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Rising suicide rates show prevention remains a crucial part of mental health service mix

New data published this week showing suicide in Australia has reached a decade-high rate is an important reminder that suicide prevention is one of the most crucial elements of our response to mental health, says Jesuit Social Services.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' annual [Causes of Death report](#) reveals that the suicide rate in 2015 was 12.6 deaths per 100,000 people, the highest rate recorded in the past decade.

"These statistics demonstrate that despite positive investments and interventions at both State and Federal levels, an increasing number of people across Australia are taking their own lives," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

The report shows that 3,027 people died from intentional self-harm in Australia in 2015, a rise from 2,864 the previous year. Suicide remains the leading cause of death among 15-44 year olds, and in 2015 accounted for one third (33.9 per cent) of deaths among this age group. Suicide is also the second leading cause of death among 45-54 year olds.

"Providing holistic and effective support to vulnerable people dealing with poor mental health is vital as we work towards reducing the country's suicide toll," says Ms Edwards.

Jesuit Social Services has operated Support After Suicide since 2004. The program provides support including counselling, home and group visits, and online resources for people bereaved by the loss of a loved one.

"We know that people left behind after a loved one's suicide – including family members, friends, colleagues and classmates – are at increased risk of taking their own lives. Postvention, which means supporting people to navigate the complex grief and trauma involved in a suicide, can and does prevent further suicides from occurring."

Like other suicide prevention programs, Support After Suicide has recently negotiated with a number of Primary Health Networks across Victoria to ensure its continual operation following a change in the way mental health programs are funded at the Federal level. The program is also Victoria Police's select service for referring family members after a suicide.

"These statistics are a stark reminder that there is much work required to improve outcomes for people who feel disconnected and are at risk of suicide. We are pleased that the valuable work of Support After Suicide has been recognised with a further 12 months' funding, and remain committed to working with people impacted by suicide," says Ms Edwards.

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential.

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