

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Newly refurbished Geelong Lifeline centre is now Australia's largest**

**What:** Official opening of new Lifeline Geelong crisis support centre

**When:** Thursday May 26 from 1-2pm

**Where:** 1 McKillop St, Geelong

**Talent:** General manager Lifeline Geelong & South West Victoria Jason Doherty, former chair of Lifeline Geelong SW Vic Joe Crosbie, local crisis support volunteer Ian Palmer, Lifeline Australia CEO Colin Seery

Lifeline has more space in its Geelong crisis support centre to meet the record number of calls from the community to 13 11 14 for support.

The newly refurbished call centre is now the largest in Australia with 13 seats, doubling its previous capacity of six seats. It was officially opened on Thursday (May 25).

General manager Lifeline Geelong and South West Victoria Jason Doherty said the refurbishment of the existing centre will provide better facilities for Lifeline's amazing crisis supporters to be there for people in times of need. Mr Doherty said calls to 13 11 14 are up 25 per cent in the past two years.

"Lifeline has increased the number of Geelong based crisis supporters – the people who answer calls to 13 11 14 – from eight to 74," Mr Doherty said.

"Of the 74, 38 are day shift volunteers and 36 are part-paid overnight crisis supported," he said.

Ian Palmer has been a volunteer crisis supporter for three years. He started volunteering in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"While challenging at times, it is very rewarding to be there for people in the local community in their time of crisis – to listen without judgement, acknowledge their pain, and to offer hope," Mr Palmer said.

"Sadly, many people who experience mental ill health continue to be misunderstood. Many people are struggling with problems such as relationship break downs, cost of living pressures, the impacts of COVID-19 and recent natural disasters and being lonely or isolated from family and friends."

Mr Palmer also volunteers at one of Lifeline's five local shops, which provide vital revenue to operate the crisis support centre and other community suicide prevention programs and services. It costs Lifeline \$3,500 to train and support each crisis supporter. Each call to 13 11 14 costs it around \$39.

The refurbishment received funding support from Lifeline Australia. There is also a larger space for Lifeline to use for its community suicide prevention training and for other community and mental health support groups to use.

The new crisis support centre is being named after long serving local Lifeline volunteer, Joe Crosbie. Mr Crosbie, who lost his son to suicide, served on the local Lifeline board from 1997 to 2019. He was chair from 2011 to 2019. He also volunteered on Lifeline Australia's board from 2004 to 2008.

Mr Doherty would love to hear from anyone wishing to volunteer to be a crisis supporter or at its local shops or warehouse. It also welcomes donations of clothing and household items for its shops.

"We provide our volunteers with extensive training and support. Volunteering for Lifeline is a rewarding way to give back to others in the community and make some new friends along the way," Mr Doherty said.

The Geelong centre is one of 41 nationally - operated by 4,000 crisis supporters. Lifeline answers a call for help every 30 seconds. Lifeline is a beneficiary of this year's national Push-Up Challenge. To participate, or support someone who is, visit [www.thepushupchallenge.com.au/beneficiary/lifeline-geelong-vic](http://www.thepushupchallenge.com.au/beneficiary/lifeline-geelong-vic).

*Cont.. for statistics and media contacts.*

**NB:** Lifeline's 24-hour telephone crisis line 13 11 14 is pronounced 'thirteen eleven fourteen'

## **Media release (cont): Newly refurbished Geelong Lifeline centre is now Australia's largest**

### **Statistics**

- More than 65,000 Australians make a suicide attempt each year.
- Nine Australians die every day by suicide. 75 per cent of those who take their own life are male.
- For each life lost to suicide, the impacts are felt by up to 135 people, including family members, work colleagues, friends, first responders at the time of death.
- 1 in 4 Australians are lonely and have no-one to speak to.

### **Local Lifeline support**

- Telephone: 13 11 14
- Lifeline Text: 0477 13 11 14
- Chat online: [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- Community training/local suicide prevention services/volunteering and shop donations: 1300 152 854 or [GeelongSWV.lifeline.org.au](http://GeelongSWV.lifeline.org.au)

**Media information:** Jason Doherty on 0430 104 075.