

Question on Notice
No. 197
Asked on 9 March 2011

MR WELLINGTON asked the Minister for Health (MR WILSON)-

QUESTION:

With reference to youth suicide rates in Queensland -

What programs are currently occurring to network with young Queenslanders on the issue of youth suicide in Queensland?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Nicklin for his question.

The Queensland Government has taken a whole-of-government approach to suicide prevention since 1998, acknowledging that responsibility for tackling suicide in Queensland cuts across departments, sectors and agencies. Under the Queensland Plan for Mental Health 2007-2017, suicide prevention is part of a broader mental health reform agenda that aims to ensure access to a responsive system of services to meet the needs of people with a mental illness.

The Queensland Government takes a targeted approach to child and youth subpopulations at particular risk of suicide, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people with a mental illness, and children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect.

As I am advised that across Australia and in Queensland the overall rate of suicide has declined in recent years, and the suicide mortality rates for children and young people in Queensland is relatively low. It is recognised however that rates of suicide among young people aged between 15 and 17 years have risen in recent years, and that suicide rates among Indigenous children and young people are between three and seven times higher than their non-Indigenous peers.

There are a range of government, non-government and community services that support children and young people at risk of suicide. Suicide prevention programs and initiatives that network with children and young people centre on enhancing resilience in young people, promoting detection and early intervention and supporting high risk populations.

Programs and initiatives being implemented across Queensland to enhance the resilience and build the necessary skills of children, young people and adults include:

- KidsMatter Primary and MindMatters, national initiatives supporting social and emotional wellbeing in primary and secondary schools;
- the BRiTA program (Building Resilience in Transcultural Australians), developed by Queensland Health to promote resiliency and lifeskills in children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and

- the Lifeskills Tool Box program is partially funded by Queensland Health and works to improve the life skills and resilience of young workers in the building and construction industry.

Actions to promote the early detection and early intervention of emerging mental illness and suicide risk in children, young people and adults include:

- The Queensland Ed-LinQ initiative, a Queensland Health program that supports child and youth mental health services, the education sector and the primary health care sector to work collaboratively and enhance the early identification and treatment of mental disorders affecting school-aged children and young people;
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), a LivingWorks program that assists frontline workers to provide initial support for people at risk of suicide, and connect them with appropriate help; and
- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), a program that assists workers and members of the public to provide initial support to people experiencing a mental health crisis. The youth MHFA program is specifically designed to assist adults who are supporting young people.

Programs and initiatives addressing the needs of groups at high risk of mental illness and suicide, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait people, are being progressed by a range of government and non-government services:

- Queensland Health Child and Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS) provide early diagnosis and intervention, treatment and rehabilitation for the children and young people aged 0 -18 years with severe and complex mental illness. CYMHS are located across Queensland and are part of an integrated mental health service system that includes community based services, acute and non-acute inpatient services, consultation-liaison psychiatry, and a range of specialist positions, teams and Statewide services (e.g. e-CYMHS, forensic services, dual diagnosis services);
- The Youth Support Coordinator program, a joint collaboration between Department of Communities and the Department of Education and Training, assists young people at risk of disengaging from school to move into and through the senior phase of learning;
- The Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Roundtable is comprised of community representatives and advises the Department of Communities on the experiences and concerns of LGBT Queenslanders, their families and communities. The LGBT Roundtable has identified suicide and self harm as a priority area; and
- The MATES in Construction (MIC) suicide prevention program is aimed at reducing the incidences of suicide and improving the mental health and well-being of workers in the Queensland building and construction industry.

The non-government sector provides a range of services that complement the clinical services provided through Queensland Health. At present, there are approximately 36 suicide prevention programs operating in Queensland specifically aimed at children and young people.