



**Media Release March 19 2008
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

New Study: Suicide Prevention On Target in Australia

New research in the international peer-reviewed journal *Health Policy* suggests social change and improved suicide prevention strategies may be responsible for downwards trends in Australian suicide.

The study shows that in the past decade male suicide has declined more rapidly than female suicide, and highlights the role of public health campaigns to raise men's awareness of mental health.

International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH) Chair and study co-author Dr Samara McPhedran said "The declines are good news, but we urge policymakers to pay close attention to groups with unmet needs, as well as risk factors for female suicide such as domestic violence and sexual abuse."

The authors also took advantage of the quasi-experimental design provided by the 1996 gun laws to look at trends in different suicide methods.

Male non-firearm suicide has fallen more quickly than male firearm suicide or female non-firearm suicide.

"Our findings indicate that tightening gun laws did not lead to faster declines in firearm suicide, relative to non-firearm suicide."

"Measures such as the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which was introduced in the late 1990s and emphasised awareness, destigmatisation of mental illness, and appropriate treatment, may have had more of an impact than legislative change on reducing suicides."

"It seems that trying to prevent suicide by tightening gun laws is like trying to fix a leaking tap by turning it off with more and more force every time, rather than changing the washer. When it comes to suicide prevention, 'changing the washer' means early detection, intervention, and appropriate treatment."

The research notes that economic variables are thought to contribute more strongly to Australian male suicide than female suicide, which has implications for gender-specific public health policy and suicide prevention campaigns.

Executive summary:

<http://www.ic-wish.org/McPhedran%20and%20Baker%20Suicide%20Trends%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Contact:

Dr Samara McPhedran –

0415 963 189/+61 415 963 189

Chair, International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH)

www.ic-wish.org

WOMEN ON TARGET FOR POSITIVE CHANGE