

Urban Futures Symposium

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Presentation: School Social Workers: Working with Youth Suicide in Australian Secondary Schools

The key aim of this project is to understand how social workers based in Australian secondary schools conceptualise their role in working with students experiencing suicidal behaviours, and how this shapes their practice. Suicide is the leading cause of death for young people aged 15-24 years in Australia (AIHW, 2022). Understanding the role school social workers play in early intervention, prevention and postvention supports best practice, policy and resources that contribute towards reducing the impact of suicide on young people, their families, the school and broader community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSISPEP, 2016; Robinson, 2016) and LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, and others identifying differently to their birth gender) young people (Hill et al., 2021; LHA, 2021; Rhoades et al., 2018) experience a higher suicide rate than the general youth population.

Investigating school social workers' experiences of their role in supporting suicide prevention with vulnerable student populations in a post-covid context is significant, particularly given the notable lack of Australian social work literature and research regarding suicide with these populations (Kelly et al., 2022; Maple et al., 2017).