

WA Primary Health Alliance cautiously welcomes year-on-year reduction in suicide rate

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The Australian Bureau of Statistics annual Causes of Death data review, released yesterday, has found a fall in the rate of both Australians and Western Australians who died due to intentional self-harm in 2018.

While any decrease is positive news, WA Primary Health Alliance acknowledges the fluctuating nature of suicide rates and the fact that 2018 still represents the fourth highest figures recorded at both a national and state level over the past decade.

Suicide death rates among Aboriginal Western Australians remain almost three times greater than that found amongst non-Aboriginal persons, increasing to eight-and-a-half times higher when only considering children aged five to seventeen years, highlighting that greater efforts are required to close the gap.

While circumstances linked to suicide are complex, co-morbidities related to mood and anxiety disorders and substance misuse continue to be frequently associated with such deaths. These disorders are also among the most prevalent mental health-related presentations within general practice.

WA Primary Health Alliance CEO Learne Durrington said, “Given the GP is the most frequently accessed health professional by those who engage in suicidal behaviour, we believe efforts to enhance the identification and management of risk factors in the primary care setting are paramount to the success of any suicide prevention strategy.”

“Working in partnership with GPs and their practice teams, service providers and allied health professionals across many parts of the primary health system, we are focused on delivering better mental health, together.”

WA Primary Health Alliance continues to look for innovative ways to enhance the mental health of Western Australians through primary care initiatives such as the [Alliance Against Depression](#) and [PORTS](#) (Practitioner Online Referral Treatment Service). These activities seek to empower individuals and communities, and provide mental health interventions to underserved groups and regions.

Read the report: [Australian Bureau of Statistics annual Causes of Death data review](#)

Helplines: If you find yourself in an emergency, or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, contact emergency services on 000. Other 24-hour services include: Lifeline on 13 11 14 and Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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About WA Primary Health Alliance: WA Primary Health Alliance shapes, strengthens and sustains a health system that works for people. As the operator of WA's three Primary Health Networks – part of the Australian Government's national PHN program – we plan, guide and direct investment towards important primary healthcare services.

By partnering with GPs, allied health professionals, service providers, government and community, we can deliver better health, together. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au