



NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA RELEASE

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OLDER MEN AT HIGH RISK OF SUICIDE SAYS COTA NSW

“On World Suicide Prevention Day it’s worth remembering that older men are at heightened risk of risk of suicide,” says Ian Day, CEO of COTA NSW.

“Men account for around 75% of all suicide deaths in Australia. Sadly, it’s not widely known that men between the ages of 75 and 85 have the second highest suicide rates behind men aged between 35 and 45.”ⁱ

“We believe that there are a number of factors that contribute to these tragic statistics,” said Mr Day. “Once people stop participating in paid work, some individuals find that they become quite socially isolated.”

Research has consistently shown that some men experience a crisis of identity around retirement.ⁱⁱ They also experience a decrease in the number and quality of their friendships, as well as reduced opportunities for physical activity, sports, hobbies and other interests.ⁱⁱⁱ “Unfortunately, retirement can serve as men’s pathway to social isolation, and social isolation is undoubtedly a contributor to suicide.”

“We’re very pleased that in recent years governments have devoted more resources to mental health initiatives, and that they are actively seeking to prevent people from contemplating suicide. But it’s vital that older men are recognised as group requiring targeted assistance.”

“Of course, we can all do more to combat social isolation. Sometimes all people vulnerable people are seeking is a bit more contact from their friends and family. We all need to make this a priority.”

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ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012). Causes of death, Australia, 2010: Suicides (ABS Cat. No. 303)

ⁱⁱ Gradman, T. J. (1994). Masculine identity from work to retirement. In E. H. Thompson (Ed.), *Older men's lives* (pp. 104-121). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

ⁱⁱⁱ Scott, A., & Wenger, C. (1995). Gender and social support networks in later life. In S. Arber & J. Ginn (Eds.), *Connecting gender and ageing: A sociological approach* (pp. 158-172). Buckingham: OUP.