

Written Submission:

Committee: Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services

Inquiry: Inquiry into Youth Suicide and Self Harm in the ACT

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SupportLink Australia delivers a number of community programs within the ACT. One of these programs, StandBy Suicide Bereavement Response Service, ACT provides a coordinated response of support and assistance for people who have been bereaved through suicide.

The StandBy Response Service established a Steering Committee who has the responsibility of providing local guidance, strategic direction and oversight to the implementation and sustainability of the program.

In addition, SupportLink Australia currently delivers the ACT Trauma Support Service providing immediate practical and emotional support to those in the community impacted by an unexpected death.

SupportLink Australia also auspices the Canberra After Suicide Support Group.

Within our role within the Community Sector, and specifically in supporting those bereaved by suicide, there are some common trends, themes and service gaps that have been identified, which we include below for the information of the Committee.

The current restructure of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention funds, from a National to local level focus reflects the importance of localised support developed with an understanding of the unique needs of a particular community. For example, in the ACT, we have an often-transient population and a large number of school and university students who may spend only a short time in the ACT. Therefore, support structures need to be clear and accessible as well as accounting for the unique challenges facing those who may live away from their support networks.

The past few years have seen a strong collaborative partnership form between StandBy ACT and Headspace School Support ACT/NSW in order to deliver coordinated support services to school communities impacted by a suicide (young person or parent). This involves empowering school communities to provide/access the appropriate and informed support they require with timely response, and to a wide-reaching number of community organisations and services.

An identified gap for the ACT community is in the area of supporting Primary School aged children who have been bereaved by a suicide or other Coronial death (investigated by the Coroner). Measures to address this gap have included development of a resource to conduct an information session for primary schools to then adapt within the school community.

Another identified gap is supporting families/communities from CALD and Indigenous backgrounds and the importance of supporting those who have particular religious beliefs.

Navigating the topic of suicide with young people who have a developmental disability.

From our involvement in supporting those bereaved by an unexpected death within the ACT, we see a need for ongoing, coordinated and timely support for those young people, families and communities impacted by the loss of a young person, particularly as a result of suicide.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee and please don't hesitate to contact us if we can provide further information.