



Suicide Prevention ***by Tony Pietropiccolo***

Suicide in Australia remains a very difficult and distressing issue. The number of people who end their own lives exceeds the road toll and is of great concern to many individuals, families and communities. Suicide is not an easy matter to discuss due to the sensitivity surrounding it and the historical negative connotations associated with it.

Youth suicides are particularly shocking given the natural expectation we have that the young have everything to live for. Such suicides are particularly difficult for parents and other family members, school communities and friends. They are hard to understand and as a consequence are particularly anguishing. However, the age-range of people who end their lives prematurely is very broad involving people of middle age as well as the elderly.

When suicides happen in clusters within particular communities they can have a debilitating and destructive effect. A few years ago a large community in the West Australia's south experienced such an event and the impact on that community was significant. During a discussion I had at the time with its mayor the impact that the loss of so many lives was having on both individuals and the local community was very evident and concerning. The experience had created a crisis of confidence for the local community as they asked "What is wrong with us". They were desperately searching for understanding, practical assistance and comfort.

Recently, Centrecare was appointed by the Mental Health Commission to assist the WA Suicide Prevention Council to implement a state-wide suicide prevention plan over the next three years. Centrecare is honoured to take on such a responsibility and delighted to be able to participate in such a significant undertaking. Its importance to the wellbeing of individuals, families and whole communities is self-evident and fully in keeping with Centrecare's mission of providing excellent, respectful and caring services which facilitate healing and encourage all persons to develop to their fullest potential.