



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2014-2015

Brendan Smyth MLA (Chair), Mary Porter MLA (Deputy-Chair),
Giulia Jones MLA, Yvette Berry MLA



**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Asked by Brendan Smyth MLA (Chair) on 20 June 2014: Dr Brown took on notice the following question(s):

Ref HD-No 17: Hansard Transcript 20 June 2014, page 118

In relation to Suicide rates in the ACT

THE CHAIR: All right thank you for that. The numbers of suicides attributed in the current financial year. I know sometimes there is a lag in determining it?

Dr Brown: I do not have the exact number with me. I can get that for you, but it is usually around about 35 to 40 in the ACT and we are slightly below the national rate.

THE CHAIR: So the last couple of years what are the numbers—say perhaps the last five years?

Dr Brown: Yes we can get that for you. The figures published by the ABS are a five year average I believe because obviously sometimes the data takes a couple of years to come through. My understanding and recollection of this is that we have remained below the national average over that period, but we will certainly get the data for you.

THE CHAIR: All right and the trend is hopeful, it is static increasing?

Dr Brown: Our trend from memory has been relatively static. We, however, are aiming to see that reduce over time.

THE CHAIR: Is there a particular focus on suicide amongst older Canberrans? We often talk about particularly young males being over represented, but is part of the suicide plan is there a focus on older Canberrans?

Dr Brown: I mean people do tend to think of younger people when they think of suicide, but there is, in fact, a real issue to do with suicide in the older population and so yes, I think that is an area of focus. I cannot specifically recall off the top of my head what has been in the old plan, but in the new plan it will undoubtedly be a focus for us. Again I can seek to get some details on that.

THE CHAIR: If you would take it on notice that would be kind and well done on that. Ms Porter, a new question?

Katy Gallagher MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

- 1 As the ACT is a small jurisdiction, with relatively few suicides, reporting the yearly number of deaths is unlikely to provide an accurate understanding of trends concerning deaths by suicide in the ACT. Additionally, due to unavoidable legal and medical processes, there are frequently delays in determining causes of death. For these reasons the ACT does not produce a yearly accounting of deaths by suicide.

Instead the ACT relies on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Causes of Death, Australia* publication. This is an annual publication and is two years retrospective, ie the publication in 2014 deals with deaths up to 2012. The publication provides both a reasonably firm number of deaths (though there is the possibility of further revision in later years) and a five year age standardised death rate. The five year age standardised death rate (SDR) is the rate of suicides per 100,000 of mid-year population for the previous five years. This is the agreed figure to report the number of deaths by suicide in the ACT.

The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is for the year 2012.

In 2012 the number of suicides in the ACT was 24 and the SDR was 9.1. The Australian SDR was 10.8ⁱ.

In 2011 the number of suicides in the ACT was 34 and the SDR was 9.9. The Australian SDR was 10.6ⁱⁱ.

In 2010 the number of suicides in the ACT was 42 and the SDR was 9.9. The Australian SDR was 10.4ⁱⁱⁱ.

In 2009 the number of suicides in the ACT was 32 and the SDR was 9.7. The Australian SDR was 9.9^{iv}.

In 2008 the number of suicides in the ACT was 35 and the SDR was 9.4. The Australian SDR was 9.8^v.

- 2 In the ACT Managing the Risk of Suicide Plan 2009-2014 older people are identified as an at risk population group^{vi}.

In the ACT Mental Health Services Plan 2009-2014, in addition to the services currently provided to older people, there is planning for the development of an older person's day hospital service^{vii}.

ACT Health currently provides a triage and crisis assessment and treatment service to all age groups and older person's community and inpatient services for people aged 65+ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50+. These services address moderate to severe mental illness including suicidal and self-harming behaviour.

ACT Health is in the process of developing a new plan that will build on the current suicide prevention and mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention plan. The new plan will be a strategic framework that will be whole of government, whole of community and whole of lifespan in its scope.

Healthcare and support for older people is also managed through Commonwealth funded services such as GPs, Home and Community Care and aged care services such as Community Aged Care Packages.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2014-2015

Signature: 

Date: 30.6.14

By the Minister for Health, Katy Gallagher MLA

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014, *Causes of Death, Australia, 2012*, Table 11.5 Suicide, State and territory, Number of deaths, Age-standardised death rate, Rate ratio, Sex, 2003–2012, data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no. 3303.0, viewed 24 June 2014, [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&3303_11 suicide \(australia\).xls&3303.0&Data Cubes&103825E61751ABC2CA257CA5000C9033&0&2012&25.03.2014&Latest](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&3303_11%20suicide%20(australia).xls&3303.0&Data%20Cubes&103825E61751ABC2CA257CA5000C9033&0&2012&25.03.2014&Latest)

ⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Causes of Death, Australia, 2011*, Table 11.5 Suicide, State and territory, Number of deaths, Age-standardised death rate, Rate ratio, Sex, 2002–2011, data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no. 3303.0, viewed 25 June 2014, [http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&3303.0_11 suicide \(australia\).xls&3303.0&Data Cubes&2EB6450A0DA638FACA257B2E000D7EA8&0&2011&15.03.2013&Latest](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&3303.0_11%20suicide%20(australia).xls&3303.0&Data%20Cubes&2EB6450A0DA638FACA257B2E000D7EA8&0&2011&15.03.2013&Latest)

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, *Causes of Death, Australia, 2010*, Table 11.5 Suicide, State and territory, Number of deaths, Age-standardised death rate, Rate ratio, Sex, 2001–2010, data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no. 3303.0, viewed 25 June 2014, [http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&3303.0_11 Suicide \(Australia\).xls&3303.0&Data Cubes&804001B138195BDBCA2579C6001D4CCA&0&2010&02.11.2012&Previous](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&3303.0_11%20Suicide%20(Australia).xls&3303.0&Data%20Cubes&804001B138195BDBCA2579C6001D4CCA&0&2010&02.11.2012&Previous)

^{iv} Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, *Causes of Death, Australia, 2009*, Table 11.5 Suicide, State and territory, Number of deaths, Age-standardised death rate, Rate ratio, Sex, 2000–2009, data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no. 3303.0, viewed 25 June 2014, [http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/SUBSCRIBER.NSF/log?openagent&3303.0_11 suicide \(australia\).xls&3303.0&Data Cubes&D4B355BE67928750CA25788400129F8A&0&2009&03.05.2011&Latest](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/SUBSCRIBER.NSF/log?openagent&3303.0_11%20suicide%20(australia).xls&3303.0&Data%20Cubes&D4B355BE67928750CA25788400129F8A&0&2009&03.05.2011&Latest)

^v Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010, *Causes of Death, Australia, 2008*, Table 11.5 Suicide, State and territory, Number of deaths, Age-standardised death rate, Rate ratio, Sex, 1999–2008, data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no. 3303.0, viewed 25 June 2014, [http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&3303.0_12 Suicide \(Australia\).xls&3303.0&Data Cubes&DD1F1010E54A2CE8CA2576F60013491D&0&2008&14.05.2010&Previous](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&3303.0_12%20Suicide%20(Australia).xls&3303.0&Data%20Cubes&DD1F1010E54A2CE8CA2576F60013491D&0&2008&14.05.2010&Previous)

^{vi} ACT Health (2009). *Managing the Risk of Suicide: A Suicide Prevention Strategy for the ACT, 2009–2014*. Australian Capital Territory: Canberra.

^{vii} ACT Health (2009) *ACT Mental Health Services Plan 2009-2014*. Australian Capital Territory: Canberra.