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MEDIA RELEASE

‘Road toll’ approach needed to tackle growing suicide rate

Bendigo Community Health Services has called for a ‘road toll’ approach to tackling suicide.

BCHS CEO Kim Sykes said alarming Australian Bureau of Statistics ‘causes of death’ figures showing a major escalation in the suicide rate across the nation proved a new approach was needed.

“There is enormously good work being done in Australia by many people and organisations to tackle the issue of suicide and mental health,” Ms Sykes said.

“But the latest figures show that good work must have high level support, be properly informed and coordinated and, importantly, have the resources to achieve real change.”

Ms Sykes said ABS causes of death figures showed 2864 people took their own lives in 2014 – 2160 males and 704 females.

The 2012 suicide toll was 2535 people – 1901 males and 634 females.

“Statistics show 1301 people died on the roads in 2012 and 1155 in 2014 – the lowest toll since 1945.

“In 1970 that figure was 3798 but society decided something had to be done.

“In the years since a concerted campaign has reduced this loss of life - roads have been made better, laws introduced to deter drivers, car safety dramatically improved and police have done some great work.

“It’s clear a change in community attitude on the back of society deciding enough was enough produced a united effort against the road toll which was supported by strong and ongoing educational campaigns led by organisations such as the Transport Accident Commission.

“This has proven enormously successful and shows what can be achieved.

“What we need now is a similar approach to suicide – we can’t sit by and know that 2864 people took their own lives in one year and think we're doing enough.

“We have to act.

“We have to have a unified approach to this issue and that starts with talking about it. We must also work hard to eradicate the stigma around suicide so this can be an open and honest discussion to bring about real action and change.

“The road toll proves collaborative action can make a difference. “The ball now sits with the nation – what are we going to do about it?”

Media contact:

Rod Case

Director, Media and Communications

Bendigo Community Health Services

(03) 5448 1629

0418 147 560

rodcase@bchs.com.au