Suicide in Women

- Women have higher rates of suicidal behaviour compared to men (ideation, planning and suicide attempts) compared to men, however men are more likely to die by suicide.
- In 2013, 637 women died by suicide in Australia, a rate of 5.5 per 100,000.
- Suicide is a disproportionate cause of death among younger women. The proportion of 15-19 and 20-24 year old female suicides (25%) compared to older women (less than 5%).
- Hanging is the most commonly used method of suicide for women with poisoning by drugs.
- Women are more highly represented in non-fatal suicidal behaviours but are far less visible in suicide prevention programs and research.
- There were an estimated 804,000 suicide deaths worldwide in 2012, which equates to a global suicide rate of 11.4 per 100,000 population (8.0 for women and 15.0 for men).
- Non-suicidal self-injury is prevalent amongst women and can be extremely distressing and complex. The rate for women hospitalised as a result of intentional self-harm were at least 40% higher than men’s rates over the period from 1999-00 to 2011-12.

Risk Factors –
- Women with a history of mental illness diagnoses have a greater risk of suicidal behaviour.
- Depression is a major issue for a significant number of middle-aged and older women – this age group of women also have a higher rate and number of suicides than woman of all other ages.
- One in 10 women develop depression during pregnancy and 1 in 7 develop postnatal depression; roughly 30% of pregnant women with depression experience suicidal ideation.
- Alcohol was detected in nearly 28% of women who suicided.
- Life experiences such as relationship turmoil, domestic violence, childhood sexual abuse, exposure to poor parenting, financial stress and unemployment.
- Bullying and peer victimisation puts adolescents at increased risk of suicidal ideation and behaviour.

Population Groups at Increased Risk –
- In a nation survey 38% of same-gender attracted women aged 22-27 years had experienced depression compared to 19% of heterosexual women respondents.
- The relationship between bullying and suicide risk was stronger for lesbian and bisexual youth than for heterosexual youth.
- ABS data for 2013 showed the suicide rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women has increased to 12.9 per 1000,000 compared with 5.4 for non-Indigenous women.
- Suicide rates (per 100,000) in 2013 for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 15-24 years was 22.7 compared to 5.0 for non-Indigenous women.
- Evidence shows us that of all the relations to the deceased, partners and mothers of people who die by suicide are the groups most at increased risk of suicide.

| Table 1: Prevalence, 12-month suicidality by gender, Australia, 2007 & 2013 suicides |
|------------------------------------------|-------|--------|------|---------|--------|--------|
|                                | Women | Women No. | Men | Men No. | All Persons | All Persons |
| Suicidal ideation               | 2.7   | 221,300   | 1.9 | 146,700 | 2.3     | 370,000   |
| Suicide plans                   | 0.7   | 57,500    | 0.4 | 33,500  | 0.6     | 91,000    |
| Suicide attempts                | 0.5   | 42,700    | 0.3 | 22,600  | 0.4     | 65,000    |
| Any suicidality                 | 2.8   | N/A       | 1.9 | N/A     | 2.4     | 380,000   |
| Suicides (ABS 2013 data)        | 25    | 637       | 75  | 1,885   | 100     | 2,522     |

"One of the secrets of life is to make stepping stones out of stumbling blocks.” – Jack Penn

“You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.” – John Bunyan