



DELEGATE'S REPORT

15th November 2005

DR1	SUICIDE PREVENTION
FILE: *	CLR JHB

SUMMARY:

Reporting on a meeting with Ms Catherine Sydes, National Manager, Lifeforce Suicide Prevention Program and Mr Craig Willis, Suicide Prevention Manager, North Coast Area Health Service.



The meeting was held at Port Macquarie on Wednesday, 19 October 2005 following an address by Ms Sydes at the recent Country Mayors Association and a visit to Council by Mr Willis and Mr and Mrs Eric Trezise.

The matter of suicide prevention, as is mental health generally, is such that in the main it is ignored trivialised or neglected.

Port Macquarie Hastings Council submitted a motion to the Local Government Association Conference at Mudgee calling for a review of the Mental Health Act partnerships with the Council of Social Services and the Australian Local Government Association pointing out that there was no Local Government Association Policy.

In support of the motion Council states that Mental Health is crisis driven with insufficient funding.

In 2002 Council resolved that the then Mid North Coast Area Health Service advise the strategy in place in respect to Suicide Prevention.

It appears there is no strategy.

In May 2005 the Commonwealth Government released a Draft Framework for Effective Community-Based Suicide Prevention for consultation.

The document refers to the community-wide approach to suicide prevention with three tasks that help communities build the infrastructure required for a successful and sustainable approach to suicide prevention.

- Notifying, understanding and involving the community
- Reviewing and/or building community capacity
- Reviewing and/or building community readiness for suicide prevention

Continued engagement and participation of the whole community is essential.

A report compiled by the Mental Health Council of Australia, the Brain and Mental Research Institute and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission provides the disturbing message of how mental health services are failing millions of Australians each day.

The Minister for Health, Mr Tony Abbott, MP has acknowledged the need for improved services but said the system would work better if just one level of government dealt with the issues.

Wouldn't this apply equally to all health services throughout Australia?

A Suicide Safety Network is to be established within the Hastings along similar lines to that of the Central Coast, which Mr Trezise outlined to Council.

Whilst the network does not provide services to the community it seeks to identify shortfalls in service provision and resources, which place "at risk" individuals in harms way.

Ms Sydes indicated that she would welcome the opportunity to address Council.

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS) was introduced in 1999 and aims to reduce the incidence of suicide and self harm and promote mental health and resilience across the Australian population.

The NSW NSPS Advisory Group has funded 24 projects in NSW, which were overseen by the Department of Health and Ageing. One cluster of eight projects was aimed specifically at men aged 25-44, while a second cluster of five projects targeted indigenous communities.

There was funding in the 2004/05 Council budget with a follow up grant for 2005/06 for "Gathering Resilience and Personal Growth Towards Empowerment" under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy (the program). The program was one of the five indigenous projects approved through the Department of Health and Ageing.

Council received an award for the above program in September 2005.

In a review of the NSW Suicide Projects the NSPS took a considered decision to shift the focus of suicide prevention 'upstream' and encourage prevention activities aimed either at whole communities or targeting those groups with above average risk.

The six areas which have been prioritised for action are:

1. Promoting well-being, resilience and community capacity across Australia.
2. Enhancing protective factors for suicide and self-harm across the Australian community.
3. Improving the ability of services and support networks within the community to meet the needs of groups at increased risk.
4. Services for individuals at high risk.
5. Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
6. Progressing the evidence base for suicide prevention and good practice.

Sustainability can be taken to mean that the overall work commenced by the pilot project will be continued and supported by another body after the initial seed funding has ceased.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

• ***Environmental***

Nil

• ***Social***

There is clear evidence of the importance of mental health services embracing suicide prevention with the number of presentations to Kempsey District Hospital.

• ***Economic (Financial)***

Nil

• ***Policy or Statutory***

Council's Social Plan refers to the benefits of social networks to address social deprivation through ongoing health conditions such as mental illness.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Ms Catherine Sydes be invited to address Council at the February 2006 meeting.
2. That Mental Health Services and Suicide Prevention be included on the agenda of matters to be discussed with Mr Mark Vaile, MP, Deputy Prime Minister, Member for Lyne and Mr Andrew Stoner, MP Member for Oxley.

3. That an appropriate motion concerning the totally inadequate funding provided by State and Commonwealth Governments to ensure that services for Mental Health and Suicide prevention are effective and efficient be included on the agenda for the Mid North Coast Group of Councils and the "A" Division Conference of the Shires Association of NSW, in 2006.

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COUNCILLOR J H BOWELL