
From: Shawn Phillips
Sent: Wednesday, 12 May 2010 3:28 PM
To: Griffiths, Owen (SEN)
Subject: RE: Senate Inquiry into suicide in Australia

Hi Owen

With regard to Senator Furner's question (page 11-12) regarding migrants, I agreed to look further into the topic. The Senator's question was in two parts. The first part sought confirmation with regards to the rates of suicide of particular immigrant populations in Australia relative to the rates of suicide in their home country. The references in our submission (page 22) are the only ones we know of on this topic. It should also be noted that the methods of reporting and data collection on completed suicides varies widely from country to country, making comparison between countries very difficult. The second part of the Senator's question was related to the suicide rate of people from non-English speaking background relative to the proportion of the WA population from non-English speaking backgrounds. We looked at the data from the WA Coroner's database and 2006 census data. One of the challenges is to define people from non-English speaking backgrounds. We selected all those suicides that occurred in 2006 and separated them by country of birth into two lists, those born in countries where English is commonly spoken and those where it may not be.

Countries of birth – English speaking

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|-------------|
| Australia |
| New Zealand |
| England |
| Scotland |
| Wales |
| Ireland |
| Canada |
| USA |

Countries of birth – non-English speaking

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|--------------------------|
| France |
| Germany |
| Netherlands |
| Switzerland |
| Italy |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina |
| Former Yugoslav Republic |
| Greece |
| Slovenia |
| Czech Republic |
| Russian Federation |
| Iraq |
| Indonesia |
| Malaysia |
| China |
| Hong Kong |
| Bangladesh |
| South Africa |
| Tanzania |

It should be noted that this is a very imprecise method of classifying NESB. For example that may be cases where someone was born in a country considered to be non-English speaking but to an expatriate family from an English speaking country. These would be included in the sample. Also there may be cases where someone was born in Australia to a migrant family from a non-English speaking country. These would not have been included in this sample.

Based on the method described above we found that in 2006, 11.11% of people who died by suicide were born in countries considered to be non-English speaking compared to 13.01% of the WA population born in countries considered to be non-English speaking. We also looked at the total number of suicides over the twenty one years of the study and found that 11.24% of suicides in WA were by people born in the same countries considered non-English speaking. In conclusion it does not appear that in WA the rate of suicide by people born in non-English speaking countries is disproportionately high relative to the size of this cohort in the general WA population.

I hope this information is of value.

Regards

Shawn Phillips

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