



**24 August 2018 – Embargoed until 12pm**

## **Chief Coroner releases provisional annual suicide figures**

Chief Coroner Judge Deborah Marshall today released the annual provisional suicide statistics, which show 668 people died by suicide in the 2017/18 year.

New Zealand's suicide rate – the number of suicides per 100,000 population- is at the highest level since the provisional statistics were first recorded for the 2007/08 year and has increased for the fourth year in a row.

Judge Marshall says suicide continues to be a significant health and social problem in New Zealand.

“It’s a tragedy to see the number of self-inflicted deaths increase again” says Judge Marshall.

“We need to keep talking about how to recognise the signs that someone may want to take their own life. If someone expresses thoughts and feelings about suicide, take them seriously.”

Part of the role of the Coroner is to make comments or recommendations to help prevent similar deaths in the future.

“As Coroners, we look into each case of suspected suicide to try and shed light on what factors prompted it.

“Recommendations made in the last year include facilitating better information sharing between health care professionals, ensuring that adequate and up-to-date training in suicide risk assessment is undertaken by counsellors and psychotherapists and making policy changes to how mental health referrals are handled by District Health Boards.

“However, the same comment is often repeated by Coroners. If you think someone is at risk, support them to reach the appropriate services as soon as possible.”

### **The 2017/18 annual provisional suicide statistics show:**

- Female suicides have increased by 44 compared to last year, while male suicides increased by 18. The ratio of female to male suicides is 1 : 2.46.
- The age cohort with the highest number of suicides was the 20-24-year-old group, with 76 deaths, followed by the 45-49-year-old group with 67 deaths.
- The Maori suicide total (142 deaths) and rate (23.72 per 100,000) are the highest since the provisional statistics were first recorded for the 2007/08 year. Male Maori continue to be disproportionately represented in the provisional suicide statistics with 97 deaths last year.

Please note:

The information provided relates to provisional suicide figures and will slightly differ from the Ministry of Health figures. They include active cases before Coroners where intent has yet to be established therefore may eventually be found not to be suicides. In addition, Ministry of Health figures are recorded by calendar year.

**For media inquiries, contact Julia Goode on 021 636 416.**