

# MEDIA RELEASE



## Suicide prevention a focus for new coordinator

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**As part of a 12-month trial, a new after-care coordinator based in Northam will connect people with vital community-based support, on discharge from a hospital emergency department following a suicide attempt.**

The new role is located within the community and provides a vital link between hospital and community-based services. It is funded by WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) via its Country WA PHN and employed by Holyoake.

As well as coordinating ongoing care, informed by the hospital discharge plan, the coordinator will provide social and practical support and reconnect the person with their GP and other relevant services.

WAPHA General Manager Mark Cockayne said the new service will give people living in the Wheatbelt better access to the right care, in the right place at the right time.

"The idea for the service was sparked by one of our Wheatbelt team members who, as a volunteer ambulance officer, noticed people in this situation often left hospital with little ongoing support in place," Mr Cockayne said.

"We know continuity of care during the first few days after discharge from hospital following a suicide attempt is vital, as this is a known high-risk period for suicide.

"We are hopeful that, with the support of the coordinator, family, friends and the appropriate services, the person can get off to a good start by setting goals, engaging in treatment and building up their resilience."

A particular focus of this activity is linking patients back to their GP and providing patient support during the critical post-attempt period.

The logic behind this is based on numerous research findings that suggest up to 80 per cent of people who engage in suicidal behaviour have consulted a GP within the previous month.

"Within a joined up mental health care system, the role of the GP can be critical. They are often the first point of clinical contact for people seeking help for mental health problems and are the gatekeepers to other service providers," Mr Cockayne said.

Holyoake's Wheatbelt Community Alcohol and Drug Service, Clinical Services Manager, Peter Osborne said this exciting new community-based support service will go a long way towards understanding the immediate needs of those being discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt.

"It will provide much-needed continuing care to vulnerable individuals. We look forward to working with WAPHA to facilitate the trial," Mr Osborne said.

This service is supported by funding from the Australian Government through the PHN Program.

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## ENDS

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**About WA Primary Health Alliance:** WA Primary Health Alliance 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, hospitals 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](http://www.wapha.org.au)