

Message from the Chair and CEO



During the past year, we have needed to respond to the global challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst also maintaining focus on our members and the suicide prevention agenda. The 2020-21 financial year proved to be a time for creativity, resilience and determination. A year where we demonstrated our agility and grew from strength to strength, despite the challenges of the global pandemic.

Our National Policy Platform gained significant traction and resulted in decisions that are game changers for suicide prevention. We reinvented successful ways of working, collaborating, networking and running education events. For the first time in many years, our landmark National Suicide Prevention Conference was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19. We quickly refocused our knowledge sharing approach and began a successful online webinar series that reached over 1,000 people. We spearheaded accreditation and quality assurance with the launch of the Suicide Prevention Quality Improvement Program. Amidst all this success, there were some major bumps that forced us and the sector to be nimble and change course quickly. The strain of the global pandemic has pushed the sector to reconsider how to meet the growing demand for services and programs.

Without doubt the past year has been full of uncertainty; for many in our community it has been the toughest of years. When times are tough, we often witness powerful solidarity, extraordinary compassion and empathy; and we've certainly seen that among our members.

The voice of lived experience has continued to strengthen with 20 Lived Experience Panel members contributing to our work. In 2020, we hosted two Connect 2020 webinars focused specifically on how we can include lived experience in everything from research and program design, to peer support. Lived experience is about more than ticking a box. By understanding the variety and diversity of knowledge and experience, we can start to design solutions that are fit-for-purpose and will save lives.

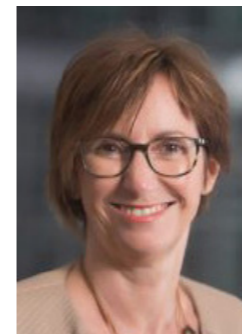


Government attention on suicide prevention has grown and continues to gain momentum at both the federal and state government levels. It's clear that suicide prevention is high on the policy agenda and independent of politics. In May 2021, we saw record Federal Budget funding for mental health and suicide prevention. The release of the National Suicide Prevention Adviser's Final Report, as well as the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System were also pivotal in shaping substantial suicide prevention policy reform. These reports align closely with our National Policy Platform, developed in consultation with our members.

We also launched the first annual State of the Nation in Suicide Prevention report on World Suicide Prevention Day 2020, which offered a comprehensive survey of the suicide prevention sector. This annual survey will be a significant feature on our calendar and help guide suicide prevention decision making.

One thing that has particularly struck us recently is the diversity and growth in our membership. We have been joined by groups representing Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples, the construction and trucking industry, men in distress, and a host of other corners of society. From large groups with their own diverse membership, to organisations with less than ten employees, our members genuinely reflect the diversity and difference that is so central to society.

We have continued to focus on building our member offering in the past 12 months. Our collective impact can't be underestimated, and by working together we will continue to be a strong force for change in suicide prevention. Your feedback in the recent Member Benefits Survey will help shape our focus and member offering.



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