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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Suicide Prevention Efforts Paying Off – But More Can Be Done**

It is no coincidence that Australian suicide rates have undergone a slight decline since the allocation of increased funding for suicide prevention programs, the International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH) said today.

New information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that overall suicide rates in 2004 were 2.7% lower than they were the previous year.

WiSH Chairwoman Ms Samara McPhedran said “The figures send a reminder about the importance of adequate government support for suicide prevention strategies. Funding and public awareness campaigns began improving in the late 1990’s, and we are now seeing positive results.”

Hanging accounted for 48% of all suicide deaths in 2004, up from 45% in 2003. Hanging was followed by poisoning using means other than drugs (including motor vehicle exhaust) at 19%. “Other” methods represented 14% of suicides, and included drowning and jumping from a high place. 11% of suicides involved poisoning by drugs. The use of firearms accounted for 8% of suicides, continuing a downwards trend that began in the 1980’s.

“The Australian statistics fit with New Zealand suicide researcher Annette Beautrais’ recent statement that restricting access to various methods of suicide should be viewed only as an adjunct to identification and management of precursors to suicidal behaviour. Despite today’s encouraging news, suicide remains a major public health issue,” Ms McPhedran explained.

Reference: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Suicides, Australia, 1994-2004. <http://www.abs.gov.au>

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**WOMEN ON TARGET FOR POSITIVE CHANGE**