

Your ref:
Our Ref:
Enquiries: Selina Horrocks 9222 2768

Mr Shawn Phillips
Executive Officer
WA Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention
PO Box 855
WEST PERTH WA 6872

Dear Shawn

The Care for Children and Young People Advisory Committee discussed the *WA State Suicide Prevention Plan Consultation Paper – June 2007* at its August meeting.

The Committee is concerned that young people who have been in out of home care are significantly more at risk of suicide than their peers and strongly believes that any State Suicide Plan should address this vulnerable group in our community.

The recently released report *Transition from care: Avoidable costs to governments of alternative pathways of young people exiting the formal child protection care system in Australia* contains some pertinent statistics on the post-care group:

- twelve months after leaving care, 35% of young people reported that they had attempted to commit suicide, either while still in care or after being discharged from care;
- 40% of wards thought about suicide before and after care;
- an analysis of WA Department of Justice data (2005) reveal that young offenders who had been wards and had progressed to adult prison report high levels on self harm, suicide attempts, drug use and mental health symptoms.

Young people who have been removed from their families and placed in care have major disadvantages compared to their peers. In a longitudinal study *Wards Leaving Care: Four to Five Years On* (University of NSW, 2007) it was reported that 12 months after leaving care more than one in two young people (57%) reported that they had thoughts of committing suicide and more than one in three had actually tried to do so. It was further reported that for those with no long-term placement while in care the proportion who tried to commit suicide was even higher at 50%.

It is clear that young people who have been in out of home care need to be considered as a significant target group for suicide prevention strategies.

The Committee appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on such an important issue and hopes that a draft Plan will be available for comment at a later date.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Busch", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jack Busch PSM
Chairperson
Care for Children and Young People Advisory Committee

23rd August 2007