

IN THIS

ISSUE

- **Know the Facts Tour**
- **World Suicide Prevention Day**
- **Educating Opinion Leaders**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- World Suicide Prevention Day** 2
- Educating Opinion Leaders** 2
- Feedback** 2
- A Tribute to the Foley Family** 3
- Acknowledgements** 4

Know The Facts Tour

April saw Deb and Maria pack up their car with a tent, data projector and laptop and hit the road for a tour of the North Island. Nine free community information sessions were delivered over a three week period along with displays in libraries, media interviews and meetings with a range of groups and individuals.

The information sessions provided the latest suicide statistics, presented the research explaining why NZs mental health approach to suicide prevention has failed and information on how a social approach to suicide prevention has been successfully implemented on other countries.

The response was overwhelming. In Hamilton, 40 of Waikato University's Medical and Coun-

selling staff attended the presentation, In Tauranga a member of the Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee attended and participated in a 2 hour discussion with Casper and other attendees after the presentation, in New Plymouth a retired Coroner told us our social approach was entirely consistent with his experience on the bench at inquests where

he saw little evidence of mental illness but strong evidence of social factors causing suicide. In Whakatane a GP asked for a copy of our presentation to use in training with his colleagues. Everywhere, families who have lost loved ones to suicide endorsed the need to talk about the issue and for us to support each other in achieving change to NZs approach.



World Suicide Prevention Day

How many New Zealanders could tell you when World Suicide Prevention Day is? In the country with the highest rate of youth suicide in the developed world, it is telling that the answer would be almost zero.

Casper aims to change that by making World Suicide Preven-

tion Day on September the 10th the focus of a range of activities aimed at raising awareness of suicide in this country and empowering families and communities to own the suicide prevention agenda.

See the story on page 2 for details of what we have planned.

World Suicide Prevention Day

Our plans for World Suicide Prevention Day got a boost this week with notification from the Speaker of the House that we have been granted permission to march on parliament.

In the lead up to the day, on the 8th September, we are planning a large march down Lambton Quay to Parliament buildings where we will provide the opportunity for families bereaved by suicide to talk about what needs to change in NZ and explain to

MPs why largest victim group in New Zealand plans to make this a key election issue.

541 pairs of empty shoes will be placed on the steps of parliament to represent the New Zealanders who died from suicide last year.

Casper will host an event later that evening to pay tribute to those who have died, to the courage of their families and to those who have worked without recognition in the suicide prevention field for many years.

On the 10th of September a sponsored walk around Auckland domain will end with a community barbeque to raise funds for Casper and to highlight the role community cohesion plays in suicide prevention. Walks and community barbeques are being planned for many cities and towns around the country. For more details about planned events or support in running your own community event on World Suicide Prevention Day, contact our events manager, Carolyn Lowe.



Our first meeting was with the Commissioner for Children who shares our concern that 10% of the deaths of 10-14 year olds in NZ are suicides

Educating Opinion Leaders

In March some of the Casper team travelled to Wellington to meet with key opinion leaders.

Our first meeting was with the Commissioner for Children who shares our concern that 10% of the deaths of 10-14 year olds in NZ are suicides and that more young people die from suicide than from all medical causes combined. Following our meeting,

the Commissioner advised us he had promoted the benefits of meeting with us to Pat Tuohy of the Ministry of Health and Peter Dunne, Minister of Suicide Preven-

tion. Dr Tuohy has agree to meet with us and we are grateful to the Commissioner for securing this opportunity for us. Somehow it appears communication has been confused with Mr Dunne as the Commissioner advised that he understood Casper had been invited to attend the meeting on the development of new guidelines on media reporting of suicide. Sadly this is not the case with the Minister advising us that families would not be represented at the meeting. After considerable pressure he agreed to meet us for 30 minutes in Wellington—a meeting we could not attend due to lack of funding.

Our second meeting was with the Families Commission who gave us a very generous two hours of their time. As a follow up, one of the Commissioners met with us in Auckland on his own time to offer

support for our work .

We also met with Women's Refuge to discuss the links between witnessing family violence as a child and teen suicide and to raise awareness of the risks of labeling and drugging women and children who are victims of this violence by mental health professionals.

Our most important meeting however was with a high profile law firm who we have approached to take on a class action under the Bill of Rights Act on behalf of those families whose loved ones have died from suicide induced by psychotropic drugs including antidepressants, antipsychotics, sedatives, stimulants and others.

We hope to be able to provide more news on progress with this initiative in next months newsletter.

Casper Team with Families Commissioner Gregory Fortuin



Feedback

Casper is an organization established by families for families, in the community for the community.

Feedback from families and from the community is constantly evaluated to ensure we are meeting our goals and properly representing the views and meeting the needs of our members.

Those who have attended more than one of our presentations will be aware that changes are made regularly in response to feedback received.

This is a selection of some of the correspondence and feedback we have recently received:

“And then I tried to locate you, and found out about CASPER!! so right now I feel in a state of reprieve. There ARE other people who are trying to change this awful situation, Your web site is very good. Like finding an oasis for people like me trying to find others in the same awful state. The idea of a forum is brilliant. We are so alone in this.”

“Found your amazing website while searching just released serious & sentinel events report.re our late daughter. May need advice, Feel very alone.”

We’re very supportive of Casper and want to keep in touch and be active ok. Brilliant to hear all about your adventures – what a difference you and Maria are making - thank you both xxx

Thanks for your presentation at The University of Waikato this Thursday morning. I am the Catholic Chaplain at the university. Your main message, that suicide is a social, not medical, issue, is very important. I hope you are able to keep up the good work of communicating this message to wider circles in society. I will be praying for your deceased children and for your work.

Casper Tributes

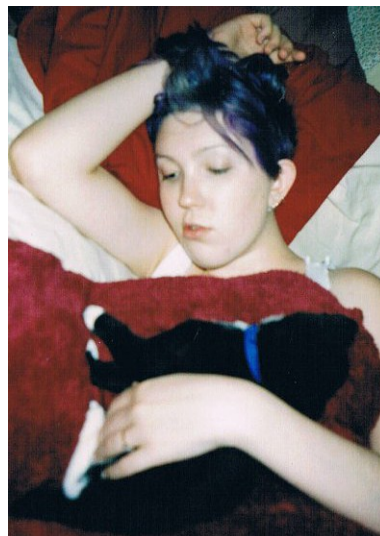
Peter and Ebony Foley are one of the bravest couples we have ever met. To continue to get out of bed in the morning after losing three children to medical neglect is a daily act of courage few of us could match. To work tirelessly in preventing a similar fate for other children and to do so with love, warmth and humour deserves a medal.

Peter and Ebony lost a newborn daughter, Aroha, to medical misadventure. Their son Ian died after being prescribed benzodiazepines by a doctor who was found guilty of disgraceful conduct. Their daughter Seren died by suicide in March last year on a cocktail of psychotropic drugs, following incarceration in a psychiatric facility where she was sexually abused by a staff member.

No parents should suffer the pain and loss these two have. None could face it with more courage than Peter and Ebony. You are an inspiration to us all. This award is for you and for your daughter Seren whose courage and endurance reflects that of her parents.



PETER & EBONY FOLEY



TINEKE SEREN FOLEY

Casper

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Please contact us with your feedback. Suggestions and ideas for stories. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter please send us your article, story, award nomination or news.

For information on world suicide prevention day activities and sponsorship information please contact

Carolyn Lowe, Casper Events Manager on
0274765024

Casper wants to acknowledge...

- Carolyn Lowe for getting an A+ for her first university assignment and appointment as ambassador for the Human Services Degree.
- The safe arrival of Jetero James Green, son and brother of Steve, Paula and Grace
- Carolyn Hodson for her moving and informative speech at the New Plymouth Casper presentation
- Adam Robertson for completing the Discovery for Teens Course
- The Powell Family for surviving the 2nd anniversary of Michael's passing
- Gladys Dent for her tenacity and courage
- The community of Kawerau for their commitment to suicide prevention and youth empowerment
- Ranene and Graham Jelley for their hospitality and support
- MRE Property for their sponsorship of the Casper website
- Jarrad Hodson for the design and production of the Know the Facts Tour and World Suicide Prevention Day posters
- Those who have lost their lives to suicide and the families who work to prevent others suffering this tragedy.



Waste Casper funds on a cup of tea? Not our Deb—she finds a table at a café in the main street and makes her own tea .



A cabin with power to plug in her trusty GHDs puts a smile on Maria's face in Kawerau.