

Youth Suicide and Prevention

Young people face many barriers, concerns and obstacles in their lives and many have developed the skills and resilience to overcome these. Unfortunately for some young people the reality of their circumstances is too much for them to bear alone and suicide seems like the only option. Suicide is still one of the leading causes of death of young people in Australia with Tasmania, along with the Northern Territory, recording higher rates of suicide when compared to other states. Suicide rates are particularly high among young Aboriginal people. Research indicates that young men complete suicide at a higher rate than young women and in 2011, 80 males aged 15-19 and 151 males aged 20-24 died by suicide compared to the 35 females aged 15-19 and 55 aged 20-24 Australia wide.

Mission Australia's Annual Youth Survey found that 12.5% of young females in Tasmania were extremely concerned about suicide and another 8.8% were very concerned compared to the 6.7% of young males who were extremely concerned and 4.7% who were very concerned. Given the alarming numbers of young people completing suicide it is important that help seeking behaviours and prevention programs and initiatives are put in place to assist these young people. Self harm is often described as a help seeking behaviour, as is acting out, sudden changes in attitude or disassociation from friends, family and activities that were previously enjoyed. It is important that people are aware of these help seeking behaviours and are confident enough to respond to them. Prevention programs need to be broad enough to accommodate the different needs of young people to provide the best service.

Mental health is a major factor in suicidal behaviour, particularly in youth suicide. Several other factors such as alcohol and drugs, family or friendship breakdowns, school stresses and self esteem can also be linked to suicidal behaviour in young people. Youth suicide prevention strategies need to take these different factors into account to best assist young people.

YNOT is committed to:

- Advocating for the need for youth suicide prevention programs and strategies.

ynot is the peak body representing the voice of Tasmanian youth



- Assisting in the development of resources to enable youth sector workers to identify and appropriately respond to help seeking behaviours.
- Encouraging young people to discuss their concerns with others to minimise the feeling of isolation.
- Promoting the shared responsibility of communities, young people and service providers for youth suicide prevention.
- Supporting help seeking and recovery programs for young people in the state.

Future Vision

A Tasmania where there are fewer young people concerned about suicide and less suicide deaths among young Tasmanians. A Tasmania in which young people have access to services they need to assist them with their needs and where intervention and prevention programs are developed and implemented to provide additional support to young Tasmanians.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010), *Measures of Australia's Progress*, retrieved from www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@nsf/Lookup/bysubject/1370.0-2010-Suicide.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012), *Suicides, Australia*, retrieved from www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@nsf/Products/3309.o-2010-Chapter-Summary?OpenDocument

Hassan, R, *Unlived Lives: Trends in Youth Suicide*, retrieved from www.aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/proceedings/13/hassan.pdf

Mission Australia (2013), *Youth Survey 2013*, Mission Australia.

National Media Initiative (2014), *Facts and Stats about Suicide in Australia*, retrieved from www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-suicide/facts-and-stats.

NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention (2013), *Suicide still the highest cause of death amongst Australian Young People*, retrieved from <http://www.cresp.edu.au/news/abs-report-suicide-still-highest-cause-death-amongst-australian-young-people>.