



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

10 September 2008

World Suicide Prevention Day – New Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Council

The Rudd Government will bring together key community experts in suicide prevention to develop the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, and invest \$2.4 million in an innovative suicide-prevention pilot program.

The new Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Council will be chaired by Professor Ian Webster, Emeritus Professor of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales.

The council will provide a forum for expert service providers, researchers and clinicians to share expertise, contribute to national decision-making processes and to identify community needs and priorities for the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

I have also approved a new, reinvigorated National Suicide Prevention Strategy Workplan, which will include significant shifts in approach to suicide prevention:

- a shift to supporting service provision for individuals at greatest risk of suicide, particularly individuals who have attempted suicide or self harm, or who are otherwise at high risk of suicide, such as the innovative suicide-prevention pilot program outlined below.
- a stronger emphasis on support for people at risk of suicide in rural and remote areas of Australia, such as training for health professionals in rural and remote areas to identify and respond to people at risk of suicide.
- more proactive and targeted support for other high-risk groups, including people bereaved by suicide, Indigenous people, young people and men. Work in this area will include funding men's networks, such as the Toowoomba Older Men's Network, continuation and strengthening of the *Mindmatters* program for secondary school children, and funding for bereavement crisis support services in the aftermath of a suicide, including Indigenous specific services.
- strengthening the capacity of communities to prevent suicide in specific geographic areas. The government will work with states and territories to identify local areas most affected by suicide, and will develop appropriate locally tailored projects to support local populations affected by or at risk of suicide.

New support for patients at risk of suicide and self-harm

One example of the more targeted approach being taken by the Government is a new measure to support patients at high risk of suicide or self-harm.

At the demonstration sites, people who have self-harmed or attempted suicide and then presented to a GP or an Accident and Emergency Department will be linked with allied health providers specially trained in how to provide essential support.

A total of \$2.4 million is being provided for 20 demonstration sites around Australia under the project. Divisions of General Practice in these areas will engage allied health professionals to deliver more flexible and intensive services for high risk patients.

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For all other inquiries, contact Ms Roxon's office (02) 6277 7220

Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Council (ASPAC) - Members

- Chair – Professor Ian Webster, Emeritus Professor of Public Health & Community Medicine, University of NSW;
- Ms Dawn O’Neil – CEO, Lifeline and member of the National Advisory Council on Mental Health;
- Dr Michael Dudley – Chair of Suicide Prevention Australia and Senior Staff Specialist in Psychiatry, Prince of Wales and Sydney Children’s Hospitals;
- Ms Wendy Sturgess – CEO, Crisis Support Services;
- Professor Diego de Leo – Director, Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention;
- Professor Brian Kelly – Director, NSW Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health;
- Ms Barbara Hocking – Executive Director, SANE Australia;
- Ms Janet Meagher – Consumers’ Health Forum of Australia; and
- Ms Adele Cox – Chair, National Indigenous Youth Movement.