




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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ADJOURNMENT

Suicide Prevention

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (10.15 pm): I would like to share with the House some important news occurring in our city of Townsville around a particular and serious issue of recognising and reducing suicide rates in our community. As we know, with suicide there is no particular targeted group. Our community and our city, including the ADF community, have experienced losses due to suicide. One of the most important aspects of responding to the very real issue of suicide is to ensure it has a whole-of-government approach including working closely with the local community. To put it in context, in 2015, 749 Queenslanders died by suicide. In stark contrast, there were 279 deaths from transport accidents in Queensland in the same year. Which one receives more media commentary?

I have no doubt that every member in this place has most likely been touched by the sad reality of knowing someone who has committed suicide. That said, suicide prevention is a priority for our government. The Queensland Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2015-2017 was developed by the Queensland Mental Health Commission as a whole-of-government plan aimed at reducing suicide and its impact on Queenslanders through such measures as building stronger community awareness and capacity. At a local level in our community, some outstanding people have been working quietly in the background to listen to the voice of lived experience, consult widely throughout the community, map services, find gaps and gain insights into the data around suicide in our city. Suicide prevention is indeed everybody's business. It takes a whole community, united in purpose and vision to effect change.

The Townsville Suicide Prevention Network is an organisation doing exactly that, bringing our community together on a journey to help recognise those who need help and ultimately reduce rates of suicide in our community. It is an organisation led by chair Alison Fairleigh and a whole group of determined people like Adriel Burley. There is a host of other like-minded people from our community, business leaders, state agencies such as fire, police and QAS, representatives and leaders including Mr John Caligari AO, Lieutenant General (retired). He also has a vision to assist in reducing rates of suicide with Australian defence personnel who are committing suicide at a higher rate than the wider civilian population. As he has said, these individuals also have families who are immediately affected and, sadly, are often forgotten. Like most others, John Caligari is determined to make change. I know this because of my previous career as a paramedic. Not only have I responded to countless suicide attempts and, sadly, those who have succeeded but I have also lost some good mates in the Ambulance Service along the way. That is why I commend, and I am determined to work with, the Townsville Suicide Prevention Network, and I wholly endorse their community action plan.