

mind matters
Leading mental health and wellbeing



PO Box 112
(61 Manton Street)
HINDMARSH SA 5007
ph: (08) 8245 9800
fax: (08) 8340 7800
www.mindmatters.edu.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached the submission for the Inquiry into Suicide in Australia by Principals Australia: MindMatters.

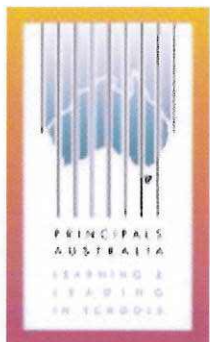
We have attached supporting documents as requested by the committee at the presentation made by MindMatters on May 4th in Adelaide.

1. Excerpts from the MindMatters Evaluation summaries 2006
2. Additional notes – Youth Empowerment Process and Community Partnerships
3. “Doctor on campus: A general practice initiative for detection and early intervention of mental health problems in rural Australian secondary schools” article

We thank you for being able to provide the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

Robyn Hearl On behalf on the National MindMatters team
MindMatters
National Project Officer - Strategic Development
Principals Australia Inc.
61 Manton St. PO Box 112
Hindmarsh SA 5007



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Inquiry into Suicide in Australia

Report by Principals Australia –MindMatters



MindMatters

We thank the Senate Community Affairs Committee for the opportunity to provide comment on the consultation to the Inquiry into Suicide in Australia.

MindMatters is a national initiative for secondary schools funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and implemented by Principals Australia Inc.

The MindMatters initiatives were developed in recognition of the need to address the mental health and wellbeing of young Australians. Based on the World Health Organisation Global School Health initiative and the National Health Promoting Schools framework, MindMatters supports promotion, prevention and early intervention for schools.

MindMatters has been successfully attended by over 130 000 participants from education and health over the last 10 years.

MindMatters has been recognized as a leading initiative in secondary schools in Australia. MindMatters supports a whole school approach to the mental health of young people, including links to community agencies, support groups and promotes help seeking.

MindMatters' classroom resources promote self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

A component of the MindMatters resources has involved professional development for staff around self harm, suicide and high risk taking behaviours.

Inquiry into Suicide in Australia

Submission by Principals Australia – MindMatters

No.	Term of Reference	Comments
a	The personal, social and financial costs of suicide in Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MindMatters recognizes the enormous cost of suicide in Australia. Providing students with the skills of understanding stress and coping, dealing with relationships, recognizing warning signs, help seeking and developing resiliency are important aspects in building a support structure for students in school communities. • MindMatters works within a whole school community approach developing mental health literacy in adults and well as young people
b	The accuracy of suicide reporting in Australia, factors that may impede accurate identification and recording of possible suicides, (and the consequences of any under-reporting on understanding risk factors and providing services to those at risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a number of factors which can impede accurate identification and recording of possible suicides in Australia; one being an understanding and awareness of possible signs. • MindMatters helps to provide classroom teachers and support staff with a mental health literacy to improve their understanding and capacity for supporting and identifying pathways for those students in the high risk area. • MindMatters helps to create a greater awareness of the signs that may predict the onset of a mental health issue.
c	The appropriate role and effectiveness of agencies, such as police, emergency departments, law enforcement and general health services in assisting people at risk of suicide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MindMatters whole school and community approach encourages schools to proactively build such links with their community agencies – before a critical incident occurs. An effective process of collaboration between schools, agencies and police can assist in better supporting individuals and the follow up of their health care. • MindMatters promotes and encourages referral pathways for schools and community agencies to support ongoing help seeking and care for students.

<p>d</p>	<p>The effectiveness, to date, of public awareness programs and their relative success in providing information, encouraging help-seeking and enhancing public discussion of suicide;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MindMatters has achieved considerable success in mental health promotion. Through the introduction of the MindMatters kit and resource materials the mental health literacy of young people, staff and community who have used the materials has been enhanced considerably. In 2000 every school in Australia with secondary enrolments received a MindMatters Kit. • Schools have reported the stigma attached to talking about mental health, mental illness and suicide to have reduced. • Help seeking for young people has improved in schools that have used MindMatters for a whole school approach to health and wellbeing with overall improved health and wellbeing outcomes.
<p>e</p>	<p>The efficacy of suicide prevention training and support for front-line health and community workers providing services to people at risk;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide prevention training would be beneficial to all school staff who work with students with specific needs in mental health. The information gained from suicide prevention training may better support those front line health and community workers and encourage help seeking. • As part of MindMatters professional development, workshops for teachers have included specific sessions looking at suicide prevention in relation to the role of the school and the positive role that teachers and other adults can play in talking about issues relevant to the young person including for example, discussion around suicide ie ways that do not harm.
<p>f</p>	<p>The role of targeted programs and services that address the particular circumstances of high-risk groups;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MindMatters has a particular focus on students experiencing high support needs in mental health. Our two day professional development has been well attended by school counsellors, psychologists and student welfare staff. A database of resource programs that schools and agencies can access has been developed as a part of the MindMatters Plus resource and is accessible online