

MEDIA RELEASE



Thursday, 18 January 2018

Long- term thinking needed to prevent rural youth suicide

Suicide is a complex issue with no one single cause and we need to think long-term if we intend to address rural youth suicide.

The recent death by suicide of Dolly Everett has resulted in widespread discussion about the tragedy of youth suicide, especially when it occurs in rural and remote areas where there are fewer resources and services dedicated to suicide prevention and to supporting families and others who are affected.

The Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) would like to express our sympathy to Dolly's family and all whose lives have been touched by the suicide of a family member friend or acquaintance.

Rural suicide causes enormous distress to individuals, families, work places, schools and across communities and must be seriously addressed.

In 2016 the rate of suicide per 100,000 people in rural and remote Australia was 50 percent higher than in cities.

Director of the CRRMH, Professor David Perkins said this fact alone should result in all governments and national and state service providers seriously considering how their plans, funding and services should address this tragic inequity.

"While we applaud the recent funding announcement by the federal government to help teachers to identify students who are at immediate risk, we need to do much more to reverse the increase in youth suicide rates into the future.

"We also need to focus strongly on building protective factors so that young people are more resilient in the future, and to build stronger family, school and community environments that can support their young people. This is of critical importance in rural and remote areas where local resources need to achieve the same as service providers in capital cities," Professor Perkins said.

The CRRMH has recently released a position paper on the prevention of rural suicide that advocates a five-fold approach that focuses on the immediate and longer term futures:

- provide immediate responses to assist those who are currently at risk of suicide
- provide effective and ongoing support to those who are affected by the suicide of a close family member, friend or colleague
- provide support to those who are vulnerable due to life circumstances
- build protective factors in children and young people

- build healthy and resilient rural people and communities.

You can read all the five key focus areas for action to address the need to save rural lives now and to lower the number of deaths and rates of suicide in the future by downloading the [position paper on “Rural Suicide and its Prevention”](#) at www.crrmh.com.au.

“Australia should adopt an aspirational goal of achieving a very low rate of youth suicide in future generations and all governments and sectors need to work together at a local, regional, state and national level to achieve this goal,” Professor Perkins said.

“Everyone needs to be part of the solution to the under-recognised and unacceptable problem of rural suicide.”

The CRRMH welcomes the opportunity to partner with organisations that wish to take action and have a positive impact on rural suicide. Please contact us on 02 6363 8444 or email crrmh@newcastle.edu.au

The CRRMH is also mindful that media and those commenting in media/ social media ensure responsible discussion of suicide. Please consider MindFrame guidelines when reporting about suicide: <http://www.mindframe-media.info/>

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

If you’re concerned about your own or someone else’s mental health, you can call the NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511 or Lifeline on 13 11 14.

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