

Media Release

# Suicide still huge issue

12 July 2014

Warringah Councillors Vincent De Luca OAM and Wayne Gobert OAM will attend with leaders across Australia the National Suicide Prevention Conference to be opened by Governor General, Sir Peter Cosgrove on 23 July 2014.

The National Suicide Prevention Conference provides a platform for the exchange of ideas to help achieve a National agenda of halving suicides in Australia over the next decade. This year the focus will be to deliver improved outcomes in suicide prevention for those working with vulnerable populations. The program includes leading researchers, practitioners and policy-makers, tempered by the voices of people with a lived experience of suicide.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released its Causes of Death, Australia, 2012 data in March 2014. Sadly, it revealed that the average number of suicide deaths per year is 2,415. In 2012, approximately 75% of people who died by suicide were males and 25% were females.

The NSW Suicide Prevention Strategy 2010-15 documents that NSW has the lowest rate of suicide in Australia, 7.8 per 100,000 population in 2008 and that both the national and NSW rates have reduced significantly since 1997, when the Australian rate was 14.6 and the NSW rate was 14.8 per 100,000 population.

Cr De Luca, who was Co-Founder of Give Anything Prevent Youth Suicide became involved in this issue in 1994 when a number of local High School students on the northern beaches committed suicide. He was a delegate to the 1997 National People's Convention on Youth Suicide prevention at Old Parliament House which developed a National Prevention policy. "While I am pleased that since 1997 rates of suicide have reduced, there is still a lot of work to be done to address this significant issue with a number of local young people and adults committing suicide every year on the northern beaches" Cr De Luca said.

Cr Gobert began his working life as an Officer of the Royal Australian Navy, with him commanding a warship, managing several bases and spent time at the Head of the Navy's Leadership School. In 2010 the Australian Defence Force conducted a Mental Health Well-being Review following revelations in the Federal Parliament that in 2006 79 defence personnel had suicided in the previous nine years - 49 of those who died were in the army, 23 were in the navy and seven were in the air force. "I am committed to learning as much as possible at the conference to assist with preventing and addressing this significant issue confronting our community" Cr Gobert stated.

Both Cr Gobert and Cr De Luca have been awarded the Order of Australia for their work in the community.

**Someone who is thinking about suicide will usually give some clues or signs to those around them, though these may be subtle they may include:** Alcohol or drug misuse, Withdrawal from family and friends, Quitting activities which were previously important, Prior suicidal behaviour, Self-harming, Putting affairs in order, Writing suicide note or goodbye letters to loved ones, Uncharacteristic risk-taking or recklessness, Fighting and/or breaking the law, Unexplained crying, Emotional outbursts and increased irritability.

For anyone needing help or for more information contact the LifeLine crisis line on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.