



Our society needs to take bold steps to get serious about suicide prevention, TARNYA DAVIS says.

THIS week to mark World Suicide Prevention Day, hundreds of people marched to Merewether beach to remember people they know who have died from suicide and to raise awareness of this tragic epidemic.

Suicide continues to be the highest cause of death of people aged 15-24, every day 6 men and 2 women die from suicide. Half of Australian adults know someone who has died from suicide. The suicide rate amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is more than double the national rate.

We tend to think of suicide as a mental health issue, yet half of those who take their lives never have contact with mental health services. Mental health services must be increased, access should be easier, and the stigma of seeking psychological support should be smashed so that more people in need can reach out and when they do, have their request met. Yet, if we are going to make a serious change in the rates of suicide, we need to understand the factors that increase someone's risk include societal factors such as unemployment and financial strain, unstable housing and social isolation.

When we understand that people who don't have work are faced with financial strain, unstable housing and the isolation that comes with being disconnected to people and a purposefulness that comes with work, we can see that real change to suicide prevention comes with broader reforms that include increasing NewStart, so that extreme poverty and the associated stress and isolation is reduced, saving people's lives.

Tarnya Davis is a clinical and forensic psychologist and principal of NewPsych Psychologists.