

## My Beautiful Son

I lost my son \_\_\_\_\_ to suicide on the \_\_\_\_\_ at the age of 22 years. This has devastated our family immensely. As a mother and teacher for 34 years I am at a loss personally to fathom how this occurred however on statistical evidence many factors point to a pattern that continues to claim our beautiful children.

\_\_\_\_\_ was the fourth born child with four very close siblings in a divorced family that lived in regional Australia, \_\_\_\_\_. His primary years at school were difficult ones as he was a BIG boy and faced lots of teasing and very limited/little teacher intervention and no significant male teachers until he reached high school. His early years at high school were also difficult until he took his weight and worked at transforming himself through unbelievable self-discipline and physical work into a very talented representative sports person and the school captain of \_\_\_\_\_.

He was a successful elite sports person (Played under 20s Rugby League \_\_\_\_\_, where he did not receive income other than \$450.00 for his "Professional "games) until injury changed his sporting choices.

He won a science scholarship on completion of his HSC, which he sacrificed to take up the offer, where he scored 85+5 bonus points TER and was in his final year at \_\_\_\_\_ where he returned after injury studying Environmental science (land and water management). On checking his e-mails he was investigating an honours year at Sydney University for 2015.

He was well supported by a close and loving family. Financially life was always tough as his dad had a gambling and drinking problem and I was the sole income provider throughout his childhood and teenage years. He had just started a new relationship (6 months old) after a disastrous break up 18 months previous from a former relationship that was toxic and lasted only 12 months.

\_\_\_\_\_ had two full knee reconstructions as a result of his professional sport injuries where the club/s failed to acknowledge responsibility for neither any medical support nor any verbal or written contact. This particularly devastated him. This placed an enormous financial strain on all of us.

## **Why children and young people engage in intentional self-harm and suicidal behaviour?**

### **The barriers which prevent children and young people from seeking help.**

Rural access to services still has limited opportunities and the stigma attached is far from removed. I believe that a more proactive recruitment into the primary education system of male mentors, role models sporting programmes that provide success and FAILURE into our world is required.

The model adopted recently by the ARL that sees sport as a non-competitive option until children reach 11 is in my opinion creating an unreal adult world. The world is challenging and as we continue to prevent risk taking and real world consequences we are in a sense setting up no resilience to deal with problems. We've removed any dangerous playground equipment and softened the playground so no physical contact occurs through play nor sport. I believe that BULLYING is often one where the

squeaky wheel receives the attention and the strong to provide the positive influence that appears to have disappeared over the past thirty years.

Ephemeral in their dealings with information and networks I have struggled with students at times to deepen their understanding to information and have them think more broadly about relevant ideas and issues-. Have the answer what more is there in it. - I personally believe we are more connected yet less connected than ever before. The digital access to everything sometimes leaves the humanness of emotion and context at a far distant. I call it the skimming generation .Wisdom (respect) that was part of my childhood for parental ideas is often very dismissed as not valuable. Reconnecting the links for knowledge is something that communities may need to work at doing more. I notice a real decline in volunteering particularly in the more established areas. RESPECT often discussed is now visually disappearing for all established and well held positions (police, teachers, nurses etc)

We need to re-establish the value of education and doing your best to achieve

We spend a great deal of resource time, lessons and peer supported opportunities in the education process however parents appear to have sifted in their responsibility of being a parent. How this can be changed is difficult as society now seems to accept a flaunting of the laws i.e. underage drinking a more liberal approach to well established boundaries and FACEBOOK or social media that blurs the acceptable/non acceptable boundaries. Guidelines exist for the use of social media but do not appear to be implemented. Underage users etc however I believe the return to societal values is constantly challenged by this medium.

I helped research a lit review on e-health mental health services for rural youth in 2013 and came to the conclusion that there is an abundance of services available but they appear to work separately and do not appear to coordinate and streamline services.

As a result of three young boys deaths to suicide within 6 months in our own community the reactive approach that galvanises support is evident. I am extremely fortunate to be part of the community that forms a very supportive and caring link for my youngest son . Independent from the Government services that do not appear to specifically target the sporting boys the club is investing in a private though costly program of mental health workshops to be incorporated within the football programme.

I have run out of time to properly get my submission together so will send this very basic DRAFT to just say that this enquiry is very much needed as we are losing such incredibly beautiful people

Sorry I have run out of time to provide more ideas on what is happening particularly in rural Australia