

32, Splatt Street,
Swan Hill Victoria 3585.
28th October 2009.

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write in reply to your circular regarding an Inquiry into Suicide in Australia and offer the following information if it may be of any assistance.

In 2003 there was a very high incidence of suicide in Swan Hill and as Mayor of the municipality I was challenged to do something about it.

After inviting all the agencies who might be involved or interested in the reduction of self harm to a meeting, a committee was formed and christened itself the "Healthy Minds Network", a group which still enjoys regular meetings and has witnessed a reduction in the number of suicides in this rural city from seven per annum to two.

Our charter is distinct from Lifeline or Beyond Blue in that we do not offer counselling but engage in a localised information package with three main objects, i.e. To raise the awareness of Mental Health issues, To de-stigmatise depression and other mental illnesses, and to Improve access to appropriate services. This leads to referral to those before mentioned organizations This programme has had dramatic results, being recognised by the awarding of the National Local Government Award for Health and Wellbeing in 2006.

I am endeavouring to spread this strategy through other local government areas, Loddon has adopted it and Horsham and Bendigo are considering.

In August 2008 I attended the World Symposium on Suicidology in Glasgow, Scotland which I found to be of great value, and I also presented a paper on this subject at the "Margins to Mainstream" conference in Melbourne, November 2008.

It was a source of great pride when three eminent speakers at the Glasgow forum stated that the most important aspect of suicide prevention was "To raise the awareness" our number one strategy since 2004.

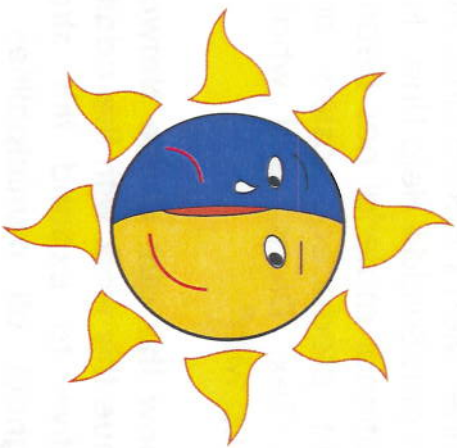
This is a very brief introduction to the Healthy Minds project and if it is considered of any value to the Senate Inquiry I would be pleased to expand further at your request.

Yours sincerely,

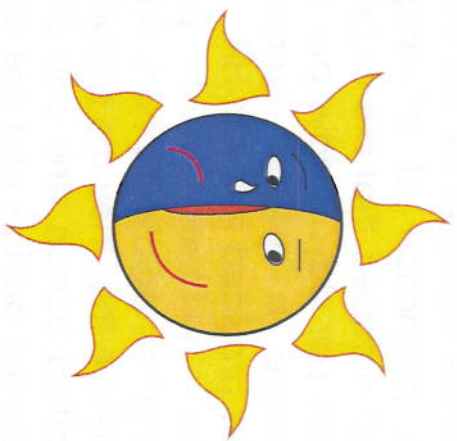


David Quayle,
Councillor, Swan Hill Rural City Council.





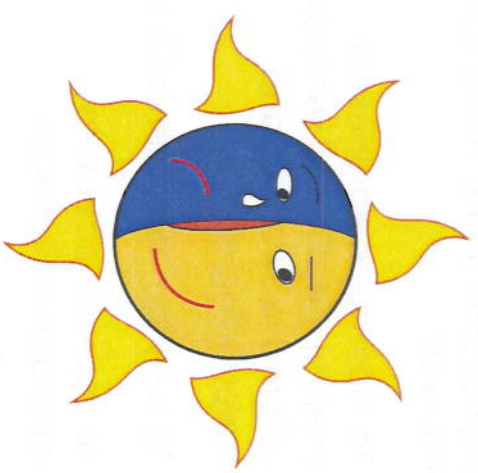
Swan Hill Healthy Minds Network



Emergency Contact Numbers

Swan Hill Healthy Minds Network

Ambulance, Fire & Police	000
Mental Health	Mildura..... 1300 366 375
	Bendigo..... 1300 363 788
Alcohol & Other Drugs 1800 888 236
Kids Help Line 1800 551 800
Life Line 131 114
Suicide Helpline 1300 651 251
Men's Line 1300 789 978
Mallee Domestic Violence Service (03) 5033 1899



Swan Hill Healthy Minds Network

The original aim of the Healthy Minds Network was:

1. To increase awareness of mental health and services offered in Swan Hill and surrounding areas.
2. To de-stigmatise mental illness
3. To improve access to appropriate services

In 2003 and 2004 there was an unprecedented number of suicides in the Swan Hill municipality and following a public meeting which attracted 600 residents, the Swan Hill Healthy Minds Network was established in August 2004, with the aim to provide awareness of mental health and the services offered in Swan Hill and surrounding areas.

The Swan Hill Healthy Minds Network analysed the evaluations and found areas highlighted included support groups, education, youth and service access/awareness. This information, as well as that obtained from agencies, allowed for the development of the Swan Hill Healthy Minds Network Plan.

One of the strategies for the Network is the promotion of a range of contact numbers that are accessible 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and have a referral process to services provided in Swan Hill. These contact numbers assist people requiring immediate support, with the confidence that they are speaking to a qualified person who can provide confidential advice and are able to refer them to a local agency for ongoing assistance to de-stigmatise mental illness through support of these agencies.

The Swan Hill Healthy Minds Network Plan can be used as a guide to allow agencies to determine what strategies would be applicable for their service delivery and also allow opportunity to develop agency specific strategies to meet the objectives.

The contact numbers developed by the Healthy Minds Network have been promoted in a variety of ways including via the media and incorporate the Emergency Contact Numbers sticker and, a refrigerator magnet telephone directory. These include contact numbers for Kid's

Help Line, Men's Health Line, Mental Health and Suicide Help Line. Further promotional material has been with student produced posters and a DVD, "Sex, Drugs, and what you wake up with".

It is now the aim of the Network to continue this work with the additional objective to expand this strategy throughout all municipalities to a State and/or National Network with a standardised logo.

Contact Details For Further Information

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