



Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Program

Educating, empowering and resourcing local Australian communities

Select Committee Submission Youth Suicides in the Northern Territory

December 2011



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SUBMISSION

Wesley Mission welcomes the Northern Territory Government's initiative to establish a Select Committee to inquire into Youth Suicide. This unfolding tragedy requires a whole of community response; leadership and coordination by government is essential.

Wesley Mission has played a role in Suicide Prevention for nearly 50 years having established Lifeline in 1963 at the initiative of Rev Dr Alan Walker. Our involvement in Suicide Prevention in the Territory began with our support of Lifeline Top End and more recently has been through initiatives of the Wesley LifeForce Program which is funded by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing.

Wesley LifeForce provides suicide prevention training to the community and supports the establishment of Suicide Prevention Community Networks.

Wesley LifeForce has delivered suicide prevention training seminars and workshops to the Australian community for the past 20 years. We have delivered four suicide prevention workshops in the top end to 58 community members. Three community Networks have been established in the Northern Territory with the support of Wesley LifeForce.

- Darwin Region Indigenous Suicide Prevention Network
- Top End Suicide Prevention Network
- Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Network.

These networks bring together community services, professionals and individuals with an interest in Suicide Prevention. They allow the coordination of community activity to address the issue of suicide in a way that is tailored to the local situation and needs.

The local communities have enthusiastically supported the establishment of these networks and they are already providing a platform for local planning and initiative. An overview of the networks program and the networks is attached.

APPENDIX A – Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Program

APPENDIX B – Summary of Northern Territory Networks

Recommendation:

Community Suicide Prevention Networks have been shown to be a cost effective means of supporting communities to address the issue of suicide including youth suicide. Wesley LifeForce has established 21 networks nationally and three in the Northern Territory. We would seek the Northern Territory Government's support to establish further networks in priority communities as identified by the inquiry and Northern Territory Health.

APPENDIX A

Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Program

Wesley Mission

Wesley Mission has its origins in the first Methodist Church formed in Sydney in 1812. Originally established as the Central Methodist Mission, the organisation focused on social justice and evangelism for the poor and needy people of Sydney.

The Uniting Church was created in 1977 from a union of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. The Central Methodist Mission became the Wesley Central Mission (and subsequently Wesley Mission).

Wesley Mission provides services across Australia and works collaboratively with other organisations and key stakeholders. Its services are available to all people and are not discriminatory or judgmental of any person's beliefs or lifestyle.

The Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Program

The Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Program was established in 1995 by Reverend Bob Dunlop of Wesley Mission as a response to the growing number of suicides in Australia.

Wesley LifeForce provides four distinct but interrelated suicide prevention and/or postvention components:

1. Education Programs – delivering a robust and evidence-based content which focuses upon educating people about suicide, challenging attitudes, and teaching basic engagement and suicide intervention skills. In the past ten (10) years Wesley LifeForce has facilitated 279 suicide prevention training events teaching suicide intervention skills to 5,412 persons in rural, remote, regional and metropolitan Australia;
2. Community Liaison – supporting and developing suicide prevention activities within Australian communities by partnering with key service providers for the planning and implementation of educational programs;
3. Community Suicide Prevention Networks – establishing community coalitions via a localised framework or model within targeted communities that identifies and brings together community participants with an interest/service provision in suicide prevention and mental health issues. The network facilitates the exchange of information, coordinating suicide awareness and prevention at a local level with a special focus on high risk communities e.g. Indigenous and/or in rural or remote locations; and
4. Memorial Services – leading high profile community events that enable people who have been bereaved by suicide to come together and share grief and hope in a supportive environment.

Project Aims

The Wesley LifeForce Community Suicide Prevention Networks program specifically aims to:

1. Identify and bring together community participants with an interest or service provision in suicide prevention, mental health issues and mental well-being promotion;
2. Facilitate the exchange of information;
3. Coordinate suicide awareness and prevention activities to minimise silo service delivery and duplication of services;
4. Encourage sharing of skills and learning; and
5. Advocate to raise the community's awareness of the risk of suicide and the contributing factors in the community.

Community Networks

The Wesley LifeForce Community Suicide Prevention Networks program demonstrates a whole of community approach to suicide – encouraging network activities which are developed and implemented specifically by and for local communities. The networks program encourages a heightened sense of personal and community awareness re capacity to reduce the impact and incidence of suicide. It is a model that adapts to the requirements of the community committees, and supports a group's capacity for self-determination and development of committee skills. Wesley LifeForce provides an effective framework for the networks to operate within and connects the networks nationally to encourage a collaborative and cohesive response to local needs.

Suicide Prevention Training

Wesley LifeForce has developed quality suicide prevention training. Our Suicide Prevention Workshop is designed to teach people how to identify the signs that someone may be at risk of suicide and appropriate action to take. Simple effective interventions can make a real difference and save lives. All Wesley LifeForce Facilitators are accredited trainers and have completed suicide intervention training. Many are also accredited counsellors. Below you will find an outline of our workshop and seminars:

Suicide Prevention Workshop Outline

Welcome

Introduction	Training outcomes
Presentation	Suicide in Australia
Presentation	Why do people take their own life?
Group activity	Risk factors and protective factors

Morning tea

Group activity	Commonly held beliefs about suicide
Presentation	Barriers to suicide intervention
Video	Intervention part 1
Presentation	Precipitating events and escalating factors

Lunch

Video	Lived Experience
Intervention strategy	S.A.L.T. See the warning signs Ask about suicide intent Listen to the person Tell or take the person to appropriate help
Video	Intervention part 2
Group Activity	Skills practice
Presentation	Taking care of yourself
Summary and feedback	

Close

APPENDIX B

Summary of Northern Territory Networks

This submission outlines the operation of Wesley Mission's Wesley LifeForce Community Suicide Prevention Networks Program relative to the Northern Territory Suicide Prevention Networks, and item 3(d), of the Select Committee's Terms of Reference:

3(d) the roles of targeted programs and services that address particular circumstances of high-risk groups, and identification of the strengths and weaknesses of existing suicide prevention responses;

Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Program supports the development and operation of three Suicide Prevention Networks in the Northern Territory; two of which are Indigenous managed Networks. As a national programme funded through Commonwealth Department Health & Ageing, the Northern Territory affiliated Wesley LifeForce Networks are three of the twenty-one Wesley LifeForce Community Suicide Prevention Networks nationally.

Wesley LifeForce Networks are independent community committees made up of interested stakeholders - both directly from the community and as representatives of relevant agencies or organisations.

The Darwin Region Indigenous Suicide Prevention Network, Top End Suicide Prevention Network, and Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Group have evolved differently according to local needs and priorities. *(refer to Select Committee Submission No. 15, Recommendation 6, from Leonore Hanssens)*



Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Group

Chairperson: Gayili Marika Yunupingu (Community Elder)

Vice-Chair: Dhayirra Yunupingu (Community Elder)

Secretary: Sharon Yunupingu (Community Member)

Meetings: The Causeway, Ski Beach – Gove Peninsula

2nd Wednesday of each month

Managed by Yolngu people of East Arnhem in Nhulunbuy, their association with the Wesley LifeForce program began in March 2011. They embraced the concept model of Wesley LifeForce Networks as an opportunity to better address community needs. While working as a voluntary group for up to two (2) years prior, they cited (as a hindrance) their inability to maintain community ownership and have their agreed strategies taken seriously.

The Yolngu people are concerned that suicide is becoming a normalised response to stress and relationship problems, particularly when alcohol is involved. What is perceived by the wider community as an inability to cope with life's stressors – while the importance of being 'without family' is for Yolngu profoundly isolating. The denying of family visitation rights during a period of alcohol rehabilitation from a service which operates in a high Indigenous population in a remote area signifies a failure to develop procedure based on cultural understanding.

The Gove Peninsula Suicide Mitigation 'Working Strategy' 2009, by Anglicare NT, argued that "Early intervention projects do not adequately explore issues of Aboriginal access and engagement, nor the deficiency in postvention projects." The Yolngu community do not easily accept referral to Darwin for Mental Health treatment and request other options. Consequently, Indigenous patients are not referred as frequently as would normally be required, and support following an attempted suicide can become the responsibility of community members.

The Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Group receives strong support from the Northern Territory Police and Ambulance services from Nhulunbuy including regular participation in the Group meetings. However, there are incidences of inadequate resources available to Police and Ambulance services. Community members respond to suicide attempts 24 hours a day, cutting down young people from trees, reporting incidents and waiting long periods for the availability of police or ambulance assistance. Community members who are involved with domestic violence orders are placed on 'suicide watch' by the Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Group, while local services are not accepting of the relationship between court action and suicide attempts. The formation of the Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Group gives Yolngu community an opportunity to explain the issues from a cultural context and these are treated and respected as such.

On World Suicide Prevention Day September 2011, the Galupa Marngarr Group organised sponsorship through local organisations in order to stage a large community event. 400 community people attended – spreading a strong suicide prevention message through 3 activities: A Memorial Service; A Play “Helping Hands” written and performed by Network members and assisted by students of Yirrkala School denouncing suicide in their community; And a celebration event of dance and music provided by Indigenous bands in a alcohol-free venue. The Galupa Marngarr Group in association with Wesley LifeForce submitted for funds in November through the Mental Health Association of Australia to run an Indigenous Conference on Suicide Prevention where the outcomes will be driven by Yolngu.

The reputation of Galupa Marngarr Group is becoming known across the East Arnhem Communities. In November 2011 they were invited by Groote Eylandt, Anindilyakwa Land Council, to collaborate on suicide prevention strategies. (*refer to Select Committee Submission No. 34, P. 4 from Northern Territory Police*)



Darwin Region Indigenous Suicide Prevention

Network

Chairperson: Ngaree Ah Kit (Community Member)

Secretary: Delsey Tamiano (Danila Dilba)

Meetings: Healing Room, Danila Dilba - Malak

1st Monday of each month

Established in October 2010 in response to a community rally and cry for help, drawing attention to the high rate of Indigenous suicide in the Northern Territory. Wesley LifeForce, the Danila Dilba Health Service, community members and other stakeholders worked together to facilitate and establish the Network.

The public rally was held on Thursday September 30 at Northern Territory Parliament House. The peaceful protest, called 'Save Our Children from Suicide', was organised by the Balunu Foundation and came after at least seven people, some as young as 14 years, took their lives across the Northern Territory.

While it is documented that incidence of suicide and attempted suicide in Aboriginal populations can be unrelated to mental health issues, the examination of suicide triggers in relation to other factors needs further attention. Suicide Prevention Australia's Position Paper 2008 stated: *"The risk of suicide among Indigenous communities is complicated and compounded by complex (trans)generational transmissions of trauma, grief, violence, identity and cultural dislocation and loss..."*.

Early in the Darwin Network development network members identified the need for greater availability of Indigenous specific resources in community training and information, to assist community to be better informed about suicide risk factors, and suicide prevention. As well, there was an identification of the need for follow up bereavement support.

The Darwin Network is managed by an effective Indigenous committee made up of a cross-section of the Darwin regional stakeholders. They are listening and responding to the needs of their community to improve engagement with services, access to awareness training, and bereavement support. The Network is regularly supported by the resources of the Wesley LifeForce program.

Members marked World Suicide Prevention Day 2011 with a 'Walk 4 Suicide Prevention & Awareness' in Darwin. 150 people took part in this all-day event.

In early December 2011 Wesley LifeForce will assist the Darwin Network in the facilitation of their first Planning Meeting.



Top End Suicide Prevention Network

Chairperson: Jacki Fleet (Community Member)

Asst. Secretary: Hiltrud Kivelitz (Carers NT)

Meetings: Peter Chandler's Office,
Shop 2 Palmerston Shopping Centre
1st Tuesday of each month

Established through Wesley LifeForce in October 2010 and operates from Palmerston NT. This Network has been collaborating with Peter Chandler Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) which has provided office space for the Network meetings.

The Top End Suicide Prevention Network aims to: Increase community awareness of suicide prevention; increase awareness of support services; and promote services and training opportunities.

Community activities have been targeted at enhancing cohesion and collaboration between mental health and specifically suicide related services and service users; the dissemination of service information; and building cooperative approaches to suicide prevention through schools, sporting clubs and churches.

Currently the network is developing a brochure aimed at increasing awareness of the services and support available to the community in relation to suicide and suicide prevention. This will also raise the profile of the network and its vision and mission for the community in the Top End.

In early December 2011 the network will hold its first Annual General Meeting at which Wesley LifeForce staff will lead a 12 month planning component.