

MEDIA RELEASE

Overcoming 'The Enemy Within'

October 2018

The Mildura Suicide Prevention Trial Project (2017-2020) is helping to bring an Aboriginal mental health advocate and motivational speaker, to the Sunraysia region during Mental Health Month.

Joe Williams is a proud Wiradjuri man, former National Rugby League player and professional boxer. Throughout his life, Joe has struggled with addiction, mental illness and suicidal thoughts.

Trial Coordinator, Murray PHN's Merryl Whyte, said that the event would be a great opportunity for the community to come together, in particular men.

"Suicide is the tenth ranked leading cause of death for males nationally," Ms Whyte said. "We all experience low times in our life and sometime, we feel that we are the only person who has ever felt that way.

"The fear of speaking up really gets in the way of our moving past the low point, and that is particularly a problem when that low point is suicidality", Merryl said.

Joe Williams is a firm believer that the conversations have to happen all year round.

"Everyone is keyed in to talking about mental health during Mental Health Week or Month, but people are affected by mental health issues 24hrs a day, 365 days a year."

"I aim to normalise the conversation and let people know that it's ok to have these conversations at any time." Mr Williams said.

Ms Whyte said that Joe's story demonstrated that even through the toughest of times and the lowest of lows, there were ways to cope.

"As Joe will discuss, that is not easy. But it is possible, even when faced with suicidal thinking," she said. "This is a message that we all need to hear."

The event will be taking place in Mildura at the Working Man's Club on Tuesday 16 October at 7.30am. People wishing to attend can obtain tickets to attend at <https://goo.gl/7MX2yU>. Tickets are \$15 and include a bacon and egg breakfast, and tea or coffee.

Joe Williams will also be visiting Robinvale later the same day: <https://www.rdhs.com.au/activities-events/>

If you are in an emergency or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please contact emergency services on 000. Other support services include:

Lifeline – 13 13 14 or www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467 or www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Mensline Australia: 1300 789 978

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

Contact details:

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Background

Joe Williams: <https://www.joewilliams.com.au>

For his work in this field, Joe was named 2015 Wagga Wagga Citizen of the Year in the community sector, became a finalist in the 2017 National Indigenous Human Rights, and in 2018 was awarded Suicide Prevention Australia's LiFE Award for his outstanding work in communities across Australia. Joe is also a contributing author for the book 'Transformation; Turning Tragedy into Triumph' and wrote his autobiography 'Defying The Enemy Within'.

Mental Health Month: <https://www.mhfa.org.au/CMS/vic-mental-health-month-2018>

October is national Mental Health Month, during which we are encouraged to reflect on the mental health and wellbeing of yourself and those around you. As individuals, and as a community, we can all do something to increase our awareness of mental illness. By helping to shed a more positive light on mental illness and reduce the stigma. According to the 2007 National survey of health and wellbeing summary, one in five Australians experience a mental illness in any year, yet almost two-thirds don't seek professional help.

Mildura Place Based Suicide Prevention Trial

The Mildura Place Based Suicide Prevention Trial began in August 2017 and will run until 2020.

It is coordinated by Murray PHN on behalf of the Victorian Government. There are twelve trial sites in Victoria, including Benalla which is also in the Murray PHN region.

Using the Lifespan Framework developed by the Black Dog Institute, the trials will address suicide prevention by working with local communities to develop community-driven suicide prevention plans that address local priorities and build on existing services and supports.

This includes: improving emergency and follow up care for suicidal crisis; using evidence-based treatments for people at risk of suicide; equipping primary care to identify and support people in distress; improving the competency and confidence of frontline workers to deal with suicidal crisis promoting help-seeking, mental health and resilience in schools; training the community to recognise and respond to suicide risk; engaging the community and providing opportunities to be part of the change; encouraging safe and purposeful media reporting; and improving safety and reducing access to means of suicide.

Data source

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/3303.0~2017~Main%20Features~Intentional%20self-harm%20in%20Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20people~10>

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/3303.0~2017~Main%20Features~Intentional%20self-harm,%20key%20characteristics~3>

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