Tasmania is preparing to participate in a national trial exploring how a coordinated approach can help local communities reduce suicide.

Tasmania is one of 12 sites around the country taking part in the Australian Government-funded trial. Primary Health Tasmania will lead the trial in Tasmania, working closely with the Department of Health and Human Services and the suicide prevention sector.

Primary Health Tasmania general manager Mark Broxton said the national trial represents a major opportunity to test different approaches to reducing suicide and self-harm.

“There are a range of suicide prevention activities on the ground throughout Tasmania including clinical services, education and training,” Mr Broxton said.

“The purpose of this trial is to see how multiple activities can be implemented in a coordinated and collaborative way at a local level to build community capacity to reduce suicide.

“We all have a role to play in preventing suicide in our community, including looking after ourselves and supporting each other, but it is only by working together that we can prevent suicide.”

Tasmania has the second highest rate of suicide in Australia (16 suicides per 100,000 people in 2015). Each of the 12 trial sites will focus their work on a priority population group. The Tasmanian population group will be decided in the next month.

The results from each trial site will be assessed independently and shared nationally to help inform more effective suicide prevention activities across Australia.

Implementation of the national trial is being supported by the Black Dog Institute, whose LifeSpan suicide prevention model will be used in Tasmania and at many of the other trial sites.

LifeSpan Director at the Black Dog Institute, Rachel Green, is in Hobart today to address an information session about the model for a number of service providers and community groups.

Primary Health Tasmania is partnering with the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Community Network and the Department of Health and Human Services to run today’s forum, which gives participants an opportunity to learn about the evidence behind the framework and ask questions about how it can be applied in Tasmania.

The forum is the first of a number of local consultation and engagement activities that will be held throughout development, implementation and evaluation of the trial.

“LifeSpan is a world-class approach to suicide prevention which combines nine evidenced-based strategies into one community-led initiative,” Ms Green said.

“It aims to build a safety net for the community by connecting and coordinating new and existing suicide prevention activities and building the capacity of the community to better support people facing a suicide
Mr Broxton said once the Tasmanian population group and location have been selected, the trial partners will look at what suicide prevention activity is already on the ground, where it fits within the LifeSpan framework, and what needs to be developed to fill the gaps.

“Primary Health Tasmania will work with existing services and programs to ensure that future programs are meeting the needs of the community and not duplicating what is already in place,” he said.

Activity will align with and complement the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016-2020.

The Australian Government has provided $3 million for the Tasmanian component of the trial, which is scheduled to run until 30 June 2019.

Primary Health Tasmania is establishing an advisory group to support development and implementation of the trial.

The Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Trial Advisory Group is being drawn from members of the existing Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Community Network.

The Black Dog Institute and LifeSpan

The Black Dog Institute is a world-leading medical research institute focused on translating the latest scientific knowledge into better health outcomes for people with mental illness.

The Institute has received $3 million from the Australian Government to support the national suicide prevention trial.

It will work with the Primary Health Networks at each of the 12 trial sites to develop and implement community-specific strategies, using the LifeSpan model.

More information about LifeSpan: www.lifespan.org.au

About Primary Health Tasmania

Primary Health Tasmania is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation working to connect care and keep Tasmanians well and out of hospital. It was established under the Australian Government’s Primary Health Networks Program to support and enable a coordinated, primary care-focused health system.

More information about Primary Health Tasmania: www.primaryhealthtas.com.au

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