

Media Release

WA communities empowered to tackle suicide

10 October 2017

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) has launched a new community-based approach to tackling depression and suicide today.

WAPHA will work with communities in three suicide prevention trial sites - Rockingham-Mandurah-Kwinana, the Midwest and the Kimberley - to implement the initiative.

The Alliance Against Depression, of which WAPHA is the Australian Chapter, provides a framework to work in partnership with communities to coordinate and integrate locally and culturally appropriate approaches to the treatment of depression, the prevention of suicide and improved mental wellbeing.

Based on highly successful experiences throughout Europe, which saw a 24 per cent reduction in suicidality over two years, The Alliance Against Depression consists of four levels of community-based integrated interventions. These create strong synergistic effects, due to its cooperative and comprehensive approach.

This initiative is part of the Australian Government's investment into suicide prevention across Australia, with WAPHA responsible for local implementation, as WA's peak body for the planning and commissioning of primary health services.

WAPHA CEO Ms Learne Durrington said we are committed to providing leadership for the ongoing dialogue around the treatment of depression and the prevention of suicide.

"It's time to realise that mental health is everyone's business.

"The Alliance is not just a framework for mental health clinicians and professionals, rather it provides access to world best practice tools and resources for communities to actively participate in providing mental health care for their friends, families, colleagues and neighbourhoods.

"Communities, whether they are a physical place, cultural group, workplace, social group, or combinations of people who care about each other, can be empowered to improve their own health and wellbeing.

"Reducing the burden of suicide on our nation will take a collective approach involving all of community.

“There’s no quick fix or easy answer to such a complex problem. It requires us to keep our eye on the big picture and for everyone to work together to make a real difference and keep our people well.”

Former Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston AK, AFC (Ret’d), has undertaken the role of Patron of The Alliance Against Depression in Australia.

He said depression is much more common than most people would imagine, and is often life threatening.

“The incidence of mental illness throughout Australia is on the rise and sadly too many young men and women are taking their own lives.

“The Alliance is a robust and proven framework that can guide and shape a community’s response to destigmatising mental health and reducing suicidal acts,” Sir Angus said.

The event featured speakers including Professor Dr Ulrich Hergel, President of The European Alliance Against Depression, retired Commissioner of Police, Dr Karl O’Callaghan, Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia Community Champion Keryn Bradbury, and personal stories shared by those with lived experience of suicide.

If you would like to know more about The Alliance Against Depression, find out how to start your own Alliance, or ask about contributing to established Alliances, visit: <http://www.wapha.org.au/alliance-against-depression>

ENDS

Notes for editors: Journalists are reminded about the importance of following responsible media guidelines when reporting on mental illness, particularly suicide. To access these, visit: www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-suicide/facts-and-stats

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About WAHPA: WAPHA oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, Area Health Services and service providers to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au