

MEDIA RELEASE



Thursday, 7 December 2017

Position Paper recommends strategies to save lives and decrease rates of rural suicide

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

This has prompted the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) to develop a [Position Paper on "Rural Suicide and its Prevention"](#). This paper proposes 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.

Director of the CRRMH, Professor David Perkins said that recommendations outlined in the Position Paper draw on the suggestions and ideas obtained from participants who attended the CRRMH's Rural Suicide Prevention Forum held at the Sydney Royal Easter Show as well as local and international sources, and the CRRMH's experience and research.

"Rural suicide causes enormous distress to individuals, families, schools, workplaces, and communities and must be addressed seriously. We believe that the higher rates of suicide in rural and remote Australia and the current upward trend in rural suicide rates are not acceptable," he said.

"Clearly the way we currently think about and respond to the problem of suicide prevention is not working in regional, rural and remote Australia. While the evidence to inform the prevention of suicide in rural areas is not perfect, this should not prevent us from taking action," said Professor Perkins.

Patron of the CRRMH, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) Governor of NSW has endorsed the Position Paper and says the purpose of this paper is twofold: to describe the problem and to suggest how we might address it based on the best available evidence.

The paper outlines two focus areas for immediate action that include strategies to: prevent people who experience suicidality from taking their own lives and to help those who are affected by the suicide of others.

The other three focus areas include suggestions designed to: prevent deaths in the future including providing support to vulnerable groups in rural and remote populations, building protective factors in children and young people and; building healthy and resilient people and communities.

The paper also provides concrete suggestions for addressing the high rates of suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities specifically looking at indigenous leadership and participation in suicide prevention strategies.

Strategies outlined advocate that leadership for rural suicide prevention is needed at the Commonwealth, State and Local Government level. Local communities also have a role to play and are best-placed to identify local opportunities for suicide prevention, both in terms of how to help those who might be at risk of experiencing suicidality and how to improve the resilience of their community.

“Decreasing the suicide rates is not just the responsibility of the health sector; it goes beyond health,” said Professor Perkins.

“It can’t be one size fits all approach; these strategies must consider the unique social, economic and environmental strengths and weaknesses that exist in individual rural communities.

“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.

You can download the Position Paper at www.crrmh.com.au.

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.

For best practice guidelines on Mental Health Reporting, visit <http://www.mindframe-media.info/>

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Locked Bag 6005 Orange NSW 2800



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