

**Submission
No 53**

PREVENTION OF YOUTH SUICIDE IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Inquiry into the Prevention of Youth Suicide in New South Wales

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Inquiry into the Prevention of Youth Suicide in New South Wales, and for providing an extension to the submission date.

Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) is the peak body for the suicide prevention sector in Australia; our mission is to deliver national leadership for the meaningful reduction of suicide in Australia.

In preparing this comment we would first like to draw attention to those we have lost to suicide and acknowledge the suffering suicide brings when it touches our lives. SPA comment has drawn on the expertise of a number of its Members including individuals with lived experience of suicide.

Comment for the consideration of the Inquiry is appended to this letter. Please contact [REDACTED] if you have any questions or require further information.

Suicide Prevention Australia is pleased to work with the Committee on Children and Young People in reducing suicide and its impact on young people in New South Wales and Australia, and welcome further engagement on this important issue.

Yours sincerely



Susan Murray
Chief Executive Officer

Inquiry into the Prevention of Youth Suicide in New South Wales

General comment

A number of SPA member organisations are directly *or indirectly* active in the youth mental health and suicide prevention space, providing telephone helplines, online support services, counselling and peer support programs, school programs, training and education services and other programs, or conducting research, including:

- [Orygen](#)
- [yourtown](#)
- [batyr¹](#)
- [ReachOut](#)
- [Youth Focus](#)
- [Menslink](#)
- [Peer Support Australia](#)
- [Early in Life Mental Health Services](#)
- [Black Dog Institute](#)
- [beyondblue](#)
- [headspace](#)

Note: Some of the links above direct to a description of the specific programs provided by the organisation in youth suicide/mental health and well-being, and school programs.

The issue of youth suicide has produced, in recent years, a number of **inquiries** and attendant reports and recommendations, including:

- 2016 [Learnings from the message stick: the report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas](#) (WA)
- 2016 [Inquiry into Youth Suicide and Self Harm in the ACT](#) (ACT)
- 2014 [Intentional self-harm and suicidal behaviour in children](#) (Human Rights Commission)
- 2012 [Gone Too Soon - Final Report on Youth Suicides](#) (NT)
- 2011 [Inquiry into Early Intervention Programs Aimed at Preventing Youth Suicide](#) (Commonwealth Government)

A number of **major reports/papers** have been produced to inform the discussion, including:

- The 2016 Orygen Report [Raising the bar for youth suicide prevention](#)
- The 2016 Orygen Report [Looking the Other Way](#)
- The 2010 SPA Position Paper [Youth Suicide Prevention](#)

¹ Incl. [being-herd](#), [school](#), [university](#), and [stigma reduction & help seeking](#) programs

The **research literature** also provides good knowledge and learning on the subject (eg):

- Strauss, P., Cook, A., Winter, S., Watson, V., Wright Toussaint, D., Lin, A. (2017). Trans Pathways: the mental health experiences and care pathways of trans young people. Summary of results. Telethon Kids Institute, Perth, Australia.
 - [Trans Pathways study - mental health and care pathways of trans and gender diverse young people in Australia](#) and [Report](#)
- Mitchell, P.; and Andriessen, K. (2017). Grief of adolescents after the death of a relative or a friend: Summary of the findings of an interview-based study, School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Australia.
- Rowe, S. L., French, R. S., Henderson, C., Ougrin, D., Slade, M., & Moran, P. (2014). [Help-seeking behaviour and adolescent self-harm: A systematic review](#). Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 48(12), 1083-1095
- Hawton, K., Saunders, K. E., & O'Connor, R. C. (2012). [Self-harm and suicide in adolescents](#). *The Lancet*, 379(9834), 2373-2382.

Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of resources, there are many published papers going back over several years on the issue.

From a **policy** perspective, there is specific government policy addressing youth suicide:

[Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania 2016-2020](#)

Suicide prevention trial – youth focus

The Commonwealth Government is funding a suicide prevention program trial looking at youth suicide; this is being conducted under the auspices of the [Perth South Primary Health Network](#)

A number of **training tools and resources** exist, including:

- [KidsMatter](#) - an Australian mental health and well-being initiative for primary schools and early childhood education and care services, it is a partnership between education and health sectors and is funded by the Australian Government.
- [MindMatters](#) - a mental health initiative for secondary schools that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people
both these programs are under review or redevelopment by beyondblue and headspace
- The [Youth Aware of Mental Health \(YAM\) intervention program](#), part of the Black Dog LifeSpan initiative
- (United States) The [Lifelines](#) program was developed specifically to reduce youth suicide in the US school system

Again, this is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Suicide Prevention Australia Recommendations

Given the breadth of research into the issue of youth suicide in recent years including Australian research and attendant reports/recommendations, Suicide Prevention Australia recommends the Inquiry into the Prevention of Youth Suicide in New South Wales be informed by the above.

1. Within the milieu of information itself, and the context of other (state) suicide prevention and mental health policies, the Inquiry is directed to two recent reports/recommendations:
 - The 2016 Orygen Report [Raising the bar for youth suicide prevention](#)
 - The 2016 Orygen Report [Looking the Other Way](#)

These reports provide comprehensive overviews of the issue, and importantly recommend areas for action which should be considered in the NSW context.

2. The need for ongoing research and evaluation into youth suicide programs, and what is determined to be an effective approach, is strongly recommended.
3. The NSW Department of Health should engage with counterparts in the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services to discuss the development of their specific youth suicide prevention plan and how the key actions were determined.
4. Following the lead of Tasmania, the NSW Government should consider the development of a specific NSW youth suicide prevention plan. Any such development should take into account and align with existing, related, policy including the (NSW) state suicide prevention policy, the recently announced *Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan*, and relevant policies and strategies in other states and territories.