

MEDIA RELEASE



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Rural suicide prevention on the agenda at Easter Show

In every state in Australia, the rate of suicide among those who live outside the greater capital cities is higher than that for residents that live within them.

This, along with the fact that over the last five years the rate of suicide has been gradually rising in rural areas, but has remained relatively stable in capital cities, has prompted the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) to organise a rural suicide prevention forum at this year's Royal Sydney Easter Show. The forum, developed with the support of the NSW Mental Health Commission, is titled "Working Together to Prevent Suicide in Rural Areas" and will take place on Tuesday 11 April.

Director of the CRRMH Professor David Perkins said that the Easter Show provides an appropriate opportunity to talk about the issue of preventing suicides in rural areas.

"One of the aims of the Easter Show is to bring the country to the city but it's not just about livestock and akubras - it's important that the issue of suicide prevention is recognised as a major issue for rural communities," he said.

Key stakeholders, including politicians, policy makers, government and non-government organisations and industry representatives will discuss the complexities involved in preventing rural suicides and how these are different to that of urban suicide prevention.

The Governor of NSW, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) will attend the forum, along with NSW Minister for Mental Health the Hon. Tanya Davies, NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, and the NSW Mental Health Commissioner, John Feneley.

"We are very fortunate to have these people in the room among 60 key stakeholders who will come together to participate in a frank conversation about this issue," Professor Perkins said.

Mr Feneley said the conversation was timely as both NSW and the Commonwealth were investing in rural suicide prevention trials. "The world-first LifeSpan suicide prevention trial is beginning in NSW – with the Murrumbidgee trial site to tailor proven strategies to rural needs – and the Commonwealth is funding a suicide prevention trial in western NSW".

"The time is right to ensure all voices are heard, so we can build suicide prevention models that respond to the particular needs of our communities," said Mr Feneley. "It can't be a one size fits all approach; these strategies will need to consider the unique social, economic and environmental strengths and weaknesses that exist in individual rural communities," he said.

"The majority of suicides among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people occur outside capital cities, so Indigenous leadership and participation in suicide prevention strategies is critical. We must be guided by what Aboriginal leaders tell us."



Professor Perkins said the ideas discussed and suggestions made at the Forum would assist the CRRMH to develop a position paper on Rural Suicide Prevention.

“Those contributing to the forum have a real opportunity to influence the upcoming suicide prevention trials in rural communities, so that the leaders and members of these communities can implement proven strategies to reduce suicide attempts and deaths’, he said.

Everyone needs to be part of the solution to rural suicide and this is an important contribution”.

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