

MEDIA RELEASE – MAY 26, 2016

## **Suicide risk cannot be dealt with in isolation from complex web of disadvantage: Jesuit Social Services**

New research showing the suicide toll exceeded the road toll in 28 electorates across the country is crucial in urging our country's leaders to commit to a national suicide prevention program. But in many areas of Australia, the suicide risk cannot be dealt with in isolation from a complex web of persistent disadvantage, according to Jesuit Social Services.

“Disadvantage and social exclusion are key drivers of poor mental health and any response to addressing this, and the country's suicide rate, must recognise the complex web of issues facing vulnerable people,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“Postvention – providing support to those left behind after the suicide of a loved one – must also play a crucial role in any effective suicide response as we know that those bereaved by a suicide are more likely to take their own lives.”

The research, led by ConNetica and the Brain and Mind Centre University of Sydney, found that of 28 audited electorates the Victorian electorate of Gippsland experienced 80 suicides (ranked 'severe') between 2009 and 2012.

The electorate of Gippsland is home to Morwell, which was named as one of the six most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria in last year's report *Dropping off the Edge 2015*, commissioned by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia.

“*Dropping off the Edge 2015* highlighted how a small number of communities are burdened with disproportionately high levels of unemployment, criminal convictions, disability, low education, child maltreatment, family violence and psychiatric admissions,” says Ms Edwards.

“In areas like this, it is not possible to address mental health and effectively reduce the suicide toll without addressing the broader context of entrenched disadvantage that has a significant bearing on poor mental health for many people. Ultimately we must build stronger communities that will support their members to flourish.”

*Dropping off the Edge 2015* called on all levels of government to urgently respond with a new approach that is targeted to the most disadvantaged locations, tailored to the unique context of each location and employs a long-term horizon.

“We know that there is no ‘quick fix’ to improve outcomes for many people in these communities and that investments must be sustained over successive governments, and indeed decades. The Action Agenda proposed this week is a positive start, which we welcome, but we urge Government to commit to improving wide-reaching outcomes that will ultimately allow us to see the reduction in suicide rates we all hope for.”

**Media enquiries** – Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or [kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au](mailto:kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au)