

Our voices cannot be ignored: An open letter from 31 people with a lived experience of suicide

DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

We write to you not as professionals or policymakers, but as people whose lives have been irrevocably torn apart by suicide.

Some of us have survived our own attempts. Some have cared for loved ones in deep distress. Others carry the lifelong pain of losing a family member, friend, or colleague. Many of us experience suicidal distress on a daily basis. We are the faces behind the statistics. And we are speaking with one voice when we say: the government must prioritise the prevention of death by suicide.

We need to keep investing in what works. Continued support for initiatives like the Suicide Prevention Research Fund is vital to ensure lived experience is translated into evidence-informed programs and services that save lives — especially in under-resourced areas.

At the same time, the release of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy is a long-overdue and deeply important step. For the first time, lived experience is not only acknowledged but embedded as a core component of how we tackle suicide in Australia. That matters. It matters to each of us, and to the thousands of Australians who have been waiting for their experience to be seen, heard and respected.

But what good is a Strategy if there is no funding to push it forward?

We are grateful to see our voices valued in the Strategy. But listening isn't the same as doing. Without real investment, real programs, and real action — the vision of this Strategy will not be realised.

We know what's needed because we have lived it, and we continue to live it every day. We know that suicide prevention can't just sit within the health system. We know that support must be available in communities, not only in hospitals. We know that peer-led programs save lives. We know that services need to be consistent and funded properly — not short-term, stop-start, or out of reach for those who need them most.

We want to see investment in suicide prevention specific programs that work, like peer-led support, aftercare, safe spaces and lived experience training. Not just investments in mental health. We want to see the Suicide Prevention Research Fund reinstated so we can continue to build an evidence base that reflects real-life experience. We want to see government fund the Strategy it has proudly released.

Our experiences are painful, but they also give us strength and insight. And from that pain, we are determined to build a future where fewer people have to endure what we have.

To every elected leader and candidate: you cannot say you care about suicide prevention if you won't fund it directly.

To the Australian community: we ask you to stand with those of us with lived and living experience of suicide and call for real commitment from the Government.

We do not want empty promises. We want action.

Our voices cannot be ignored.

Yours truly,
The Undersigned.

BELLA CINI

JACQUI GILLESPIE

BRIANA BENNETT

JENNIFER WALTMON

CAROLYN RIPPER

JO KAIN

CASSI STRAUSS

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KRISTY STEENHUIS

CRAIG HUGHES-CASHMORE

LIDIA DI LEMBO

DANIEL JEFFERY

MARK DAVIS

DE BACKMAN-HOYLE

MELANIE CLARK

DR. CATHY KEZELMAN

MICHAEL ELWAN

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EMMA BOUCHER

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