
MEDIA RELEASE
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In lead up to World Suicide Prevention Day and RUOK? Day, Australians reach out to Lifeline, Australia's largest suicide prevention service, in record numbers.

On Tuesday September 8, Lifeline's 13 11 14 crisis line received more calls than ever in its 57-year history with 3,326 calls being made by Australians in crisis.

John Brogden shared his own story in today's SMH OpEd: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/why-i-m-worried-about-suicide-in-australia-by-a-former-political-leader-who-personally-knows-the-risks-20200909-p55tr1.html>

Mr John Brogden, Chairman, Lifeline Australia said with World Suicide Prevention Day and RUOK? Day tomorrow, there has never been a more important time to for every person to realise the power they have to make a positive difference to the lives of those around them.

"As Australia's largest crisis line, 13 11 14 acts like a barometer to the mental wellbeing of our nation. With a record number of calls yesterday, it is clear that tomorrow will be the most important World Suicide Prevention Day to date. We must remind the community that people are really struggling with bushfire recovery and the challenge of Covid-19. There has never been a more important time to reach out to those who you think may be struggling and let them know you care. Your actions can save a life." He said.

World Suicide Prevention Day 2020 is themed "Working together to prevent suicide" and Mr Brogden acknowledged the important work of Lifeline's 4,500 Crisis Supporters, most of whom are volunteers who have been working to ensure no Australian has to face their darkest moments alone.

"There are over 10,000 volunteers working with Lifeline to ensure Australians are kept safe. This year, we have asked a lot from our volunteers, we are very grateful to all who have worked additional shifts and continually put up their hand to ensure we can be here to support every Australian who needs us. Our volunteers are key players in suicide prevention, and we want to recognise their efforts this World Suicide Prevention Day. Our Crisis Supporters are the reason we can be here for Australians who need us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 13 11 14." Said Mr Brogden.

While most people know Lifeline as the 13 11 14 suicide prevention crisis line, the organisation is made up of a network of 40 centres operating in 60 communities across the nation also offering on the ground services to help communities become suicide safe through training, counselling and suicide prevention support groups.

"Along with our crisis support services, we aim to make communities suicide safe by equipping people with the skills to understand how to recognise the signs, respond appropriately and refer to support services. This year, we want every person in Australia to realise that they can be a key player in suicide prevention." Mr Brogden said.

Globally, last year, there were 800,000 lives lost to suicide, that's a life lost every 40 seconds. In Australia's last reporting period (2018), there were 3,046 lives lost to suicide. With every life lost, there are 135 people – families, friends, colleagues, fellow students, who are left devastated. There are many more who struggle with their own mental wellbeing.

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

This year, Lifeline expects its 4,500 Crisis Supporters will talk or chat to well over 1 million people through its phone and webchat services. The phone service alone is currently receiving up to 90,000 calls a month; that's a person reaching out every 30 seconds. April and August were both record months for the 57-year old service and yesterday was its busiest day.

Mr Brogden also encouraged any person in Australia who is struggling to make a connection with someone they trust, or reach out to Lifeline:

"These are challenging times, it is ok not to be feeling ok. Connecting with others is key. If you, or someone you know are feeling overwhelmed, we encourage you to connect with Lifeline in the way you feel most comfortable. Either phone us to speak to a Crisis Supporter on 13 11 14 (24 hours/7 days), or chat to us online at www.lifeline.org.au (7pm – midnight, 7 nights)."

Lifeline's World Suicide Prevention Day events: Out of the Shadows walks go virtual in a show of support for those bereaved by suicide and those who are struggling with their own mental health.

Every year, Lifeline centres across the nation bring their communities together to observe World Suicide Prevention Day through Lifeline's Out of the Shadows events. Local community walks traditionally take place at sunrise and create a safe place of acceptance to mourn loved ones lost to suicide and reduce stigma by bringing suicide out of the shadows and into the light. However, this year with physical distancing restrictions created by Covid-19, Out of the Shadows will be providing opportunities for connection virtually.

This year, Lifeline encourages Australians to join a virtual walk at sunrise. **To register a walk or join your local community virtually, visit: www.outoftheshadows.org.au**

Australians are also encouraged to visit a virtual reflective garden to plant a flower and leave a message of remembrance or support, to show those who are struggling that they are not alone.

Mr Brogden said coronavirus restrictions have heightened the need to demonstrate support and provide a safe space for those impacted by suicide to mourn and reflect:

"Losing a loved one to suicide is different to any other loss, the stigma surrounding suicide is still very real. Often those who are grieving or experiencing suicidal ideation can experience tremendous marginalisation. The COVID-19 restrictions are exacerbating isolation, there are many left to grieve or struggle with their thoughts alone. Through Out of the Shadows, we aim to ensure that people feel connected and aware of the support and compassion that is around them." He said.

"This year, we are calling on every Australian to make this garden bloom and help Lifeline send the clearest signal yet to those who are struggling, that they are not alone."

To visit the virtual garden, go to: www.outoftheshadows.org.au

Lifeline is Australia's leading suicide prevention service, operating the 13 11 14 telephone line within 40 centres around the nation. The service expects to respond to over one million requests for support this year, creating an average of 120 safety plans to keep a person experiencing suicidal ideation safe every day.

To visit the Out of the Shadows virtual garden, go to: www.outoftheshadows.org.au

To donate to Lifeline, visit www.lifeline.org.au/donate To arrange an interview, please contact: media@lifeline.org.au or phone: 0408 407 376

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