

MEDIA STATEMENT

Friday, September 3, 2010

Dads Suicide Risk Skyrockets when Separated from their Children

As Father's Day approaches, MensLine Australia has uncovered men living without their children are five times more likely to have attempted suicide, as compared to fathers who are living with their children.

The extreme isolation and emotional pain many men feel is evident when they reach out for help and contact MensLine Australia. Highlighted by an analysis of the 50,000 callers who ring MensLine Australia each year, fathers living alone are also twice as likely to have experienced a serious mental health concern and three times more likely to be suicidal when calling the professional telephone counselling service.

Randal Newton-John of MensLine Australia explains many separated fathers are devastated by the inability to see or live with their children.

"Men are often struggling with pain, anger and frustration when they call our counsellors. We receive at least two suicide-related calls every day. Sadly, we receive many more calls from men whose only glimmer of hope is the possibility of one day, being able to spend more time with their kids", said Newton-John.

"Times like Father's Day can intensify the difficulties faced of many non-custodial parents, with many dads distressed that access to their kids is being controlled by someone else. This can challenge a man's sense of worth, dignity and his identity as a father. The struggle to deal with these overwhelming feelings and the separation from their kids can increase their risk of suicide", said Newton-John.

Call patterns to MensLine Australia show special days like Father's Day increase distress, both on the day itself and for the weeks to come. Unfortunately, these frustrations are not isolated to the day itself – they're what separated dads deal with on a daily basis.

MensLine Australia counsellors suggest the following tips for separated dads to reduce the pressure, both on Father's Day, and throughout the year:

- Moving or 'handing-over' is often a high tension point for separated families. Schedule 'hand overs' to occur at neutral locations, many family relationship services have 'change over' facility to help with 'conflict free' 'hand-overs'.
- Create opportunities to really engage with your children both surrounding Father's Day and throughout the year. Playing sport, going on day trips, or creating backyard masterpieces are ways to create positive memories for you and your children.
- If you can't physically be with your children, be part of their lives through letters, emails, SMS, phone calls and photos. Let them know what's been happening in your life and that you care about what's been happening in theirs.

MensLine Australia is the only national professional telephone support and information service for men. It is committed to helping Australian men to improve their health and wellbeing by supporting them to improve their relationships and break the cycle of isolation. Professional counsellors offer confidential support, information and referral, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the cost of a local call. The service is free and accessible nationwide by calling **1300 78 99 78**. MensLine Australia is provided by Crisis Support Services.

MensLine Australia – 1300 78 99 78

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www.menslineaus.org.au

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