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12 February 2021

Department for Health and Wellbeing
Office of the Chief Psychiatrist
Level 8 - Citi Centre
PO BOX 287
Rundle Mall SA 5000
Email: HealthMentalHealthFeedback@sa.gov.au

By email

Submission re: Draft Suicide Prevention Bill 2020

To Office of the Chief Psychiatrist,

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission regarding the draft Suicide Prevention Bill 2020 (the Bill). This submission is being made on behalf of the South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance (SARAA).

SARAA is a community led organisation that advocates for the rights and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ South Australians. This submission has been developed through consultation with our Community Advisory Group and our Board.

SARAA's interest in this Bill is due to the overrepresentation of LGBTIQ+ people in suicide statistics, as seen in recent studies that indicate that 75 percent of LGBTIQ+ people have experienced suicidal ideation¹ with over 60 percent of LGBTIQ+ youth aged 16-17 in South Australia considering suicide in the last 12 months alone². LGBTIQ+ people are also overrepresented in statistics relating to suicide attempts and self-harm, with all of these rates far exceeding those experienced by the general population.

Due to the overrepresentation of LGBTIQ+ people in suicide statistics, SARAA is supportive of this Bill. We do, however, believe that further action can be taken to ensure that LGBTIQ+

¹ Hill, A., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M., & Lyons, A. (2020). *Private Lives 3*. La Trobe University. https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf

² Hill, A., Lyons, A., Jones, J., McGowan, I., Carman, M., Parsons, M., Power, J., Franklin, J., & Bourne, A. (2021). *Writing Themselves In 4: South Australian summary*. La Trobe University. https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1198969/Writing-Themselves-In-4-SA-report.pdf

people and other vulnerable populations are adequately represented in the Suicide Prevention Council (the Council) and the Suicide Prevention Plan (the Plan). This submission will thus primarily focus on Parts 3 and 4 of the Bill, though we also endorse the submissions that have been made by the Rights Resource Network, LELAN and Uniting Communities, with whom we consulted in the development of this submission.

1. Ensuring vulnerable populations are represented in the Suicide Prevention Council

We note that s9(2)(g) will require the Council to “collectively have the knowledge, skills and lived experience necessary to... carry out its functions” and that one of the functions of the Council, as outlined in s12(2)(i), is to identify and support vulnerable populations. SARAA supports this, however we’re mindful that s9(2)(g) doesn’t specifically stipulate that lived experience of vulnerable populations need to be included within the Council.

While we appreciate that a diverse range of skills and experience are required on the Council, we argue that it is crucial for vulnerable populations to be among its members. Without members of these communities with the right knowledge and experience, it would be considerably harder for the Council to tailor the state’s Suicide Prevention Plan to meet the needs of these communities, or to engage with these communities as intended.

To ensure that vulnerable populations are included in the Council at all times, we propose that section 9 should be expanded to include mention of these communities, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, people living with a disability, and people from regional areas, and that representatives from these communities must sit on the Council at all times.

2. LGBTIQ+ inclusion in Suicide Prevention Plans

Similar to our comments about the Council as a whole, SARAA believes that the Suicide Prevention Plan must include specific reference to the LGBTIQ+ community and to other vulnerable populations. We are pleased to see this identified in s19(3)(c), and we particularly support the inclusion of section 20 to ensure that the Plan addresses the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We also support the establishment of suicide prevention plans for prescribed State authorities as outlined in section 24. We appreciate that these plans must relate to both employees and community members who engage with these authorities, and that the plan must be developed in consultation with vulnerable populations.

It is SARAA’s opinion that these Suicide Prevention Plans represent a key opportunity to address a range of issues that contribute to the higher rates of suicide for LGBTIQ+ people such as discrimination, social inequality, and barriers to accessing healthcare and other forms of support. We therefore fully support Part 4 of the Bill, provided that LGBTIQ+ people and other

vulnerable populations are consulted in the development of these Plans and that the Council's membership considers the needs of our community when establishing the Plan.

3. Other considerations

During consultation for this submission, questions were raised regarding other sections of the Bill. While these issues haven't been considered in detail as part of this submission, we note the following:

- Sections 26 & 27: Although we generally support the powers outlined in these sections to prevent access to lethal means, careful consideration must be given to ensure that any restrictions that are put in place are reasonable and do not unfairly discriminate against certain parts of the population;
- Parts 6 & 7: While gathering and recording data about LGBTIQ+ status is crucial to understand rates of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and deaths by suicide for this community, it must also be noted that this data is highly confidential and must be managed respectfully;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. If further detail is required, please contact Matthew Morris via chairsaraa@gmail.com .

Kind regards,

Matthew Morris
Chair
South Australian Rainbow Advocacy
Alliance

Jae-Marie Jaensch
Board Member
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