

SUBMISSION INTO THE INQUIRY INTO SUICIDE IN AUSTRALIA

I am writing on behalf of Nowra Family Support Services Inc in respect to the impact of suicide on the Australian community.

Nowra Family Support Service Inc is a benevolent public institution and receives funding from the NSW Department of Community Services to assist disadvantaged families with young children and families in crisis.

Nowra Family Support Services Inc also has an Outreach Service at Milton/Ulladulla, and assists families from Gerroa in the Northern Shoalhaven to Bawley Point in the Southern Shoalhaven. The Service has been in operation in the Shoalhaven Local Government area for approximately 30 years. From our experience of working with families where there are complex mental health issues and indicators of suicide, I would like to raise the following issues:

General Comments:

- * Emergency responses to mental health crises include unacceptable long waiting times in the emergency departments of public hospitals.
- * The Police being the main response to “after hours” mental health crises, and their lack of training in managing mental health issues.
- * Ensuring that the current strategies employed by the Department of Health include accountability processes which includes consumers and their relatives in such processes.
- * The inclusion of other service providers in a treatment model which is consultative and integrated.
- * The need for mental health patients to be treated with respect and dignity.

Training:

- (i) Ongoing suicide prevention training for both government and non-government personnel needs to be implemented in the various TAFE and University curricula for relevant health, community and welfare qualifications.
- (ii) General community education programs conducted at grass roots levels need to be available to ensure that community members can recognize the warning signs of individuals contemplating suicide.
- (iii) More general educational health programs conducted in secondary schools to teach students about the strategies for coping with depression and family crisis.
- (iv) The provision of more funded Adolescent Health Services. Currently in the Shoalhaven, there is one Adolescent Health Service where funding is under threat.

In view of the high rate of suicide in Australia, I urge the NSW Government to act as a Matter of urgency to implement these suggestions to ensure that Australians suffering From mental problems will be treated with the utmost dignity and respect at all times.