



'The stigma must go'

BY KATE MURPHY

Youth suicide prevention programs are being put on the national agenda after local mental health and youth suicide prevention organisations discussed the issues in front of the House of Representatives health and ageing committee at a forum on Monday.

Deputy chair of the committee and federal Member for Swan Steve Irons said he had an interest in issues such as youth suicide prevention, binge drinking, the aged care crisis and hospitals as these were issues prominent in the electorate.

"I spend a lot my time working with Bentley Hospital, the Canning Division of GPs and the aged care sector," he said.

"As deputy chair I asked the committee to initiate this inquiry into youth suicide.

"The aim of the program is to inquire and report on the need for and success of early intervention programs aimed at preventing youth suicide.

"The round table will generate recommendations to be put to the Government for action."

A number of organisations presented at the forum and Mr Irons said some of the key points included early intervention programs, a national framework for youth suicide prevention, the

Resources and helplines

Lifeline, 13 11 14, www.lifeline.org.au.

Black Dog Institute, www.blackdoginstitute.org.au.

Beyond Blue, www.beyondblue.org.au.

Even Keel, a support group for people with bipolar disorder, 9258 3241.

Samaritans, 9381 5555.

Active Response Bereavement Outreach offers counselling for those bereaved by suicide, 9am-4pm weekdays, 9266 1029.

need for information to be shared between Government departments, statistics on youth suicide in Australia being inconsistent and incomplete

and teachers and peer groups being provided with training to help identify the signs.

Chief executive of Burswood-based charity Youth Focus Jenny Allen presented at the forum and said it was about removing the stigma attached to suicide.

"It's not a one door approach, people don't just go through one door, there needs to be a variety of services," she said,

"School is our biggest referrer, and being able to educate young people who are at school about what mental health is, what mental health looks like, what is healthy and what isn't.

"We really stressed that one model doesn't fit all, and each generation has new expectations about what that model could be, for example, right now we are finding that cyber bullying is quite an issue."

Ms Allen said it was good the Federal Government was looking at suicide prevention, mental health and wellbeing in a different way.

Mr Irons said the forum would be a success if the Government acted on the recommendations.

"There is a good spirit within the committee and I am hopeful there will be bipartisan support for the recommendations," he said.

"The recommendations will be published in the final report to be tabled at the conclusion of the inquiry.

"We need to provide at-risk people with as much support as possible and better train the public to help.

"Local charities tell me this is a problem in Swan. The statistics are patchy and need to be improved.

"It is important to keep talking about this issue with the public and in Parliament to raise awareness."