

Coorong looks at suicide Country shows cut back

THE Coorong community has started its conversation on suicide prevention and support as it works to establish a local suicide prevention network.

About 100 people attended the Conversations Matter forum at Tailem Bend addressing the issue of suicide in the community, including ways to help people through the grieving process and provide support and information for those contemplating self-harm.

Tailem Bend GP Tommy van Wyngaard said increased mental health services and a better system of providing professionally trained support was desperately needed in regional communities.

"We need a dedicated and persistent team and we also need to educate and empower family members and friends of those who are at risk and have a personal plan in place when help is needed," he said.

"We need to know how to get the person with the problem to the right support.

"There needs to be people on the ground to deliver the services in terms of mental health and we need an abundance of mental health workers."

Dr van Wyngaard said there was a South African saying: Everyone uses the courtyard, but no one sweeps it.

He said it was time that everyone took a turn at looking after the 'courtyard' that was the local community.

Community members Tracy Woodward and Coorong councillor Bob Simcock both spoke of how the suicide



Guest speakers: Tailem Bend doctor Tommy van Wyngaard, councillor Bob Simcock, Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick, Office of the Chief Psychiatrist suicide prevention officer Lynne James, Standby Response Service coordinator Tracey Wanganeen, community member Tracy Woodward and council community and corporate director Nat Traeger delivered information as part of the suicide prevention forum, Conversations Matter.

of a close family member and friends affected their lives.

Council community and corporate director Nat Traeger said she believed the community had taken its first step towards a better understanding of the grieving process and what services and supports were available in both suicide prevention and bereavement support.

Two more community forums on the theme Conversations Matter are being planned for Meningie and Tintinara before the end of the year.

-Details: Anyone in need of support can contact the Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467, Lifeline 13 11 14, Kids Helpline 1800 551 800 or their local medical practitioner or hospital.

COUNTRY shows have been hit by cuts to State Government funding provided through PIRSA.

In a speech made to Parliament earlier this month, Member for Chaffey Tim Whetstone said the Agricultural Societies Council lost \$40,000 in allocated funding which may not seem like much, but regional shows were critically important to communities.

"The backbone of those shows are the volunteers and local community members who make the shows happen, bring everyone together and give them the opportunity to showcase what they do best," Mr Whetstone said.

"They also have a sense of pride when they bring their wares, their jams, their wheat clusters, their oats and grains, and their animals to these shows, and it really is important."

He was disappointed that PIRSA would no longer provide funding for rural agricultural show prizes.

"I notice that last year's prizemoney for the jam competition was \$3, but it was vital prizemoney - it was about keeping all those competitors in the game," he said.

"Without that prizemoney,

it leaves a critical gap in what regional shows are about, and that is about competing and being part of the show, and it is a stepping stone and putting your product into the regional shows and then having an opportunity to bring it to the big smoke in Adelaide and putting it on the shelves and running it against everyone else in South Australia."

Family First MP Robert Brokenshire said the State's 50 country shows were put at risk by the cuts.

"This is a disgraceful situation - the culture of country communities are underpinned by such local shows," he said.

"\$40,000 is petty cash for a Cabinet that's not backward in spending whatever it wants to look after itself."

He said the move was penny-pinching politics at its worst.

"The decision to take this funding is just further proof that we are governed by a city-centric Government that does not understand, or care about regional areas," he said.

"The Government has ripped \$40,000 worth of funding from country shows and I am calling for the State Government to reinstate this money."