Suicide Prevention Australia
Change Champions Toolkit
This toolkit has been created to provide you with suicide prevention advocacy resources and materials to help you take action in your local community and ensure that people with lived experience of suicide are actively engaged and supported.

Every day at least seven Australians die by suicide. This is seven too many.

Over the last ten years, the number of people who have taken their lives has remained consistent. This is not good enough – it must change.

The Government has acknowledged (in its 2015 Response to the Review of the National Mental Health Commission) the importance of system wide change that supports community and regionally led initiatives, placing people at the centre of how services are planned and delivered. This is a welcome response as we work towards a collective goal of halving suicides in the next ten years. To do this, community involvement is crucial for meaningful change.

We all have a part to play. Suicide prevention is everyone’s business.

First and foremost, we need to ensure that you are aware of support services available to you.

If you or someone you know is considering suicide, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14, or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 for crisis and counselling services. These services are free, offer online counselling and crisis chat, and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For additional support, please visit https://communitiesmatter.suicidepreventionaust.org and navigate to useful contacts.

What is advocacy and how can we apply it to suicide prevention?

Advocacy means taking action by speaking or writing on behalf of a disadvantaged person or group to promote, protect and defend their rights to welfare and justice. Our goal is to halve suicides in the next ten years, and advocacy plays an important role. Advocacy helps improve the support systems and networks available to people with a lived experience of suicide, by improving channels of access, support and care.

This process calls upon all sectors (Federal, State, Local Government, Health Commissions, NGOs, community organisations, other health and support groups, individuals and businesses) to enact long-term and coordinated change.

To do this, sectors must work together to:

• Build capacity to service individuals at risk
• Improve screening and assessments for vulnerable people
• Provide evidence-based treatment options
• Ensure there is consistent follow-up care and support to prevent suicides
How can this toolkit be used?

The information and resources in this toolkit can be used to motivate local decision makers, business leaders and policy makers to achieve positive changes in suicide prevention. SPA members, supporters and suicide prevention sector stakeholders may find this toolkit useful.

Before you get started, be informed

We recommend that before you take any action that you find out what is already being done in your community. Find out what services are available in the area of suicide prevention, bereavement, mental health support, crisis support etc. and whether there are existing community networks and individuals in your community who are already making progress. Visit https://communitiesmatter.suicidepreventionaust.org/ for helpful resources to get you started.

Set up meetings with community members and leaders, local groups, government departments (police and hospital networks) local businesses and associations etc. to get a clearer understanding of the suicide prevention and crisis support landscape in your community. Explore areas of shared interest in suicide prevention and establish a coordinated approach to advocacy to work towards a common goal. Examples might include requesting resources or building capacity in the community for a safe environment e.g. Gatekeeper training, safe talk training etc. More information available on https://communitiesmatter.suicidepreventionaust.org/.

Through your research you might uncover existing services in your community, already established mandates from within your local council for healthy communities and resilience or, alternatively, a major unmet need.

Most importantly, you may discover that there are people with shared goals with whom you can partner.

Your first step to becoming an active voice within your community could have immediate effect for those already working in the sector.

More information about Suicide Prevention Australia

Suicide Prevention Australia

Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) is the national peak body for suicide prevention in Australia. As the leading agency of the National Suicide Prevention Coalition, we build partnerships to change attitudes and behaviours around suicide, and assist in the healing process for people who have a lived experience of suicide. We define Lived Experience as having experienced suicidal thoughts, survived a suicide attempt, cared for someone who has attempted suicide, been bereaved by suicide or impacted by suicide in another way, such as workplace suicide.

Halving Suicides in 10 Years

The commitment to halve suicides and suicide attempts in 10 years was agreed upon by members of the National Coalition for Suicide Prevention in 2013. The National Coalition for Suicide Prevention is made up of a range of suicide prevention and mental health sector organisations, as well as business and government representatives who all work towards a common agenda with shared goals, measures and reporting frameworks. This means that organisations working in the suicide prevention space will align their programs to this agenda, resulting in a greater voice and more efficient progress towards the agreed goals.

Complete the worksheet provided in Appendix A: Worksheet - Identifying your community
Communicate with influencers:

Letters or emails

Write a letter or email your local Councillors and Members of Parliament (State and Federal) informing them of your concerns and formally request a response on specific matters. You may be able to comment on already existing mandates you’ve discovered in your research, on topics such as healthy communities and building resilience, or alignment with your Council’s strategic or social plans.

Many voices are stronger than one. Who can co-author your letter?

Other leaders of influence who you may also wish to write to include Government Primary Health Networks and local health districts, local police, independent businesses (e.g. business chambers, financial institutions etc.), community groups (e.g. Rotary, Lions Club, women’s and men’s groups), or other non-government organisations who may provide an influential voice in suicide prevention.

“Working in partnership with local communities means our voices are unified, amplified and heard, but first and foremost you feel a part of a community and connected.”

De Backman-Hoyle, Lived Experience Advocacy Advisory Committee

Refer to Appendix B: SPA Sample letter.
Suicide in Australia

Risk Factors, Facts and Figures based on ABS 2014 Causes of Death data

Risk factors for suicide
The reasons why people think about taking their own life can be complex and multi-faceted. There may be sociological reasons, including alcohol and drug use issues, relationship breakdowns, debt, discrimination, psychological reasons such as depression and mental illness, biological reasons such as genetics or physical illness.

Snapshot of Suicide in Australia
• 2,864 Australians died by suicide in 2014 (2,160 males and 704 females)
• Between 2013 and 2014 suicide deaths in Australia increased by 342
• For the past 10 years, the suicide rate in Australia has changed very little
• Men represent approximately 75 per cent of suicide deaths
• Women represent approximately 25 per cent of suicide deaths
• The highest number of suicides are observed in men within the 40-54 year age group
• The highest number of suicides for females are observed in the 35-39 year age group
• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians experience almost twice the rate of suicides compared to non-Indigenous Australians and continue to have some of the highest rates of suicide in the world

Interest groups in Australia

Men
• The highest rate for males was in men aged 85 years and over (37.6 per 100,000) followed by the 40-44 and 50-54 year age groups (29.9 per 100,000 and 29.2 per 100,000 respectively)
• The lowest age-specific suicide rate for males was in the 0-14 year age group (0.3 per 100,000) and the 15-19 year age group with 12.1 per 100,000 compared to 14.9 per 100,000 in 2013

Women
• The highest age-specific suicide rate for females in 2014 was observed in the 35-39 age group (9.2 per 100,000)
• The lowest age-specific suicide rate for females was observed in the 0-14 year age group (0.7 per 100,000)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
• Young Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander males (15-19 years) are 4.4 times more likely to die by suicide than non-Indigenous Australian males
• Similarly, young Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander females (15-19 years) are 5.9 times more likely to die by suicide than non-Indigenous young females

Youth
• In 2014, 92 males aged 15-19 years and 174 males aged 20-24 years died by suicide.
• In 2014, 38 females aged 15-19 years, and 58 females aged 20-24 years died by suicide
• Considering all causes of death, suicide accounted for 35.9% of deaths among 15-19 year old males and 34.9% of deaths among 20-24 year old males in 2014
• Considering all causes of death, suicide accounted for 27.1% of deaths among 15-19 year old females and 30.2% of deaths among 20-24 year old females in 2014

Children
• Deaths of children (5-14 years) by suicide is a rare event in Australia.
• Based on 5 year aggregate scores from 2010 to 2014, age-standardised suicide rates were low in both males and females (0.6 and 0.7 per 100,000 respectively)
Case studies
Community members became concerned about the number of suicides occurring in each of their communities and set about coordinating a community action plan to prevent further suicides.

Hay, NSW
In 2011, the town of Hay in the Western Riverina Region of NSW, more than 100km to the nearest large centre and home to about 3,000 people, formed the Community Action for Suicide Elimination (CASE) group.

"Together we devised an action plan and since then, over 140 members of the Hay and surrounding communities have been trained in suicide awareness. We've organised community awareness and fundraising activities in the community and established a CASE 24/7 emergency mobile phone number manned on a rotational basis by members of CASE. We have introduced monthly mutual support groups and promote our work widely in the community."

Tumby Bay, SA
“We involved the local school, hospital and community groups to address suicide prevention and community resilience. By establishing a reference group with representatives from a range of local organisations, services and the community, a mental health consumer and carer, we were able to develop a targeted community program that supported community training.”

Dr Graham Fleming, Rural GP from Tumby Bay SA

For more information about how to develop Community Action Plans or start a Community Action Group, see the following action plan by Mt Gambier Suicide Prevention Network. Visit Communities Matter – www.communitiesmatter.com.au.

Some actions and outcomes you can request:

1. Develop a Community Action Plan for our community
If your community doesn’t have one, call for a commitment from your local Council to develop a Community Action Plan for Suicide Prevention and Response After a Suicide.

A whole-of-community approach is important to help promote resilience, social connectedness, a sense of belonging and to protect people from suicide.

2. Create a suicide safe environment for my community
Key community members who have contact with people on a regular basis may wish to train as gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are key community liaisons such as sport coaches, school teachers, life savers, police, counsellors, recreation staff, clergy etc. These people see individuals on a regular basis, so they are able to see changes in behaviour that may identify a person who is vulnerable.

This training provides knowledge and skills to positively affect attitudes towards talking safely about
Suicide Prevention Australia works closely with a number of training organisations providing gatekeeper training and can connect you with relevant training services for your community. Contact admin@suicidepreventionaust.org or call (02) 9262 1130.

Gatekeeper training is modelled on the basis that people with the highest risk for suicide often do not seek help from health professionals, therefore building capacity from within the community to recognise the risk factors will help identify these people when they are most vulnerable. Risk factors may include relationship breakdowns, homelessness, discrimination, alcohol and drug use issues, depression, mental illness or physical illness. It can also teach people to assess level of vulnerability and refer to professional care when necessary all of which will help achieve our goal of halving suicides in ten years.

Request your community (council, business leaders, community groups and associations) support low cost or subsidised gatekeeper training such as ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and safeTALK training programs in the community.

3. Provide safe language and self-care training workshops in my community

Request that your community (council, business leaders, community groups and associations) support a bespoke Speakers Bureau workshop run by Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) and Roses in the Ocean (RITO) for members of the community, coaching up to 10 people on language, appropriate self-care and how to share experiences about suicide safely in a public forum. These workshops help increase capacity and skills of community members with lived experience of suicide to change attitudes and behaviours through the powerful tool of storytelling.

By supporting these initiatives, your community will help amplify the voices of those with lived experience within your community, thereby encouraging people to talk openly and safely about suicide, which in turn allows people to ask for help and give help more readily.

### GATEKEEPER TRAINING

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<th>Training</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)</td>
<td>$4,000.00 for 15-25 person workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>safeTALK</td>
<td>$2,000.00 for 20-30 person workshop</td>
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### BESPOKE SPEAKERS BUREAU TRAINING

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<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
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<td>A Speakers Bureau workshop run by Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) and Roses in the Ocean (RITO) will train 8-10 people in your community to speak safely about suicide. This workshop includes 2 full days of training, as well as catering and venue hire, production of materials, travel and accommodation for professional trainers and ongoing support for speakers.</td>
<td>$7,000-$10,000 for 8-10 people (negotiable)</td>
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“I’d always assumed people who became depressed or suicidal had experienced something devastating but that view has changed and I’ve realised people can become that for no specific reason. It was really great to hear an inspirational story that gave an intimate perspective of the reality of suicide. After attending the workshop I am now much more open to talking about suicide and reducing the stigma.”

Feedback from an audience member after attending a Speakers Bureau presentation

There are other ways you can become part of Suicide Prevention Australia’s work to halve suicides within ten years:

1. Become a member of SPA

By becoming a member of SPA, you will help to strengthen our voice in cross-sector collaborations, contribute to SPA priorities, have opportunities to network with others and support SPA to influence government to ensure public policy supports and enable suicide prevention initiatives.

There are three levels of membership available:

- Organisational
- Associate
- Friend of SPA

Visit the SPA website www.suicidepreventionaust.org/membership to learn more about the membership categories and follow links to join.

2. Become a member of the Lived Experience Network (LEN)

When joining as a member of SPA, you also have the opportunity to be part of the Lived Experience Network (LEN), which is made up of geographically diverse, passionate individuals who have a lived experience of suicide. Many people who have joined the LEN have found comfort in being part of a larger network of individuals who share a lived experience of suicide. The LEN provides opportunities to get involved in a range of suicide prevention initiatives, and members receive regular e-newsletters which feature updates regarding policy, research and resources from within the suicide prevention sector.

To be part of the LEN, join as a member of SPA in one of the above membership levels and tick the LEN in the application form. You can access the membership application forms on our website www.suicidepreventionaust.org/membership.

3. Join the Speakers Bureau and undertake training to safely share your story

The Suicide Prevention Lived Experience Speakers Bureau was developed by and is delivered as a collaboration between SPA and Roses in the Ocean (RITO). The Speakers Bureau provides training and administrative support to volunteer speakers who share their knowledge at workplaces, community groups and organisations about the importance of knowing how to give help and how to get help to prevent suicide. Before applying to be part of the Speakers Bureau, it’s important to consider your personal mental and emotional readiness to be involved. Please refer to the three guides about personal readiness, self-care, and safe language.
Suicide Support Services

If you have recently been impacted by a lived experience of suicide (having experienced suicidal thoughts, survived a suicide attempt, cared for someone who has attempted suicide, been bereaved by suicide or having been impacted by suicide in another way) we recommend that you access support from counselling and crisis telephone lines and online chat services such as Lifeline on 13 11 14, or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 (see list of contacts under Additional Resources below).

We also recommend accessing some resources prior to engaging in an advocacy campaign to assess your readiness to get involved. Some resources include:

- Thinking about your personal readiness to be involved
- Guide to self-care
- Talking about suicide a guide to language

For guidance on safe language and helpful resources, please visit Mindframe and SPA websites to learn more.

Additional Resources

Crisis and Counselling Support

- Lifeline 13 11 14 (free, available 24/7, online counselling available)  
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467 (free, available 24/7)  
  www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/are-you-thinking-about-suicide-or-self-harm/register
- Mens Line 1300 78 99 78 (free, available 24/7, online & video counselling available)  
  www.mensline.org.au
- Veterans Line 1800 011 046  
- Qlife 1800 184 527  
- Kids Helpline (ages 5 to 25) 1800 55 1800 (available 24/7)  
  www.kidshepline.com.au
- SANE Australia 1800 688 382  
  www.sane.org

Communities Matter

Communities Matter is an online resource for suicide prevention for small towns and local communities. It provides guidance on how to support your community or individuals within your community to prevent suicides.

It also has additional useful contacts for support services.  
www.communitiesmatter.com.au

Conversations Matter

Conversations Matter is a practical online resource to support safe and effective community discussions about suicide.  
www.conversationsmatter.com.au