

MEDIA RELEASE

Working with the community to prevent suicide in Benalla

13 September 2017

A trial program designed to help the Benalla community develop local strategies to prevent suicide has commenced.

Murray PHN is working with the local community to develop and deliver community-driven suicide prevention plans that address local priorities and build on existing services and supports. This will be achieved by involving local services, schools and agencies with strong links to the community.

Benalla is one of 12 sites in the state where the Victorian Government is trialing this place-based suicide prevention initiative. It forms part of the *Victorian suicide prevention framework 2016-2025* that aims to halve the state's suicide rate by 2025.

Murray PHN CEO, Matt Jones, said plans will include raising awareness of mental health issues and support services, school-based programs and frontline staff training.

"The aim of the program is to reduce rates of suicide, reduce the number of suicide attempts, improve individual resilience and wellbeing, and improve systems to prevent suicide in an ongoing way," Mr Jones said.

Mr Jones said Murray PHN has appointed a local project officer to work with the Benalla community to understand the local issues and coordinate actions that can be taken to reduce suicide rates.

"Mental health, including suicide prevention, is a key priority for Murray PHN across the region, and this program aligns with our goals of ensuring people get the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

"Last Sunday was World Suicide Prevention Day, and Australia's R U OK? Day will be held on Thursday. Both of these events are a timely reminder about the work that needs to be done in this area to support individuals and communities.

"We know that suicide is more than just a mental health issue – it's a community one. It affects so many people, including families, friends, colleagues and the communities of those who have taken their own lives or attempted suicide," Mr Jones said.

If you, or someone you know needs support, ring Lifeline 13 11 14 or beyondblue 1300 224 636.

Contact details

For more details, or to request an interview contact Caroline Hamilton, Communications Specialist e: chamilton@murrayphn.org.au or t: 03 4408 5663 m: 0449 257 776.