

1 September 2022

Attention: All Federal MPs
PO Box 6022, House of Representatives
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Dear MPs and Senators,

RE: National Suicide Prevention Act best way to address suicide risk

The challenges faced by Australians in recent years are unprecedented. The COVID-19 pandemic, economic challenges and compounding natural disasters place us at risk of an increase in suicides in our community. The only way to meaningfully reduce suicides is through whole-of-government action and a National Suicide Prevention Act can legislate this cross-agency focus on prevention.

In the lead up World Suicide Prevention Day on 10th September 2022, there is an opportunity to announce a commitment to a Suicide Prevention Act. This request is a matter of urgency, signed and supported by over 40 organisations and leaders in suicide prevention. Those supporting the open letter represent over 40,000 staff, volunteers and leaders in Australia's suicide prevention sector.

As the national peak body for suicide prevention in Australia, representing around 300 members, a key priority of our [National Policy Platform](#) is a whole-of-government approach including a Suicide Prevention Act. Acts are working to drive down suicide rates in other jurisdictions, they provide practical changes, ensure clear accountability and cement lasting reform.

We are currently at a critical juncture for suicide prevention. Research shows us that it's often two to three years after a natural or economic disaster that suicide rates increase. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and compounding natural disasters, the warning signs are there. Recent data confirms crisis calls, individual distress and suicidal behaviour remains high across the community.

Suicide is complicated human behaviour with many, varied risk factors. Only half of those who tragically lose their life to suicide are accessing mental health services in the year prior. The Final Advice of the National Suicide Prevention Advisor was clear, Government actions across a range of portfolios, including welfare, housing and education, can impact suicide risks. Preventing suicide therefore requires a holistic, cross-governmental approach that addresses these various factors.

A National Suicide Prevention Act can legislate clear priorities, accountability and focus. It can set clear governance arrangements including leadership from people with lived experience. This would strengthen recent commitments to the National Agreement and a National Suicide Prevention Office.

The Federal Government's recent commitment to a 'Wellbeing Budget' process is welcome but will not go far – or fast – enough to address the critical juncture we are facing.

We've seen that national suicide prevention legislation in other countries, such as Japan, can have a powerful impact on reducing suicides. More recently, South Australia has introduced a Suicide Prevention Act with bi-partisan support.

With rising cost of living and mortgages set to increase financial, housing and relationship stress, it's critical the Federal Government urgently focuses on suicide prevention to keep suicide rates from rising during this challenging time. The time for action is now. We ask that you please consider this request as a matter of priority. We stand by ready to assist you with the journey ahead.

Yours sincerely,
The undersigned.



Supporting Members



Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Social and
Emotional Wellbeing, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention



Supporting Associates

Agi O'Hara

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