

# PARTNERSHIPS IN PREVENTION

INFORMATION ABOUT THE WESTERN  
SYDNEY SUICIDE & DEPRESSION  
PREVENTION STRATEGY 2003 - 2005

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Every year, more than 2,000 Australians die by suicide and thousands more are affected by thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts and depression.

But it is the disabling effects of depression that make it so costly in human and economic terms – engendering a sense of hopelessness, despair and isolation in people that increases suicide risk.

Statistics cannot measure the broader social impact on affected individuals, families, peers and communities as they struggle with the profound psychological distress associated with suicide and depression.

We need concerted and coordinated community action to prevent suicide and depression if we intend to achieve a better quality of life for people at risk, their families, friends, carers and communities.

Western Sydney Health's *Partnerships in Prevention: The Western Sydney Suicide & Depression Prevention Strategy* is a significant step towards recognising the issues involved and creating community partnerships to address them.

As a service provider in our local Western Sydney Health area, I encourage you to become a “partner in prevention”. Together we can begin to tackle these complex issues and achieve a better quality of life for people affected by suicide and depression.



**Professor Steve Boyages**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Western Sydney Health**

# WHAT IS THE SUICIDE & DEPRESSION PREVENTION STRATEGY?

Suicide is one of the top ten international health issues and the impact of suicide and depression-related illnesses is expected to increase over the next 15 years.

Internationally, nationally and locally, health services and communities are looking for better ways to respond to the impact of suicide and depression.

In response to this need, Western Sydney Health has developed *Partnerships in Prevention: The Western Sydney Suicide & Depression Prevention Strategy*.

The aim of the Strategy is to create a more coordinated approach to preventing suicide and depression.

## WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

There are many organisations and individuals providing services for people affected by suicide and depression: local hospitals, GPs, community health services, volunteer and community organisations, mental health services, psychologists, psychiatrists, workplace and school counsellors and many others.

By identifying and linking life promotion and suicide prevention services and creating partnerships between organisations, we can provide more effective and efficient programs to help prevent suicide and depression. We can also identify the gaps in the services we provide and begin to find ways to fill them.

The strategy will help us more effectively deliver appropriate services when and where they are needed, improve systems within organisations, encourage better communication between health providers and promote education and training. It will also help us target populations at risk, especially youth.

## WHAT ARE THE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES?

Developing strong partnerships and building capacity at organisational, team and individual levels is the key to the *Partnerships in Prevention Strategy*.

The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Improve services for people who are suicidal and/or depressed
- Improve services for people affected by a suicide death
- Educate service providers about how to prevent suicide and depression
- Raise community awareness about groups at risk, the signs of suicide and depression, and where to go for help
- Improve the capacity of communities to be resilient to suicide and depression
- Improve data collection and methods of evaluation to provide a better picture of local health needs
- Integrate Federal, State and local initiatives to ensure the best outcome for Western Sydney.

## HOW CAN WE BUILD STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS?

As the leader in local health care, Western Sydney Health will coordinate the *Partnerships in Prevention Strategy* through the Area Mental Health Services Division, based at Cumberland Hospital.

A Suicide Prevention Coordinator has already been appointed to manage the Strategy with the support of the community-based working groups and management groups that have been established.

Working with the community, Western Sydney Health will:

- Identify and liaise with service providers, carers and consumers
- Educate and train local service providers to improve their knowledge of how to identify, assess, and manage suicidal behaviour & depression

- Direct mental health promotion activities and resources towards high-risk groups
- Conduct suicide prevention awareness activities eg. distribute information, promote helplines and local services, provide information to the general community via media, websites and publications
- Convene community-based working groups and management groups to implement the Strategy
- Review and improve systems and protocols
- Identify and share resources and information
- Provide “start-up” funding for local projects that promote “social connectedness” and build skills to cope with suicide and depression
- Convene discussion & research groups and analyse local health needs to ensure that services continue to improve
- Create a database of contacts and information to support service providers.

All the activities detailed in the Strategy are intended to be culturally and linguistically appropriate.

## HOW CAN OUR ORGANISATION GET INVOLVED IN THE PARTNERSHIP?

To be part of the Partnership, contact the Western Sydney Mental Health Service for a copy of the *Partnerships in Prevention Strategy*. Or you can download a copy from our website by visiting [www.wsahs.nsw.gov.au/pubs/index.htm](http://www.wsahs.nsw.gov.au/pubs/index.htm).

As a service provider, you can use the Strategy to identify where your organisation is meeting a strategic objective for the provision of mental health services in Western Sydney.

Then contact our Suicide Prevention Coordinator for more information about how your organisation can use the Strategy to build partnerships, capacity and communication within your own organisation and with other providers in Western Sydney.

Together we can take coordinated action to improve mental health services in Western Sydney.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

*Partnerships in Prevention: The Western Sydney Suicide & Depression Prevention Strategy 2003 - 2005* is a project of Western Sydney Area Mental Health Service in conjunction with local health service providers.

### **For more information contact:**

Suicide Prevention Coordinator

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Mail: Locked Bag 7118 Parramatta BC NSW 2150

## ARE YOU AFFECTED BY SUICIDE OR DEPRESSION?

If you are experiencing depression or thoughts of suicide, please contact your local hospital, Mental Health Service or GP. For 24 hour help, please call Lifeline on 131 114 or Kids Help Line on 1800 551 800.