Defence suicide awareness program recognised

The Department of Defence was recognised for raising community awareness of suicide prevention with the LiFE (Living is For Everyone) Public Sector Award at a prestigious national awards event last night (24 July 2013).

The LiFE Awards are held by Suicide Prevention Australia, celebrating innovation and commitment to the reduction of suicide.

The issue of suicidal behaviour and death by suicide is a major concern to the Department of Defence and the Australian community.

According to Commander Joint Health Command, Rear Admiral Robyn Walker, this is an important area of work for Defence and the award recognises the ongoing commitment to promote and develop suicide prevention practices aligned with the Australian suicide prevention sector.

“Suicide prevention has been an important focal point in the ADF since 2002 and Defence has developed a program that incorporates policy guidance for individuals, commanders and health providers as well as specific suicide awareness and skills training,” she said.

The Defence Suicide Prevention Program is comprised of four levels of Suicide Prevention Training for Defence members and Mental Health Providers:

Level 1: Mandatory ADF Suicide Awareness Training
This annual training is mandatory for all ADF members and is delivered regionally by Mental Health Professionals and appropriately trained Mental Health Providers. The training helps individuals gain a better understanding of the warning signs and symptoms of suicide and guides individuals on where they can seek assistance.

Level 2: Keep Your Mates Safe – Suicide Prevention Training (KYMS-SPT)
This two hour training session targets peers, junior leaders and managers, with the goal of enabling them to identify persons at risk of suicide and direct them to first aid and health resources.

Level 3: Suicide First Aid – Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
The third level of training encompasses suicide first aid in the form of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). The training package was developed by Living Works and is an internationally regarded program. Delivery of ASIST in the ADF is primarily targeted at junior leaders, managers and Mental Health Providers but is also open to all other interested personnel. To date, 2663 Defence personnel have participated in this training.

Level 4: Clinical Upskilling – Suicide Risk Assessment Training (SRAT)
This training is designed for Defence Mental Health Professionals and Specialists which includes medical officers, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and nurses, including mental health nurses. This training provides advanced skills for Mental Health Professionals and Specialists working with ADF members who present as a suicide risk. SRAT also aims to standardise suicide risk assessment in the ADF and optimise patient management. To date, 131 Defence personnel have participated in this training.

Defence members requiring further information or support can access their on-base health facility or phone 1800 IM SICK (1800 467 425), a national 24 hour call service providing world class nurse triage and health support for all Defence entitled personnel within Australia.

Defence also offers the All-hour Support Line on 1800 628 036. This is a confidential telephone counselling support service for Defence members and their families and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.