

# A message from the National Suicide Prevention Adviser

## Stating that suicide prevention is everybody's business is easy to say

This week marks World Suicide Prevention Day and R U OK? Day. Now more than ever it is important that we work together, across each community and across the whole-of-government, to prevent the distress and impacts that come with suicide

With more than 3,000 people dying by suicide and a conservative estimate of 65,000 suicide attempts each year, the impacts are far reaching. Research tells us that more than 100 people are exposed to each death by suicide.

That's hundreds of thousands of Australians impacted each and every year. Over the past three months I have been visiting communities across Australia and have heard about what is working and what our communities believe needs to change. I have also heard about the sadness and grief experienced by those who have lost a loved one to suicide and the frustration of those who are trying to navigate the current system of support.

Like many colleagues and community members who have worked tirelessly to communicate the importance of suicide prevention, I was pleased to see this issue elevated to the highest office in Australia recently, and privileged to be given the role of advising our Prime Minister. But, the promise of this appointment and the opportunity it brings should not be taken lightly, by me or anyone else who has dedicated their energy, knowledge, skills and lived expertise to this area

In my view, there is a real opportunity for us to come together on this issue but we must think more broadly than we have been. While it is easy to say that suicide prevention is every body's business, it is harder to really achieve the kind of cross-government, cross-jurisdiction and whole-of-community response that is required. While our health services, community organisations and funded suicide prevention programs certainly have a critical role to play, we must consider the broad range of issues impacting on people's lives and consider all of the touchpoints where we have an opportunity to make a positive difference.

We need to review our current approach and ensure that those who find themselves in despair get immediate and effective support – regardless of whether they are connected to health services or not. But we also need to actively seek to understand and reduce the factors that contribute to despair and suicidal thoughts. This means looking towards the social determinants of suicide, and effective policy shifts as well as interventions that can reduce their impacts. Recent research by the ABS showed that while many people who die by suicide experience mental illness, other health and psychosocial risk factors are also important. Things like past history of self-harm, alcohol and other drug problems, relationship issues, legal issues, unemployment, homelessness, disability, bullying, loss of a loved one and impacts of chronic health conditions.

It's critical governments, services and the broader community come together to ensure an inclusive and proactive response to suicide. This is a big issue that requires a big response. Over the next fifteen months I will be working with government Ministers and departments, community leaders and those with diverse expertise to formulate advice to improve the co-ordination and delivery of a whole-of-government response to suicide and its impacts. I hope to engage with as many of you as possible over the next 15 months as we formulate that advice.