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-suicide/facts-and-stats/_nocache

About Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA): SPA provides national leadership for the suicide prevention sector in Australia. SPA works collaboratively to develop a community that knows how to ask for help and how to give help. As the lead agency of the National Suicide Prevention Coalition, we build and facilitate partnerships to change attitudes to mental illness and suicidal behaviours, and seek to harness the voices of professionals and those with lived experience of suicide attempts and suicide. www.suicidepreventionaust.org


Crisis support information

- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 www.kidshelp.com.au
- MensLine 1300 78 99 78 www.mensline.org.au

For a comprehensive list of support and services available in Australia go to www.communitiesmatter.com.au If you or someone you know is in immediate danger call 000.

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