

The *Understanding and Building Resilience in the South West* project

coordinated by the Injury Control Council of Western Australia

The *Understanding and Building Resilience in the South West* project is a prime example of the successful outcomes that can be achieved through community consultation and ground-up collaboration on the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing messages and suicide prevention in six communities across the rural south-west region of Western Australia.

Initiated in response to heightened community concerns following a cluster of suicides in the area in 2003, the Resilience Project has achieved a number of its primary objectives. These have included:

- Facilitating inter-sectorial collaboration to develop strategies to build community resilience;
- Building capacity of the communities to address service gaps and access to existing services;
- Developing local strategies to facilitate opportunities for high risk groups to connect with their local communities;
- Community-driven provision of suicide prevention education opportunities; and
- Building the capacity for help-seeking behaviour by raising community awareness and knowledge of available referral and support services.

The physical presence of carefully recruited and appropriately skilled local south-west people as project officers has ensured broad community acceptance of the project in a relatively short space of time and has enhanced a large number of community projects related to resilience and mental health and wellbeing; particularly among the region's youth, Nyungar community, migrant/ethnic groups, men, those in contact with the criminal justice system, the socio-economically disadvantaged, and same-sex attracted people.

Added to this, the project has funded and facilitated access to a wide range of training, community education, and awareness-raising opportunities across the region. As a result, over 1,200 people have attended and received free or subsidised education and training on building resilience and reducing suicide risk across the south-west.

The *Understanding and Building Resilience in the South West* project has since earned the honour of being promoted as a 'best practice' model of community engagement on suicide prevention, and has been included in the State Government's draft *Suicide Prevention Strategy Plan*.