



PROJECT AIR

A PERSONALITY DISORDERS STRATEGY

December 2014

Self-Harm in Youth - alarming new statistics

Project Air Strategy provides specific guidelines for managing self-harm. The importance of these have been reinforced by new data showing that over a 6 year period 333 young people died in Australia from intentional self-harm. These young people were aged between 4-17, with most being male (64%). These findings have recently been published in the Children's Rights Report released by National Children's Commissioner, Megan Mitchell. However, the report emphasises that predicting these tragedies remains a challenge, as not enough is known about self-harm or associated suicidal behaviours in youth. Data from Kids Helpline revealed the most common situational risk factors for young people wanting assistance for self-harm were emotional distress, followed by diagnosed mental and physical health concerns. These risk factors are particularly salient for young people with emerging symptoms of personality disorder. The Commissioner made a number of recommendations in the Report to improve the prediction and prevention of intentional self-harm and suicide in young people. These particularly included:

- establishing a national research agenda into these behaviours, to increase understanding of the mechanisms, risk factors and protective factors involved;
- developing the surveillance of these behaviours in young people, including increasing awareness about warning signs and risk factors;
- finding effective ways to encourage children and young people to access appropriate help for early signs or difficulties;
- reviewing and updating national guidelines on the management of these behaviours in young people.

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/intentional-self-harm-and-suicidal-behaviour-children>

<http://ihmri.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@ihmri/documents/doc/uow124093.pdf>