

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

9.1 The impact of suicide extends beyond those who complete suicide and includes those bereaved by suicide and those who attempt suicide, as well as the broader community.

9.2 Accordingly, the Committee's inquiry has highlighted a number of overarching findings that were consistently raised in evidence. These are:

- the need for a single national suicide prevention strategy to clearly link the efforts of all levels of government as well as community organisations and an ambitious target for the reduction of suicide in Australia;
- the need for increased funding for both universal and targeted programs and projects, including the development of a separate suicide prevention strategy for Indigenous communities, to reduce the prevalence of suicide and suicide attempts in Australia;
- the need for better data collection methods to ensure accurate reporting of suicide in order to track rates of suicide and the success of prevention programs;
- the need for enhanced and customised suicide assessment, prevention and awareness training for frontline staff;
- the need for improved support for people who have attempted suicide, have suicidal ideation or received psychiatric care, including follow up support for those leaving care and affordable telephone crisis and counselling services;
- the need for increased community understanding and awareness, and improved media practices to reduce the stigma of suicide; and
- the need for direct and increased funding for research on suicide, particularly the evaluation of interventions to guide future suicide prevention activities.

9.3 Throughout its inquiry, the Committee was impressed by the work of many community organisations in preventing suicide and assisting those affected by it. Many of these organisations are not optimally funded but rather are supported by many volunteers who have a strong commitment to helping others.

9.4 The Committee also recognises the commitment of governments to respond to suicide in Australia, including the commitment of funding for programs and projects. Nevertheless, the Committee strongly considers that much more can be done to reduce the number of Australians attempting and completing suicide. The Committee considers that one of the key areas for action should be ensuring that the development

and implementation of the next NSPS be prioritised, coordinated and aligned with action at all levels of government.

9.5 This report makes a number of recommendations that will allow for:

- (a) a better understanding of economic costs of suicide to the Australian community;
- (b) mechanisms to improve the accurate reporting of the prevalence of suicide in Australia;
- (c) front line staff to be equipped with the skills and training in suicide prevention;
- (d) enhanced procedures for the discharge of patients with the aim of providing ongoing support;
- (e) a dedicated public awareness campaign, promoting greater community understanding of suicide with a particular focus for at-risk groups; and
- (f) stronger research to provide more targeted interventions.

9.6 In 2006 the Commonwealth Government made a significant step to increase public support for suicide prevention. Based on the evidence received, the Committee considers that the time has arrived for a further commitment to efforts to prevent suicide in Australia. With appropriate funding, coordination and initiatives such as those outlined in this report, the Committee considers that there can be concrete changes made to reduce the number of suicide and attempted suicides, and to assist those affected by suicide in Australia.

Senator Rachel Siewert

Chair