

Tragedy spurs decisive suicide prevention plan

A CAIRNS mother whose son tragically took his own life, will be at the launch next week of a suicide prevention initiative to help other families avoid heartbreak.

Machans Beach mother Ruth Crouch has pleaded with parents and the community to bring the taboo subject of suicide into the light.

"We need to raise awareness of suicide and break down the stigma, and lobby the education department and government to have suicide prevention programs in schools," she said.

"And lastly, try to get a decent mental health facility in Cairns for young people."

Her son, Declan Crouch, disappeared on March 9 last year, prompting an extensive three-week search, before his body was found near his Machans Beach home.

Mrs Crouch is now bravely sharing her experience with others in the hope of preventing another tragedy.

With the launch of National Youth Week, Mrs Crouch will help officially launch The Declan Crouch Fund and the FNQ Suicide Prevention Facebook Page at the Cairns City Library on Thursday from 4.30pm.

**LAURA
PACKHAM**

packhaml@tcp.newsld.com.au



The Declan Crouch Fund aims to raise \$75,000 in its first year, with all proceeds to go towards suicide prevention in the Far North.

Mrs Crouch is also continuing to work with about 26 of the region's young people to create a short film about suicide prevention, which she hopes will be screened in state high schools.

The Dr Edward Koch Foundation will oversee the allocation of The Declan Crouch Fund and said the money would be well spent, with a Youth Suicide Prevention Workshop already earmarked.

Foundation chief executive Dulcie Bird hoped the money would provide long-term preventative action.

"This workshop will be different to our other programs because it will appeal to youth of today, because its development and creation will be



Hope: Ruth Crouch, who lost her son Declan to suicide last year, is determined to prevent more deaths. On Thursday, she will help officially launch the The Declan Crouch Fund. Picture: TOM LEE

driven by young people," she said.

"It will help them identify warning signs in their friends and give them guidance on where to go if they are suicidal or know someone that is."

She said the FNQ Suicide Prevention Facebook page would be a guidance hub for young people to turn to.

"This is the way most young people communicate with each other and we are hoping it will become an important tool to all the other suicide prevention work we do in this region," Mrs Bird said.

» Anyone needing help can call Lifeline 13 11 14 or Kids Helpline 1800 551 800.