

Legislative Council

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COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (20:49):

I will just speak briefly on this. I realise I was not on the paper to speak and I really have not prepared anything, but I want to commend the Hon. John Dawkins for being persistent with his promotion of the program CORES and what that has to offer in educating people about the signs and symptoms and how to deal with people who have suicidal tendencies. We have heard from every member in here about the prevalence of suicide and the different groups that are more likely to fall into the heap of depression and suicidal tendencies. It seems that it is spread across our society, and it knows no bounds.

I want to make the point that it is not just the person who dies who is affected by this; families simply do not recover from a suicide in the family. As a psychologist once told me, suicide is seen by family members as the ultimate rejection by the person who has killed themselves, in that that person did not have enough faith and trust in their family members to share the emotional state they were in and the thoughts they were having. This disables close members of the family, as well, for years and years afterwards, and families are simply never the same again.

I do believe, as the Hon. Robert Brokenshire said, that governments have to accept that there are programs out there that have been used, have been tried and proven and have got results that have not been the brainstorm of a government department. I bring up my own experience with DrugBeat. We have proven for 12 years now that we have a good program with a 98 per cent success rate, yet this government refuses to acknowledge the successes in the reports that we continually put in. I imagine that CORES is pushing the same wagon uphill as well.

As the Hon. Robert Brokenshire said, it was the Hon. Dean Brown who pushed the Keep Safe Stay Cool program. It was also the Hon. Dean Brown who pushed the DrugBeat program and got funding for that; he came out and personally took an interest in that, and spoke to clients. I do not want to politicise this, but it seems that under this Labor government there is a mental or social block to community-based programs and organisations being adequately funded and supported to deliver the vital services they do.

I cannot, for the life of me, understand that. If you have programs that work, why not support them? In the long term the costs have to be minimal compared to ignoring these problems and letting them escalate the way they do. I would also like to say that I thank the Hon. John Dawkins for his persistence on this particular issue. Since I have been in here I think I can recall probably five or six times that this has been raised, either as questions or motions or whatever, and it is time that every member of parliament took an interest in this.

Just to reiterate how bad this is, not only do we have a lack of awareness of the signs and symptoms of people who are contemplating suicide, but out in the community there is almost a desensitisation to people's emotional pain and suffering. This was brought to my attention this week by a very sad case of a 41-year-old man posting his cry for help on Facebook, self-mutilating and screaming out for help, saying, 'No job, no girl, no home, no hope'. He was crying out to people on Facebook to help him, because he did not know where to go to get the sort of help he needed.

The final picture was him with a noose around his neck, and one of the comments on that Facebook page was, 'A new fashion accessory.' So, do we need education about this? Absolutely. Do we need to resensitise the community about the pain and suffering that people are experiencing out there? Absolutely we do. Do we need to make sure that people in this situation know that they can reach out and be treated with the respect and the knowledge that they deserve to pull them out of that black hole and help them through? People can be pulled out of it, they can be helped, and they can move on with their life.

The high statistics regarding men are also a pretty good indication that the old saying, 'Go to Bunnings, buy some wood, build a bridge and get over it,' is an outdated statement that we use in our society so flippantly when we tell somebody that we have no idea. 'Build a bridge and get over it' means be resilient and stand up strong, but perhaps that social attitude also needs to change. Men need to know that it is not weakness, that it is okay to seek the help that they need and that nobody will think any the less of them. I congratulate the Hon. John Dawkins again on bringing this motion to the attention of the chamber. I support it wholeheartedly.

As for the amendment, I will say now that I will not be supporting it. I am not going to shoot the messenger because I know (or suspect) that the Hon. Ian Hunter was put in a very difficult position in having to move the amendment. Perhaps out of this particular situation we can hope that staff members will learn that if they come and speak to members in this chamber about amendments that are going to be moved and why, and try to reason with us, they might get a little bit more cooperation from us in the future. With that, I commend this motion to the house.