



Kevin Humphries MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Healthy Lifestyles

Minister for Western NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

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MATES TACKLING SUICIDE

A suicide prevention program for NSW's construction workers was launched today by the Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries.

Mr Humphries said the innovative Mates in Construction program would aim to tackle the high rates of suicide in the construction industry by connecting workers with mental health professionals to offer support to those deemed at risk.

"It is worrying that suicide rates for construction workers are close to twice the national average for men," Mr Humphries said.

"Throughout the construction industry, perhaps more than any other, there is still a stigma around mental illness and around blokes reaching out for help when they need it most.

"This program aims to shatter that stigma and promote the message that the more people know about mental health and suicide prevention and are comfortable talking about it at work, the more people will seek help when they need it.

"The more we support our workmates the more we break down the stigma around suicide, mental health problems and mental illness and through Mates in Construction we are creating a network of mates looking out for mates.

"In Queensland where this program originated it has been credited with preventing up to two suicides a week in their construction industry. It is vital that we work to emulate those results here in NSW."

Mates in Construction seeks to:

- Raise Awareness of suicide as a preventable problem within the NSW building and construction industry.
- Make getting help easy, not just to prevent suicide but for all mental health and wellbeing issues on site.
- Ensure the help offered to workers is appropriate and of high quality.

Mr Humphries today awarded the Lend Lease-UTS Chau Chak Project team with the State's first Mates in Construction accreditation certificate.

"At the UTS Chau Chak construction site nearly 200 workers have undertaken mental illness and suicide awareness training that gives them the skills to recognise the warning signs and support their colleagues by connecting them to expert help," Mr Humphries said.

"As more and more sites across NSW receive their accreditation and more and more workers undertake this training I expect we will start to see an increase in men putting their hand up to seek help and with that a welcome drop in suicide rates in the NSW construction industry."