



The Hon Tanya Davies MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Women

Minister for Ageing

Ms Helen Minnican
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Office of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Minnican

**Committee on Children and Young People Report 5/56
Prevention of youth suicide in New South Wales**

Please accept the NSW Government's response to the Committee on Children and Young People Report 5/56 Prevention of youth suicide in New South Wales.

A copy of the response is enclosed.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Davies MP
Minister for Mental Health

Encl.

**NSW Government Response to the Joint Committee on Children and Young People
Prevention of Youth Suicide in New South Wales - Report 5/56 – October 2018**

Report recommendations	Response and Comments
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Mental Health Commission of New South Wales ensures that the <i>Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention in NSW 2018-2023</i> aligns with the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p><i>The Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention in NSW 2018-23</i> (the Framework) has been informed by, and aligns with the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Mental Health Commission of New South Wales ensures that the Framework supports and incorporates community led suicide prevention activities.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The Framework supports locally relevant and community led suicide prevention activities that can form part of formal regional mental health and suicide planning processes.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government develop a youth specific suicide prevention plan developed in consultation with children and young people.</p>	<p>Supported in Principle</p> <p>The Framework was developed after extensive consultation and input from a range of different stakeholders including those with particular knowledge and experience of suicide prevention for young people.</p> <p>The Framework acknowledges there are a number of cohorts, including young people, who are at greater risk of suicide and the Framework is designed to enable local responses targeted to specific cohorts at risk in individual geographic areas.</p> <p>The Framework supports communities to plan and lead locally relevant suicide prevention activities targeted to local priority groups.</p> <p>All of the interventions being funded under the Framework can also be tailored to specific at risk cohorts, including young people. The forthcoming National Implementation Strategy for Suicide Prevention, currently in development, will also contain actions of relevance to young people</p> <p>A specific suicide prevention strategy for young people will be given further consideration, with specific reference to local integration and coordination strategies to monitor young people's progress and engagement with mental health services, including prevention services such as awareness raising programs and early intervention services such as resilience programs. Family based interventions that strengthen young people's support network through parenting programs and supports will also be considered as part of this work.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government monitor and evaluate the progress of the LifeSpan trial sites in New South Wales and share outcomes with other governments in relation to the model's effectiveness and appropriateness for children and young people in regional, rural and remote areas and metropolitan areas.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Action is already underway.</p> <p>The NSW Ministry of Health is a member of the LifeSpan Research and Advisory Committee which provides strategic advice on implementation and dissemination of Lifespan and evaluation of this program. A number of the nine key strategies focus or are directly relevant to children and young people. Its effectiveness and appropriateness for children and young people across NSW will be a key evaluation focus.</p> <p>NSW Health will raise with this committee whether children and young people in out of home care will be part of the trials and evaluation.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government develop an online directory of programs and services specifically targeted for children and young people to access. The directory should be co-designed by children and young people, and map programs available by geolocation and local health district.</p>	<p>Supported in Principle</p> <p>Action is already underway. There are already range of online e-health access portals focusing on mental health and youth mental health and developing an entirely new resource could risk duplication. There are for example, already national e-directory health services that encompass mental health including <i>Healthdirect</i> and <i>Head to Health</i> and a number of national community organisations including <i>Everymind</i> and <i>Suicide Prevention Australia</i> have online Suicide Prevention Hubs which are being continuously developed.</p> <p><i>WayAhead</i> is the peak online mental health directory and information service in NSW and includes services for children and young people.</p> <p>NSW Health supports improving the scope and functionality of the WayAhead Directory into a more comprehensive service including developing pages specifically identifying youth services.</p> <p>The NSW Ministry of Health will consult with the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People in developing any future co-designed resources to address the recommendations of the Committee.</p> <p>The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People together with an interdepartmental working group has been developing a digital platform which features services, programs, facilities and events for children and young people based on location, due to be launched in 2019. This platform has been co-designed with children and young people. Whilst this is not a mental health or suicide prevention specific resource, it will assist children and young people to be better connected to their community and aware of services available to them, including those which are health and wellbeing.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government develop, implement and monitor strategies around interagency co-ordination and communication to reduce the high rate of children and young people with a child protection history dying by suicide.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Action is already underway.</p> <p>Family and Community Services (FACS) are currently implementing recommendations made by the Child Death Review Team and the Annual Child Death Reports. The NSW Government will commit to enhancing interagency coordination and communication to reduce the high rate of children and young people with a child protection and out of home care history dying by suicide.</p> <p>There are existing programs to support vulnerable families, children and young people at risk or in out-of-home-care, which are provided through partnerships between FACS, Health and non-government organisations.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific youth suicide prevention plan for New South Wales consistent with the findings of the ATSIPEP study.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Framework was developed after extensive consultation and input from a range of different stakeholders Aboriginal communities and those involved in suicide prevention in indigenous communities.</p> <p>The Framework acknowledges there are a number of cohorts, including aboriginal people, who are at greater risk of suicide and is designed to enable local responses targeted to specific cohorts at risk in individual geographic areas.</p> <p>The Framework supports communities to plan and lead locally relevant suicide prevention activities targeted to local priority groups.</p> <p>All of the interventions being funded under the Framework can also be tailored to specific at risk cohorts including young people.</p> <p>One of the Framework's funded initiatives is Resilience building within local communities – engage communities to participate in suicide prevention, with particular focus on Aboriginal communities. The results of the ATSIPEP study will guide the implementation of this initiative.</p> <p>Further consideration will be given to developing a separate suicide prevention plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government continues to support programs in schools, and increase its support for programs in the broader community, that are designed to promote help seeking behaviour and improve mental health awareness in young men.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Action is already underway. The strong long term partnership between NSW Health and the NSW Department of Education supports a number of current and developing initiatives to improve the mental health and wellbeing of students in primary and secondary schools in NSW.</p> <p>The <i>Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM)</i> program has been significantly expanded with a \$4.1 million investment from the NSW Department of Education to employ 10 accredited trainers at head teacher level. The YAM program is an evidence-based wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention program for young people aged 14-16 years.</p> <p>In collaboration with Headspace, suicide ‘post-vention’ planning workshops are taking place with schools executives, emergency management staff and school services teams across the state. These workshops aim to equip schools with a plan to minimise the impact of suicides and suicide attempts, and to mitigate the risk of suicidal behaviour spreading. School-based programs will continue to be an important area of activity.</p> <p>The <i>Project Air Strategy for Schools</i> provides school counsellors with information, training and resources to work effectively with young people with complex mental health needs including self-harming behaviour. This project is being implemented currently with school counsellors skilled up to deliver training to schools and further resources and training being developed for clinicians in the health and education systems.</p> <p>Men and young people will be an important focus of the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention given the higher rate of suicide among this group. \$8.175 million has been made available for resilience building activities that promote community wellbeing.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government provide support to research and consult with men on what mental health services and programs they would access.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Suicide prevention initiatives funded under the Framework will examine approaches to better reach men. Projects will be evaluated and contribute to a greater understanding of what works for this group.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government set a minimum standard for the provision of and access to mental health services in regional, rural and remote New South Wales, and fund the delivery of those services.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>Action is already underway. In NSW, Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Specialty Health Networks (SHNs) have responsibility and accountability for managing all aspects of hospital and health service planning and delivery for their local district or specialty network. All LHDs are expected to comply with all NSW Health policies and service agreement requirements.</p> <p>Service agreements between LHDs/SHNs and NSW Health set out the service and performance expectations and funding, including mental health services.</p> <p>In 2018-19 there are nine mental health key performance indicators within the service agreements.</p> <p>These indicators relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the occurrence and duration of seclusion events • community mental health follow-up • readmissions within 28 days • consumer experience • the number of peer workers • transitioning long-stay patients to community accommodation • absconding patients, and access block in emergency departments. <p>The NSW Government supports the devolution of decision making, which locates the responsibility and accountability for safe, high quality, patient centred care with local health districts/networks.</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to improving mental health services for rural and remote communities. In 2018-19 over \$635 million was invested in mental health services in the nine rural and regional local health districts (LHDs). Each LHD has the flexibility to tailor services where most needed and using methods most appropriate to their communities. LHDs are continually exploring ways to better meet the needs of their community.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government assist regional, rural and remote communities to build partnerships between local councils, health providers, community groups and transport providers to subsidise or eliminate travel costs for children and young people travelling to or from an approved health service.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>IPTAAS is the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. This is a NSW Government scheme providing financial assistance towards travel and accommodation costs when a patient needs to travel long distances for treatment that is not available locally.</p> <p>Additional mechanisms to subsidise rural transport will require consultation and clarification of funding options.</p> <p>The <i>NSW Health Transport for Health</i> policy framework maintains partnerships between health services and transport providers for non-emergency health related transport.</p> <p>Continuing expansion of community mental health teams in regional areas, expansion of rural and remote mental health counselling capacity and increasing awareness and uptake of telehealth and online options are likely to contribute to the reduction in the need for travel in rural, regional and remote communities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government make specific reference to vulnerable and at risk children and young people in any youth suicide prevention plan and consults with vulnerable and at risk children and young people in its development.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The Framework recognises at risk children and youth as a vulnerable population group.</p> <p>Consultation and co-design with children and young people around youth specific suicide prevention initiatives is considered essential, including with vulnerable children such as those in out of home care and from CALD or refugee backgrounds. The Framework supports communities to plan and lead locally relevant suicide prevention activities targeted to local priority groups and provides tools to assist with engaging and consulting priority groups.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 13</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government support research into suicide prevention programs for LGBTI young people.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Action is already underway.</p> <p>ACON was funded by the Suicide Prevention Fund to support LGBTI individuals at risk of suicide via GP capacity building and support, and direct aftercare support which will be evaluated.</p> <p>As part of the Framework's development, the Mental Health Commission is producing a thematic report on LGBTI perspectives on suicide prevention.</p> <p>NSW Health is a co-funder of the La Trobe University national research into the health and wellbeing needs of LGBTI young people. Results are expected in 2020.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government makes a request to NSW Health to undertake and publish a comprehensive international literature search of peer review research into what have been evaluated as the most successful suicide prevention programs for children and young people.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>NSW Health will commission a literature review of successful suicide prevention programs for children and young people.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15</p> <p>The Committee recommends that NSW Health prioritises strategies to improve post discharge care for children and young people, especially children and young people who show reluctance to receiving care.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Action is already underway.</p> <p>Enhancements to local health districts under Mental Health Reform supports improved child and adolescent mental health liaison and discharge planning.</p> <p>The NSW Ministry of Health is planning to pilot a youth after care service to provide assertive outreach to young people following a suicide attempt.</p> <p>Aftercare services have been funded \$9 million through the Framework.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 16</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government investigate opportunities to use technology, such as telepsychology, videopsychology and web-based programs, to provide clinical support to children and young people in regional, rural and remote areas who may find it difficult to access a face-to-face service.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Action is already underway. Local Health Districts continue to explore the use of telehealth options across rural locations to improve the timely access to assessment and ongoing care delivery options for people from remote locations</p> <p>Under the Framework, one of the funded initiatives will trial innovative approaches in technology for suicide prevention. This will have great utility for young people, especially those in regional, rural and remote areas.</p>
<p>Recommendation 17</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government consider expanding telepsychiatry services such as the Northern Mental Health Emergency Care – Rural Access Program to more emergency departments across the State, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>Local Health Districts continue to explore the use of telehealth options across rural locations to improve the timely access to assessment and ongoing care delivery options for people from remote locations.</p> <p>Under the Northern Mental Health Emergency Care Rural Access Program (NMHEC-RAP) reform initiative mental health professionals are based in Newcastle and are available 24/7 to deliver emergency mental health services using audio visual links to smaller rural emergency departments in the Hunter New England, Mid North Coast and Northern NSW Local Health Districts.</p> <p>NMHEC-RAP provides specialist mental health assessment, consultation and support to emergency departments as required. This allows people to access mental health care closer to home, reducing long distance transport of patients by emergency service partners. Consideration will be given to the expansion of this initiative.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 18</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government consider providing funding to youth focused services like Kids Helpline, ReachOut and eheadspace to improve the response rate to contacts from children and young people in New South Wales.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>eheadspace is expanding the provision of online and direct counselling services with the Commonwealth announcing \$12.8 million additional funding to eheadspace in October 2018.</p> <p>The NSW Government continues to explore online and phone-based services to enhance the support provided to young people with mental health issues.</p>
<p>Recommendation 19</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government establish a suicide register in New South Wales.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Work is already underway. The Suicide Data Working Group will commence work on the development of a suicide register in early 2019. \$1.95 million has been made available to support improvements in suicide surveillance and data management in NSW.</p>
<p>Recommendation 20</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government consider establishing a suicide mortality review team to review suicide deaths in New South Wales.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>In NSW, all Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Specialty Health Networks (SHNs) have Incident Management systems in place to report, investigate and implement the actions necessary to prevent clinical and corporate incidents, protect patient safety and improve clinical quality.</p> <p>All suspected suicides are investigated using the Root Cause Analysis (RCA) protocol. RCAs are led by a team of independent clinical advisors, who make recommendations for system and service improvements which are accompanied by implementation timeframes. In addition, all suspected suicide deaths are reported to the NSW Police and are reported to the NSW Coroner for investigation.</p> <p>The Clinical Excellence Commission is responsible for reviewing all RCA reports to identify statewide and/or systemic issues that require further action and response.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 21</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government establish a multicentre sentinel system to collect data on self-harm and suicide attempts.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>Further consultation with the Suicide Data Working Group has commenced.</p>
<p>Recommendation 22</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government support research into the impact of social media on youth suicide.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>NSW Health will commission a literature review of the impact of social media on youth suicide.</p>
<p>Recommendation 23</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government expand gatekeeper training beyond the LifeSpan trial sites targeting persons across New South Wales who are likely to come into regular contact with children and young people.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Work is already underway.</p> <p>Aligned with the Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention, \$600,000 in recurrent funding is available from 2018-19 onwards to deliver community gatekeeper training. The Suicide Prevention Fund also delivers suicide prevention training in some of its sites including Lake Macquarie, Hunter, Dubbo, Central Coast and Broken Hill.</p>
<p>Recommendation 24</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government make training on youth suicide prevention, including gatekeeper training, compulsory for all child protection workers and foster carers.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Government is committed to supporting our frontline practitioners working with vulnerable young people. Additional training requirements will be considered as part of professional development and the Caseworker Development Program.</p>
<p>Recommendation 25</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government work with the tertiary education sector to implement suicide prevention activities, including postvention, in universities and TAFEs in New South Wales.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>Consultation is required with various NSW Departments and the Commonwealth.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 26</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the NSW Government reviews the adequacy and efficacy of the suicide prevention, postvention and mental health and wellbeing programs currently provided to primary school students in NSW.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Work in this area is ongoing.</p> <p>School based programs delivered both by NSW Health and the NSW Department of Education are evidence based and regularly evaluated. Current programs include:</p> <p>School link: School-Link is a longstanding collaboration between NSW Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the Department of Education. It has been in operation for over 14 years and aims to improve the mental health, wellbeing and resilience of children and young people in NSW. The School-Link program is regularly evaluated. The School-Link program is currently being reviewed jointly by the NSW Ministry of Health and the Department of Education which will include broad consultation with stakeholders.</p> <p>Getting on Track in Time (Got It!): Got It is a specialist school based early intervention program for children 5-8 to reduce challenging behaviours. An evaluation demonstrated the successful implementation of a whole of primary school multilevel intervention program in the NSW context. Got It! has demonstrated positive outcomes for children, teachers and their families.</p> <p>The Project Air Strategy: The Project Air Strategy for Schools provides school counsellors with information, training and resources to work effectively with young people with complex mental health needs including self-harming behaviour. This project is being implemented currently with school counsellors skilled up to deliver training to schools and further resources and training being developed for clinicians in the health and education systems.</p> <p>In collaboration with Headspace, suicide 'post-vention' planning workshops are taking place with schools executives, emergency management staff and school services teams across the state. These workshops aim to equip schools with a plan to minimise the impact of suicides and suicide attempts, and to mitigate the risk of suicidal behaviour spreading. School-based</p>
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	<p>programs will continue to be an important area of activity.</p> <p>The beyondblue National Education Initiative supports school communities and staff to support the mental health of Australian children and young people from the day they enter the education system to the end of year 12.</p>
<p>Recommendation 27 The Committee recommends that the NSW Government prioritise filling school counsellor positions, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas.</p>	<p>Supported Department of Education are actively progressing recruitment to school counsellor roles.</p> <p>Further consultation is required on recruitment status and options.</p>