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PREVENTING WOMEN'S SUICIDE – MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

At the start of Mental Health Week 2011, Women's Health Victoria is calling for more attention to be paid to suicide prevention efforts aimed at women.

Rita Butera, Executive Director of Women's Health Victoria, says, 'more work needs to be done to address the causes of suicide in women.'

While the causes of every suicide are different, there are often some common risk factors.

'Women with a history of mental illness, like depression, post-traumatic disorders, and anxiety disorders, have a greater risk of suicide. This is concerning as mental illness makes up 15 percent of Victorian women's total disease burden,' says Ms Butera.

'Another risk factor for suicide is self-harm – people with a history of self-harm have an increased risk of suicide. And self-harm is more common among women than men.'

'We know that women and girls make up the majority of victims of sexual abuse and intimate partner violence. We also know that experiences of sexual abuse and assault are linked to suicide and suicide attempts. Women who have experienced intimate partner violence are almost four times more likely to have thought seriously about suicide than women who are not victims.'

'To prevent suicide, we need to focus on what we can do about issues like violence against women, self-harm and mental illness in women, says Ms Butera, 'Only when our efforts are specifically targeted to women can we be expected to make real inroads in preventing suicide in women.'

Mental Health Week runs from 9 October to 15 October 2011.

Women's Health Victoria recently explored the impact of suicide on women in the *Women and Suicide* Gender Impact Assessment publication:
<http://whv.org.au/publications-resources/publications-resources-by-topic/post/women-and-suicide-gia/>

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For further information contact:
Rita Butera
Executive Director
03 9662 3755 or 0437 578 182

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