



Media Release – 21 August 2020

CHIEF CORONER RELEASES ANNUAL PROVISIONAL SUICIDE FIGURES

Chief Coroner Judge Deborah Marshall today released the annual provisional suicide statistics, which show the provisional suicide rate is at its lowest in three years.

In the year to 30 June 2020, 654 people died by suicide, compared to 685 the year before – a decrease of 31 deaths, and a drop in the suicide rate from 13.93 deaths per 100,000 to 13.01.

“While it is encouraging to see the suspected suicide rate and number drop for the past year, it’s important to remember that there are still more than 650 families who have lost someone in tragic circumstances,” Chief Coroner Judge Deborah Marshall says.

“My sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who died by suspected suicide in the past year.”

There was a decrease in the number of young people dying by suspected suicide, particularly in the 15-19 age range (down from 73 to 59) and the 20-24 age range (down from 91 to 60). Both rates decreased from 23.14 to 18.69 and from 26.87 to 17.77 respectively.

However, there was an increase in suspected suicides in the 80-84 age range, with 12 more people dying by suicide in the past year (18) than the year before (6). The rate increased from 6.49 to 19.48.

The Māori and Pacific Island suspected suicide rates both decreased over the past year, from 21.78 to 20.24 and from 8.91 to 7.07 respectively. The European rate also dropped from 13.02 to 12.08.

However, the Asian rate went up from 5.09 to 7.91 – an increase of 20 deaths.

“Throughout this year there has been unhelpful and irresponsible public commentary on the effect COVID-19 would have on the suicide rate,” Judge Marshall says. “During the first lockdown period I said it was unhelpful to release figures for such a short time frame, as it is nearly impossible to draw sound conclusions, nor do I believe such public discourse is helpful to people in distress.

“I’m encouraged by the work the Suicide Prevention Office has started and for the reliable, strong and hope-filled voice that director Carla na Nagara has added to the wider public discourse.”

Ends

Please note:

The information provided relates to provisional suicide figures. It relates to deaths where suicide is suspected but has not yet been confirmed by a coroner; some cases recorded here may eventually be found not to be suicides. This data differs from the Ministry of Health data, which is based on the

numbers of suicides confirmed by coroners, or where there is sufficient other evidence to conclude the death was a suicide. In addition, Ministry of Health figures are recorded by calendar year.

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