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City on front line of ADF's war on suicide

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TOWNSVILLE will be home to the first of 12 trial sites for a suicide prevention initiative targeted at Australian Defence Force members and veterans.

Delivered by the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network, the Suicide Prevention Trial Site will focus on mental health in a bid to improve the Government's "understanding of the challenges and work to develop best-practice services".

In a joint statement yesterday, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Defence Personnel and Veterans' Affairs Minister Dan Tehan and Health Minister Sussan Ley announced a review of the Federal Government's services for ADF members and their families.

"The Turnbull Government will increase support for veterans and ADF members, including an employment initiative to support people moving from military service to civilian life," the statement said.

"We will ensure ADF members and veterans who face mental health challenges, either during service or once they have left the

ADF, can access the mental health services they require.

"One suicide is one too many, and as a society we must address mental health issues together."

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network chairman Trent Twomey said the announcement signified a major step forward for suicide prevention.

"Our recent Health Needs Assessment highlighted that our region's suicide rate is 1.5 times the national suicide rate, and we need to do something about this," he said.

"One of our key priorities out of our health needs assessment is a greater focus on mental health services for North Queenslanders.

"Townsville is the perfect site for the first Suicide Prevention Trial Site, with Lavarack Barracks the largest Australian Army base, undertaking mission rehearsal exercises prior to deployment."

Mr Twomey said the

NQPHN would partner with Townsville Legacy to deliver the program.

Townsville-based Senator Ian Macdonald said it was imperative mental health and suicide prevention were removed from the 'taboo' list.

The review is expected to provide an interim report in December and a full report in February next year.

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“Our region's suicide rate is 1.5 times the national suicide rate, and we need to do something.

NORTHERN QUEENSLAND PRIMARY HEALTH'S TRENT TWOMEY