

Men, Unemployment and Suicide

Australia, 2014

A social and political issue
- NOT a mental health diagnosis

Anthony Smith

'It may be the case that common suicide prevention strategies, such as encouraging greater use of mental health services by men and focusing on raising awareness of links between mental illness and suicide, are unlikely to lead to effective interventions for individuals.'¹

Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior © 2013 The American Association of Suicidology

Many reviews of health promotion effectiveness showed that developing personal skills (including the actions of health education, health communications and training and skills development) was an ineffective strategy if implemented in isolation from other strategies...²

From - Paper presented as a technical background paper at the WHO sixth Global Conference on Health Promotion in Bangkok Thailand, August 2005.

http://heapro.oxfordjournals.org/content/21/suppl_1/75.full]

Programmatic interventions to prevent, reduce, or reverse negative well-being during periods of prolonged unemployment are clearly desirable.³

Kelly A. Clark, Ph.D. 9/17/2012. Long-term unemployment among the baby boom generation: an exploration of coping strategies and subjective well-being.

From the USA - on unemployment:

Policy makers must come together and recognize that this is an emergency, and fashion a comprehensive re-employment policy that addresses the specific needs of the long-term unemployed. A policy package that as a whole should appeal to the left and the right should spend money to help expand public and private training programs with proven track records; expand entrepreneurial opportunities by increasing access to small-business financing; reduce government hurdles to the formation of new businesses; and explore subsidies for private employers who hire the long-term unemployed...⁴

Kevin A. Hassett, Dean Baker. The human disaster of unemployment. The New York Times, May 12, 2012.

<http://www.aei.org/article/the-human-disaster-of-unemployment/> American Enterprise Institute

INTRODUCTION

Men, Unemployment and Suicide: Australia 2014

A Social and Political Issue - NOT a 'Mental Health' Diagnosis

This Paper is an extension of an earlier Paper from 2012 ^A. A summarized version of the 2012 Paper was published in the Report *Obsessive Hope Disorder - Reflections on 30 Years of Mental Health Reform in Australia and Visions for the Future*.

Recent research policy and practice around men, unemployment and suicide are highlighted to motivate effective action on this issue. There is now very broad acknowledgement of the particular challenge around unemployment and suicide as it relates to men.

Responsive effective and appropriate action, however, is hard to find.

Men, Unemployment and Suicide – A human and economic tragedy.

The Media:

Sharman Stone warns colleagues that lives will be lost if SPC Ardmona closes⁵ The Age, 5 Feb 2014

Liberal MP Sharman Stone has warned her Coalition colleagues about the risk of suicides in her Murray electorate if the SPC Ardmona fruit processor closes down...

I do not intend to speak in the media about the suicides and attempted suicides now occurring... but believe me the loss of the last Australian fruit processor would be a human as well as a regional economic and national tragedy.

The human disaster of unemployment⁴ The New York Times, 12 May 2012

The American economy is experiencing a crisis in long-term unemployment that has enormous human and economic costs.

Anthony Smith is an Industry Partner to the NHMRC Center for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention (CRESP). <http://www.cresp.edu.au/people/industry-partners>

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Key Points - Overview

The Challenges

There are large numbers of unemployed men who suicide every year; one of the largest groups by numbers of suicide in Australia.

Blue-collar men are particularly disadvantaged by re-employment processes.

The Mental Health system and current strategies are not helpful for many men - and may exacerbate their distress.

Men turn away from 'mental health'

The relationship between Suicide and Depression is being questioned

Yet suicide prevention strategies such as 'awareness - raising' are still largely focussed on mental health issues such as depression

Despite the large numbers of unemployed men who die by suicide, there appears to be very little suicide prevention work specifically to suit their needs.

To address this issue effectively

A large part of the suicide prevention work for these men needs to operate outside the 'mental health' paradigm.

We need programs that suit the needs of unemployed men to better engage with men

- to improve their job-search and for their on-going personal well-being
- to ensure we access those who may be at greater risk

Policy on re-employment needs to be 'cross - portfolio' - to be supported by and integrated with the mental health sector

Appropriate training delivery and content in the re-employment support processes is vital

Appropriate engagement beyond the employment sector is vital

Community and the NFP sector have a significant role - but with an appropriate approach suitable to the needs of men

The Challenges

There are large numbers of unemployed men who suicide every year; one of the largest groups by numbers of suicide in Australia

Blue-collar men are particularly disadvantaged from re-employment processes

International evidence shows the strong connection between unemployment and suicide.^{6,7}

This is clearly the case in Australia. Data presented at the 2013 SPA national Suicide Prevention Conference⁸ indicates strongly that unemployed men mid 30s through late 50s make up one of the largest groups of suicides in Australia. According to accurate data from the Central Coast Coroner's Office, **Unemployed and other 'not employed'** (such as registered disability) tally to greater numbers of suicides than the **sum total** of all **Employed**.^{9, App.1}

International research shows unemployment has a particularly strong adverse impact on blue-collar workers, so that '.... men and people with blue-collar-jobs were more distressed by unemployment than women and people with white-collar jobs'.¹⁰

In Australia, blue-collar men are particularly disadvantaged by unemployment and the re-employment processes. The Progress Report for the Pilot **45 + Program** (2013)^{App. 2} details numbers of ways that skilled blue-collar workers are disadvantaged by both the JSA system and the changes in work culture that have happened, often outside their direct work experience. Many of these men are unfamiliar with even basic aspects of, for example, the training industry, the recruitment industry / labour hire, certification processes, etc. - in short, key job-search skills.

The Mental Health system and current strategies are not helpful for many men - and may exacerbate their distress.

Research 2013¹

It may be the case that common suicide prevention strategies, such as encouraging greater use of mental health services by men and focusing on raising awareness of links between mental illness and suicide, are unlikely to lead to effective interventions for individuals. This highlights the need to adopt a whole-of-life perspective to suicide prevention, which takes into account the full spectrum of experiences men may have that may lead to, or occur quite independently of, mental illness.

Of course genuine mental health issues including clinical depression require the appropriate professional mental health response and there has been some progress in Australia to ensure suitable support for men with mental health issues. But even here the mental health system appears to be failing many men.

From the Summary of this research¹¹

Regarding formal help, around 40% of rural men who died by suicide had seen a mental health professional in the three months prior to their death. The fact that many men had contact with a mental health professional but nonetheless went on to take their own lives indicates a need to consider factors such as the adequacy and appropriateness of available mental health services, the type of support provided, the intensity and level of care, and whether available services match well to rural men's specific characteristics and needs.

Other Australian research suggests that this applies to urban men as much as it does to rural men.¹²

Men turn away from 'mental health'

'Men are much more likely to access help if it's not branded as mental health or counselling'
Federal Government – *LIFE: living is for everyone*. Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet 17 *Suicide and men*¹³

The relationship between Suicide and Depression is being questioned.

From ABC Radio:¹⁴

Norman Swan: And of course the other myth which has really been revealed over the last few years, and your research has helped here, is that the link between suicide and depression is not as tight as some people have thought.

Helen Christensen: We think from the research that we're doing looking at the trajectories of how people change in terms of depression and suicide ideation and in response to evidence-based components of what is being offered, that they are not strictly tethered...

Yet suicide prevention strategies such as 'awareness - raising' are still largely focussed on 'mental health' issues such as 'depression'.

Despite the large numbers of unemployed men who die by suicide, there appears to be very little suicide prevention work specifically to suit their needs.

Current strategies for suicide prevention for men appear to be at odds with policy. We are told that the federal suicide prevention includes strategies that target '... men who are at greatest risk of suicide – but least likely to seek help. More targeted crisis support services, workplace programs and anti-stigma and help-seeking campaigns will better support men (\$23.2 million)...'¹⁵

Out of this, we have Workplace programs that clearly don't target unemployed men AND that are built around mental health issues such as depression, and the stigma around 'mental health'. For many unemployed men, - their distress is due to the difficulties of their adverse life circumstances such as extreme financial hardship and social isolation - and the stigma is the stigma of unemployment not 'mental health'.

It is hard to find anything at all that might be suitable for unemployed men.

And for all the 'awareness-raising' - to where do we refer men who may be in distress? What services are there to provide appropriate support for their particular needs especially if the factors are NOT mental health issues? This is the fundamental problem of the 'mental health' paradigm; for many of these men, their less-than-optimum state of well-being is not a 'mental health disorder', but our mental health system treats them as though it is - they are exhorted to improve their 'help-seeking' behaviour (that they '...should see someone about their *depression*...') - but the 'help' appears often to be less than effective and in fact may contribute to their difficulties.

To address this issue effectively

A large part of the suicide prevention work for these men needs to operate outside the 'mental health' paradigm.

We need programs that suit the needs of unemployed men to better engage with men

- to improve their job-search and for their on-going personal well-being
- to ensure we access those who may be at risk

It is clear that unemployment has a significant impact on personal well-being - both mental and physical health.^{4, 10, 11}

Policy on re-employment needs to be 'cross - portfolio' - to be supported by and integrated with the mental health sector

From the OECD Report *Employment and Skills Strategies in Australia*:¹⁶

Towards an action plan for jobs in Australia: Recommendations and best practices

Stimulating job creation at the local level requires integrated actions across the employment, training and economic development portfolios. Co-ordinated place-based policies can help workers find suitable jobs, while also contributing to shaping the demand, thereby stimulating job creation and productivity. This requires flexible policy management framework, information and integrate partnerships which leverage the efforts of employment, training and economic development stakeholders.

From the USA - on long-term unemployment:

Policy makers must come together and recognize that this is an emergency, and fashion a comprehensive re-employment policy that addresses the specific needs of the long-term unemployed. A policy package that as a whole should appeal to the left and the right should spend money to help expand public and private training programs with proven track records; expand entrepreneurial opportunities by increasing access to small-business financing; reduce government hurdles to the formation of new businesses; and explore subsidies for private employers who hire the long-term unemployed...⁴

Appropriate training delivery and content in the re-employment support processes is vital

Appropriate training is vital:

'Trainer skills at the group level significantly predicted decreased symptoms of depression and reemployment to stable jobs.'¹⁷

Men-friendly - with particular concern to the learning and work culture / experience of Blue-collar mature-aged men

Content - best proactive job-search as well as pointers to strategies, goal-setting, other networks and connections outside job-search specific activities. The one is seen to complement the other in terms of motivation, confidence, and self-esteem - in short, RESILIENCE BUILDING.

Appropriate engagement beyond the employment sector is vital

Knowledge about the psychological outcome of withdrawal and isolation during job loss... is important for professionals such as employment counsellors, doctors in general practice, or specialists in psychology or psychiatry who may encounter unemployed individuals during their work.¹⁸

Community and the NFP sector have a significant role - but with an appropriate approach suitable to the needs of men.

The Community and NFP sector can take a leadership role in developing a range of associated programs suitable for men. These programs may range from more to less overtly job-specific, but all should be designed to help foster and maintain purpose, motivation and resilience.

From research:³

Findings underscore the importance of maintaining a highly structured schedule of meaningful activities and accessing social relationships to absorb the rejection and negativity often found in the job search process.

Programmatic interventions to prevent reduce, or reverse negative well-being during periods of prolonged unemployment are clearly desirable.

This calls for programs for unemployed people to be designed in a way that provides as much access to social supports and non-work/non-search activities so as to provide a buffer to well-being while one is proactively searching for work.

Recommendations:

A 'cross-port-folio' approach to ensure appropriate policy and practice: the mental health system supports policy and practice which has much of suicide prevention for men outside the mental health paradigm.

Key suicide prevention strategies for men are practical programs such as:

Re-employment support and job-creation

In-service training on gender-difference throughout the 'helping professions'

[Program content and delivery meet appropriate standards to ensure suitability to the needs of men]

The establishment of a national body for suicide prevention for men

The national body for the suicide prevention for men has a number of key functions

Leadership responsibility for

Research

Program development and implementation

Corporate Partnership / Sponsorship

Job creation

Male-friendly activity and engagement

This national body / NFP may complement other men-friendly initiatives such as the Men's Sheds, and Movember but needs to remain autonomous.

Data

The collection of ABS data should measure current employment status at the time of death.

Accurate data on suicide has been collected by the Gosford (NSW) Coroner's Office since the mid-1990s and includes details on employment status. This data should be analyzed and published.

Selections from recent research:

- **Social supports and non-work/non-search activities as a buffer to well-being**

Kelly A. Clark, Ph.D. 9/17/2012 *Long-term unemployment among the baby boom generation: an exploration of coping strategies and subjective well-being*

<http://www.nhworks.org/uploads/Dissertation-KC-Executive-Summary.pdf>

(Discussion section)

Implications for Practice

The present findings have implications for several areas of practice in the employment counselling field. Programmatic interventions to prevent, reduce, or reverse negative well-being during periods of prolonged unemployment are clearly desirable.

This calls for programs for unemployed people to be designed in a way that provides as much access to social supports and non-work/non-search activities so as to provide a buffer to well-being while one is proactively searching for work.

Knowledge about the psychological outcome of withdrawal and isolation during job loss may alert individuals to the need to make an effort to remain active outside of their home and involved in meaningful activities after job loss. Such information is important for professionals such as employment counsellors, doctors in general practice, or specialists in psychology or psychiatry who may encounter unemployed individuals during their work.

- **Relationship between Suicide and Depression is questionable**

Radio National Health Report <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/healthreport/is-there-a-link-between-depression-and-suicide3f/4835120#transcript>

Norman Swan: And of course the other myth which has really been revealed over the last few years, and your research has helped here, is that the link between suicide and depression is not as tight as some people have thought.

Helen Christensen: We think from the research that we're doing looking at the trajectories of how people change in terms of depression and suicide ideation and in response to evidence-based components of what is being offered, that they are not strictly tethered...

- **There is an enormous economic cost** KPMG 2013

<http://menslink.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/KPMG-Economic-cost-of-suicide-in-Australia-Menslink.pdf>

<http://menslink.org.au/news/kpmg-estimates-economic-cost-of-male-suicide-in-australia-at-1-482-billion/>

KPMG Report *The economic cost of suicide in Australia* highlights the high cost to our economy from lives cut short by suicide.

KPMG estimates that 2,614 Australians died by suicide in 2012; the overwhelming majority of them male (2,088 or nearly 80%). More people died last year by their own hand than from skin cancer or car accidents, with the bulk of them young males aged 15-44.

The cost to our economy from these deaths is estimated by KPMG at \$1.657 billion with 90% of that figure attributable to male suicide. In the ACT, the cost was \$24 million (88% male).

In releasing the report, Menslink CEO Martin Fisk said that the enormous personal, social and cultural costs of suicide are well known, especially to families, friends and colleagues devastated by suicide. "What is not well-known is the economic cost of these lives lost. The KPMG report details the productivity lost through these tragic deaths – most of them young men – and gives us additional reasons to invest in suicide prevention programs that work."

These costs represent suicides in 2012.

- **Unemployment impairs mental health**

Paul, K., & Moser, K. (2009) 'Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses'. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 74(3), 264-282. [doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001)

Abstract

The effect of unemployment on mental health was examined with meta-analytic methods across 237 cross-sectional and 87 longitudinal studies. The average overall effect size was $d = 0.51$ with unemployed persons showing more distress than employed persons. A significant difference was found for several indicator variables of mental health (mixed symptoms of distress, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, subjective well-being, and self esteem). The average number of persons with psychological problems among the unemployed was 34%, compared to 16% among employed individuals. Moderator analyses demonstrated that men and people with blue-collar-jobs were more distressed by unemployment than women and people with white-collar jobs. Linear and curvilinear moderating effects of the duration of unemployment were also identified. Furthermore, the negative effect of unemployment on mental health was stronger in countries with a weak level of economic development, unequal income distributions, or weak unemployment

- **Effective group training techniques in job-search training.**

Vuori, J., Price, R. H., Mutanen, P., & Malmberg-Heimonen, I. (2005). Effective group training techniques in job-search training. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 10*(3), 261-275. [doi:10.1037/1076-8998.10.3.261](https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.10.3.261)

The aim was to examine the effects of group training techniques in job-search training on later reemployment and mental health. The participants were 278 unemployed workers in Finland in 71 job-search training groups. Five group-level dimensions of training were identified. The results of hierarchical linear modelling demonstrated that preparation for setbacks at the group level significantly predicted decreased psychological distress and decreased symptoms of depression at the half-year follow-up. Trainer skills at the group level significantly predicted decreased symptoms of depression and reemployment to stable jobs. Interaction analyses showed that preparation for setbacks at the group level predicted fewer symptoms of psychological distress and depression, and shared perceptions of skilled trainers at the group level predicted fewer symptoms of depression among those who had been at risk for depression. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved)

- **In reference to men and suicide prevention in Australia:**

Commonwealth Response to - The Hidden Toll: Suicide in Australia

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/16BF30CA1FAC1E5FCA257BF00020627C/\\$File/toll3.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/16BF30CA1FAC1E5FCA257BF00020627C/$File/toll3.pdf)

...targets men who are at greatest risk of suicide – but least likely to seek help. More targeted crisis support services, workplace programs and anti-stigma and help-seeking campaigns will better support men (\$23.2 million)...

Report of the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/16BF30CA1FAC1E5FCA257BF00020627C/\\$File/toll3.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/16BF30CA1FAC1E5FCA257BF00020627C/$File/toll3.pdf) - see page 19

- **The concern about the effectiveness of ‘Awareness-Raising’ as a stand-alone strategy has been raised at WHO.**

http://heapro.oxfordjournals.org/content/21/suppl_1/75.full

Awareness-raising

Much of the current programs of awareness-raising and training presume that development of personal skills will enable capacity to - intervene, to report, advise, refer....

However...

From a paper presented to WHO:

Personal skills development must be combined with other strategies for effectiveness

Many reviews of health promotion effectiveness showed that developing personal skills (including the actions of health education, health communications and training and skills development) was an ineffective strategy if implemented in isolation from other strategies, particularly with disadvantaged groups

- multiple strategies in multiple settings at all three levels (structural, social and personal) and involving several sectors are required for success;
- all strategies require attention to the socio-environmental context.

And...

Awareness of the socio-environmental context is essential:

... health promotion interventions are only effective when they are relevant to the context in which they are being used. This includes awareness of the social, cultural, economic and political context; the capacity and development of infrastructures and systems in key sectors such as health, education and government and the life realities of particular target populations or communities.

• Impact of unemployment

Vocational Interventions for Unemployed: Effects on Work Participation and Mental Distress. A Systematic Review

Audhoe, S., Hoving, J., Sluiter, J., & Frings-dresen, M. (2010). Vocational interventions for unemployed: Effects on work participation and mental distress. A systematic review. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 20(1), 1-13. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10926-009-9223-y>

Abstract

Introduction Unemployment is a growing problem worldwide. Unemployment or job loss is one of the most stressful of life events and can lead to diminished social status, disturbed social role patterns, financial debt, reduced self-esteem and feelings of guilt.

• Psychological and physical well-being during unemployment

McKee-Ryan, F. M., Song, Z., Wanberg, C. R., & Kinicki, A. J. (2005). Psychological and physical well-being during unemployment: A meta-analytic study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(1), 53-76. [doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.1.53](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.90.1.53)

The authors used theoretical models to organize the diverse unemployment literature, and meta-analytic techniques were used to examine the impact of unemployment on worker well-being across 104 empirical studies with 437 effect sizes. Unemployed individuals had lower psychological and physical well-being than did their employed counterparts.

Creed, Peter A.; King, Vivien; Hood, Michelle; McKenzie, Robert Goal orientation, self-regulation strategies, and job-seeking intensity in unemployed adults. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol 94(3), May 2009, 806-813. <http://psycnet.apa.org/?fa=main.doiLanding&doi=10.1037/a0015518>

At Time 1 (T1), the authors surveyed 277 unemployed adults using measures of human capital, goal orientation, self-regulation (emotion control, motivation control, work commitment), and job-seeking intensity. At Time 2 (T2), 4 months later, 155 participants indicated their reemployment outcomes in number of job interviews and number of job offers. Using T1 data, the authors tested the predictors of job-seeking intensity and whether self-regulation mediated between goal orientation and job-seeking intensity. Using T1 and T2 data, they tested for predictors of reemployment outcomes and whether job-seeking intensity mediated the relationship between T1 antecedent variables and the reemployment outcomes. Learning goal orientation and self-regulation predicted job-seeking intensity, and self-regulation mediated between learning goal orientation and job-seeking intensity.

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- 1 McPhedran, S. and De Leo, D.(2013) 'Miseries suffered, unvoiced, unknown? Communication of suicidal intent by men in "rural" Queensland, Australia'. The American Association of Suicidology *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, Dec. 2013. Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23829683>
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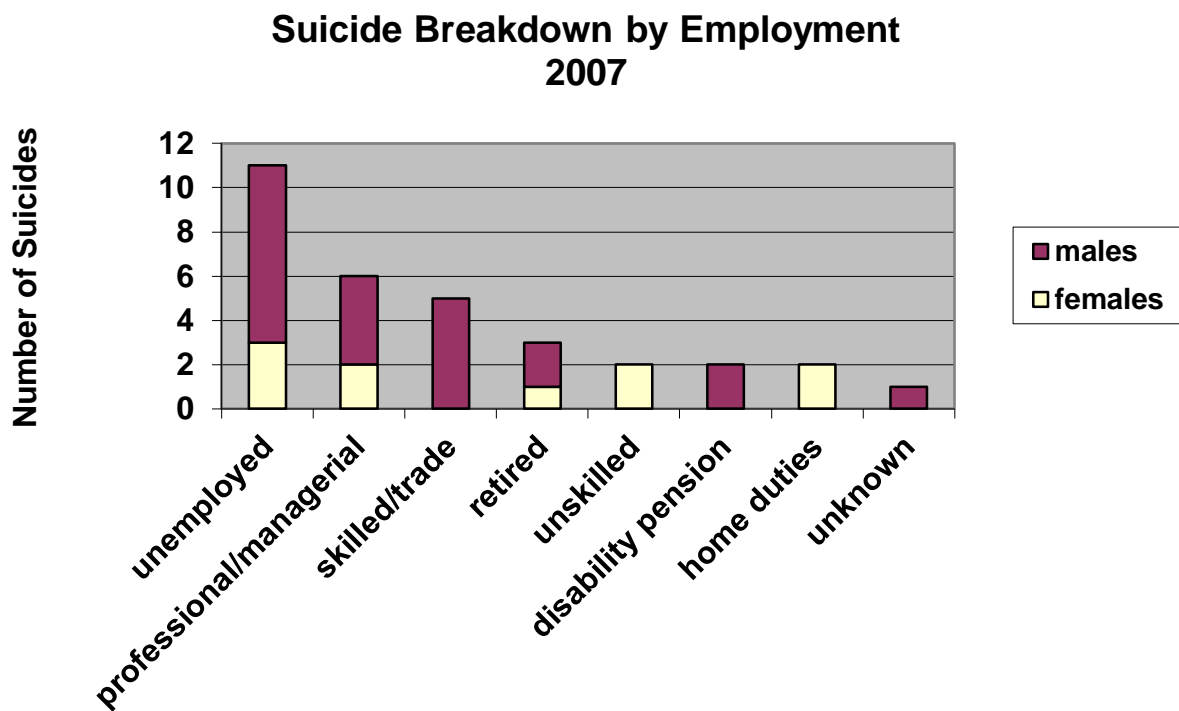
Appendices:

Appendix 1

From presentation to Suicide Prevention Australia suicide Prevention Conference 2013

Suicide on the Central Coast 2007 Report

Figure 3: Suicide Breakdown by Employment, 2007



Suicide 2000

38 suicide deaths

Unemployed	8
Other 'not-employed'	11
Employed	16

Suicide 2003

37 suicide deaths

Unemployed	14
Other 'not-employed'	8
Employed	10

Suicide 2004

36 suicide deaths

Unemployed	7
Other 'not-employed'	13
Employed	17

Suicide 2005

47 suicide deaths

Unemployed	17
Other 'not-employed'	10
Employed	16

Suicide 2006

28 suicide deaths

Unemployed	9
Other 'not-employed'	5
Employed	12

Appendix 2

Excerpts from:

Final Progress Report - The 45+ Program - Sept. 2013

To improve re-employment for mature-aged men

General

With the right approach mature-aged men can be encouraged to commit to suitable training relevant to an identified career pathway - and to follow this through.

With the right approach mature-age men can be encouraged to consider entirely NEW CAREER PATHWAY options - and to follow this through.

Integration with private Labour Hire can improve the work possibilities for mature-aged men with good skills and work experience. For integration with private Labour Hire - a relatively simple pre-assessment process and registration with the private Labour Hire can dramatically and promptly move men into work even when they have been on government-funded Providers' books for considerable periods of time.

The right approach and a simple professional pre-assessment process can better identify mature-aged men who may need other support to improve their job possibilities. This identification creates improved opportunities for targeted strategies for the more challenging clients - currently there appears to be minimal identification of other barriers including even basic health concerns that restrict the capacity of Labour Hire to place candidates. The distinction enabled by pre-assessment will aid more efficient and appropriately targeted strategies and improve outcomes across both cohorts - the 'ready and able' clients as well as those that need other support strategies.

The 'men-friendly' approach (the Peer-based environment) is fundamental to developing constructive engagement with mature-aged men. Many of these clients are deeply suspicious of recommendations by the Providers and are reluctant to commit to any new training or program support - the appropriate engagement can help overcome this reluctance.

Resources developed to suit the needs of mature-aged men, particularly blue-collar men, may improve their motivation to consider new training, new job search strategies and new career pathway options.

Better marketing of support programs for all stakeholders including unemployed / redundant mature-aged men, government funded Providers, private Labour Hire and Employers / HR will improve the current system of re-employment of mature-aged people.

Training for Providers / ECs on appropriate engagement of mature-aged men and the issues around the barriers they face should enable more constructive relationships between clients and their Providers / ECs.

Despite the well-meaning attitudes of some government funded Providers / ECs, the basic business model of the current system is a strong disincentive for Providers to help Stream 1 mature-aged clients and compounds the barriers they are already experiencing in seeking work. A different classification system for these clients is likely to improve the chances of work by both reducing the barriers against work and supporting more effective job seeking strategies. In the mean-time, re-classification may be a possibility for some clients.

The main intention of the **45+ Program** is to help re-employ mature-aged men. The **45+ Program** is not a 'mental health' program, although the practical support and the deliberate 'men-friendly' approach is a major positive impact for many of the men. The provision of appropriate 'men-friendly' engagement for mature-aged men seeking re-employment (a Peer-based environment) is a strong step in providing an appropriate 'duty-of-care' to clients who may be at risk of serious mental health and well-being issues.

There are a number of issues experienced in the **45+ Pilot** and the earlier one-off programs that appear to be symptomatic of concerns raised in the federal government's own documents ***Ageing and the Barriers to Labour Force Participation in Australia*** Dec. 2011 and the Report from the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) inquiry ***Grey Matters - Age Barriers to Work in Commonwealth Laws*** Sept. 2012.

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The 45+ Program is a model for more effective re-employment for mature-aged men

Better integration with private Labour Hire

Better information for government funded Providers to work with

New Career Pathways

The **45+ Program** is able to facilitate men to re-think their future and in many cases to create an entirely new Career Pathway.

Transferable Skills

45+ is able to facilitate the consideration of broader 'transferable skills' for the participants. Blue-collar workers especially have little familiarity with this concept even when they themselves often possess valuable transferable skills.

Creative self-marketing

The 'men-friendly' approach allows for a good deal of creativity in the development of self-marketing strategies.

Recommendations

- Better integration with private Labour Hire
- Training for Providers and ECs in appropriate respectful engagement of mature-aged clients
- Review of the content and marketing of government resources and services such as **Experience +**
- Development of resources with appropriate content and style for mature-aged clients; Information about
 - Training and the training industry
 - NEIS
 - Self-marketing strategies
 - Growth industries and potential new career pathways
 - A 'Skills Explained' resource: written for blue-collar workers
 - Basic IT Training: written for blue-collar workers
- Pre-Assessment: The evidence from the Pilot suggests that a simple pre-assessment pre-selection process can get improved job outcomes for clients with good skills and experience with the integration directly into private labour hire. We need different and more targeted strategies for harder to place clients such as DES.
- General follow-up support: While our first preference with the participants is to help them get work, as another option we try and open the idea of different pathways that may include training. As we have described, many of the men are initially resistant to doing any further training; we work towards bringing about a more positive attitude to this first - and then we give them the opportunity to think through different pathways. Some men need more time to think through the possibilities, sometimes some weeks beyond the completion of the 4 days of the **45 +** course - work. A systematic follow-up is needed to help keep these men motivated.
- Review of **Experience +**: including content and style to suit the demographic, access issues and the current marketing strategies
- Stronger /more effective partnership with Employers / Business to promote re-employment of mature-age people. For example; Aged Care - how Trades skills can be used in the Aged Care industry
- Review of the 'mutual obligations' as it impacts mature-aged men: clearly 'handing out the resume and applying for **x** number of jobs per fortnight' is not effective. It is demeaning, ineffective and time-wasting from other possible strategies.

- For mature-aged men, the changes to the workforce mean that without relevant training many find great difficulty in moving directly into a new job. To reduce the likelihood of long-term unemployment for these clients (and the enormous economic and social costs of this) the pathway options should be expanded to ensure relative training to a suitable career pathway option is supported - rather than being left to the discretion of government funded Providers / ECs who may be reluctant to fund a substantial training program such as a Certificate 4 level.
- Related to this: Review of JSA practices around 'encouraging' mature-aged clients to do training programs not necessarily helpful and possibly distinctly unhelpful to the client. For example, the practice of skilled and experienced 'job-ready' mature-aged men being 'encouraged' into Cert 1 or 2 programs 'to help their confidence'. The feedback from some participants themselves is that some of the courses they have done have been humiliating for them but they have had to endure the humiliation under threat of 'compliance'. This concern applies to most men with strong skills and experience who are job ready and willing, not just the mature-aged men.

It is not appropriate to push an adult man with good work history, skills and ethic into low level courses where the content and the structure of the course may be unsuitable to his taste, experience and cultural background.