



2013

Research Report

February 2014

Alan Woodward, Executive Director

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1. Background

The Lifeline Research Foundation was established in June 2011 as a structural unit within Lifeline Australia to support the Lifeline Vision of an Australia free of suicide and Purpose to support Australians in times of crisis and equip individuals and communities to be resilient and suicide-safe.

The Foundation's contribution to Lifeline's Vision and Purpose is to build knowledge on how to reduce lives lost to suicide and to generate informed understanding within Lifeline and externally about the impact of crisis support and community based action on suicide prevention.

The broad measure of success for the Foundation, therefore, is how much knowledge is generated and the ways in which this knowledge is utilised towards suicide prevention and crisis support.

2. Highlights

12 Months to June 2013

Generated new knowledge through:

- Social Return on Investment study for Lifeline Crisis Support Chat, with specialist consultants, Net Balance;
- Emerging findings from Servier Australia supported research on frequent callers to telephone crisis lines, with the University of Melbourne research team led by Dr Jane Pirkis;
- Initial results from research on the mental health and wellbeing of Lifeline telephone crisis supporters, with the University of Wollongong research team led by Dr Coralie Wilson.

Contributed knowledge to improve the effectiveness of Lifeline services:

- Final Evaluation of National Domestic Violence – DV Alert Training Program;
- Evaluation of a Pilot Course for telephone crisis supporters which reduces face to face training from 12 to 6 weeks and increases 'on the job' learning;
- Provided expert advice on the mapping of Lifeline services to the three Lifeline service streams: to support outcomes definition and impact measurement.

Developed collaborations with existing research activities:

- University of Wollongong: second year of research activity on the mental wellbeing of Lifeline volunteer telephone crisis supporters;
- Young and Well Co-Operative Research Centre: input to research that will test an online self-directed help tool for young people, with Inspire Foundation;
- Centre for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention (UNSW): as a partner organisation, contributing expert assistance for research on suicide attempters and those who care for them;
- University of Melbourne: as a partner on a NHMRC funded research project to develop and trial a Victorian Suicide Register.

Contributed to 'industry' based suicide prevention:

- Fly In Fly Out Workforce Needs – assisted a Lifeline WA and Edith Cowan University study
- Continued to advise the rail industry on suicide prevention through evaluation of rail station posters to promote help seeking (with beyondblue and TrackSafe)

Advocated for informed debate on suicide prevention issues:

- Discussion Papers on eMental Health and Tele Health In Australia and on What Makes Suicide Prevention Strategies Effective?
- Position Statement: Lifeline's Approach to Suicide Prevention released
- Presented papers at major conferences, including to a Helplines Symposium at the International Association for Suicide Prevention Congress, Norway, 2013.



Expert Advisory Group (from left): Alan Woodward (Executive Director) Dr Kairi Kolves, Professor Jane Pirkis, Professor David Kavanagh, Professor Beverley Raphael (Chair), Dr Michael Dudley, Dr Coralie Wilson, Professor Britt Klein, Julie Aganoff, Professor Alan Rosen, Professor Graham Martin. Not present: Eve Barratt, Grahame Gould.

3. Expert Advisory Group

The Lifeline Research Foundation receives generous assistance and advice from members of the Expert Advisory Group:

1. Emeritus Professor Beverley Raphael (Chair)

University of Western Sydney and Australian National University – Professor Raphael is a highly respected Psychiatrist and international expert in crisis support, for individuals and for communities. For a decade, she was Director of Mental Health in NSW.

2. Julie Aganoff

Director, Client Service Development, UnitingCare Community (operator of Lifeline in Queensland)

3. Eve Barratt

Lifeline Manager – South East South Australia, Psychologist

4. Dr Michael Dudley

Chair of Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) and practicing Psychiatrist specialising in children and young people – Randwick Children's Hospital and University of NSW

5. Graham Gould

Lifeline Manager – South Coast, Honorary Fellow of University of Wollongong, Psychologist

6. Professor David Kavanagh

Queensland University of Technology, Research Psychologist; lead in national roll-out of e-mental health programs and services in primary care; research on web programs and phone apps for wellbeing, depression and substance misuse.

7. Professor Britt Klein

Personal Chair in Psychology and eHealth at Federation University, specialising in developing and researching eHealth services for mental and physical health conditions, especially anxiety and depression; Visiting Fellow at ANU Centre for Mental Health Research; Clinical Psychologist

8. Dr Kairi Kolves

Senior Research Fellow, Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention – the Australian Centre of Excellence in Suicide Prevention, and recognised World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Suicide Prevention

9. Professor Graham Martin

Director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Queensland; Graham has been a member of several national advisory groups for the Australian LiFe Suicide Prevention Strategy, and was a member of the core writing group for the National Strategy.

10. Professor Jane Pirkis

Director, Centre for Health Policy, Programs and Economics. University of Melbourne; experienced evaluator of suicide prevention programs

11. Professor Alan Rosen

Professorial Fellow, School of Public Health, University of Wollongong, Clinical Associate Professor, Brain & Mind Research Institute, University of Sydney; Senior Consultant Psychiatrist, Deputy Commissioner, Mental Health Commission of NSW; special interests in community psychiatry, crisis intervention, mental health service for Aboriginal, rural and remote populations.

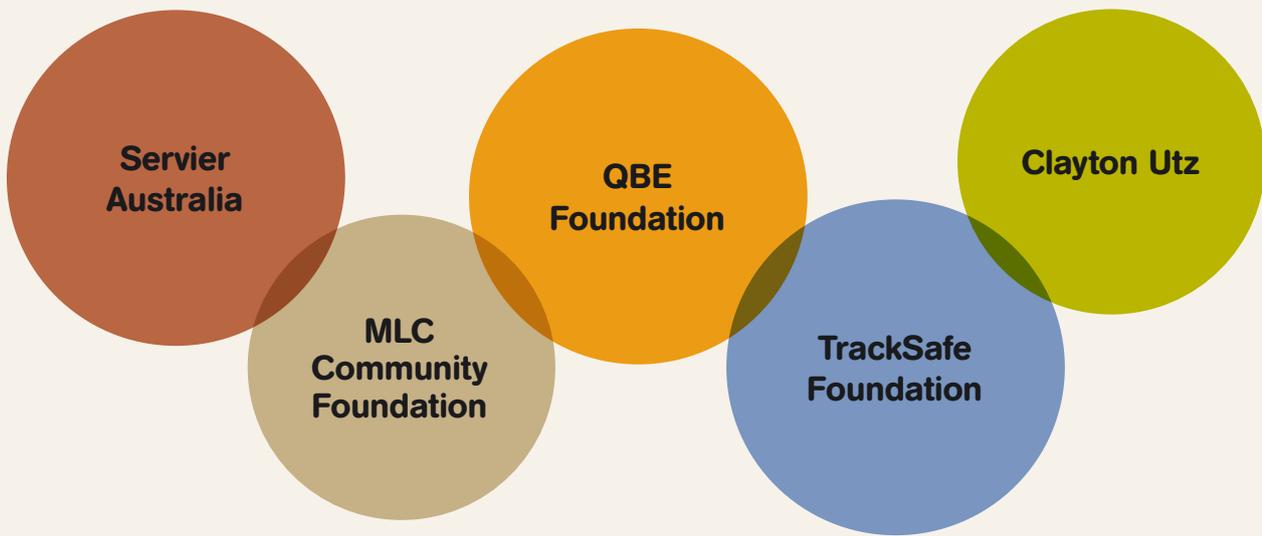
12. Dr Coralie Wilson

Graduate School of Medicine, University of Wollongong; Behavioural scientist, research leader in help seeking and help negation factors in people's access to services.

4. Funding

The Lifeline Research Foundation receives funding from corporate and private donations, and from research grants which it seeks in partnership with academic institutions.

Since its establishment, the Foundation has received more than \$500,000 in corporate donations, with major donors including:



No Government funding is provided to the Lifeline Research Foundation for its operations.

5. Research and Evaluation

Generating knowledge through research and evaluation on more effective approaches to suicide prevention.

Social Return on Investment – Lifeline Online Crisis Support Chat

- Research project conducted with specialist consultants Net Balance and with generous support from the MLC Community Foundation, to apply Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodologies to estimate the economic value of the impact on visitors to the service and the wider community from the Lifeline Online Crisis Support Chat Service.
- This SROI forecast is based on a typical year of funding for the Lifeline Online Crisis Support Chat Service. Based on 230 responses to a online user survey and economic modelling reflecting the SROI methodology, the study has found that from an annual investment of \$860,517, for every dollar invested in the Lifeline Online Crisis Support Chat Service, there is a social return valued at \$8.40. Given the uncertainty relating to the relationship between suicide ideation and suicide attempts, the ratio is more appropriately provided as a range. Based on modelled parameters to account for this uncertainty, the ratio falls in a range of \$7.40 and \$9.40.
- Social value was created for two categories of service users; those for whom crisis intervention occurred and those for whom crisis aversion occurred. Social value for the public medical system and public emergency services was also created.

Impact: This study found generally positive impacts for visitors to the Lifeline Online Crisis Support Chat Service and demonstrated the broader impact of the service in the community. Lifeline is now one of the few charities in Australia to have applied SROI methodology to measure the impact of its services.

Frequent Callers to Lifeline 13 11 14

- Major research project funded by Servier Australia. The project extends over two years. The research team at Melbourne University is led by Professor Jane Pirkis. A Research Review Group provides advice, made up of Professor Beverly Raphael, Australian National University, Professor John Tiller, Melbourne University, and Professor Maggie Jamieson, Canberra University.
- A paper on the results of a literature review is published in the March 2014 Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare: found that limited research only has been conducted on this topic, and that few helplines responses to frequent callers have been evaluated for their efficacy.
- Data analysis involving Lifeline 13 11 14 data, ABS Data from the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey, and primary health care data on mental health patients visiting GPs is being undertaken to form a research-based understanding of frequent caller patterns and profile.
- Using the profile, the research will consider the clinical model and standards required for effective responses across a range of possible mental health disorders and behavioural traits.

Impact: This research will provide scientific research evidence to guide the development and trial of a prototype for Lifeline response to frequent callers to the Lifeline 13 11 14, including the practices and standards to underpin a partnership approach for collaborative arrangements with other services.

Wellbeing of Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporters

- Continuing research program with a research team at Wollongong University with academic lead Dr Coralie Wilson, and researchers Taniele Kitchingman and Tara Hunt. A Research Review Group provides advice, made up of Associate Professor Peter Caputi, Professor Ian Wilson, Alan Woodward, Lifeline Research Foundation and Grahame Gould, Lifeline South Coast.
- Survey research of 124 Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporters conducted in 2012 found that most of those surveyed were in the normal range on measures of depression, anxiety and suicidality (those conditions often found in callers to Lifeline 13 11 14). However, those respondents who demonstrated moderate levels of personal depression, anxiety and suicidality, also showed less intention to seek help from professionals, Lifeline supports and informal sources – consistent with the help negation factors found in research of other health workers.
- The survey research also established that those Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporters who demonstrated moderate levels of personal depression, anxiety and suicidality were less likely to use the skills they were trained in when taking calls on Lifeline 13 11 14.
- Further research is underway to investigate what experiences when taking calls on Lifeline 13 11 14 trigger emotional distress for Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporters, and what skills may help protect against this distress, with particular attention to the role of assertiveness skills.

Impact: These preliminary results reinforce the importance of systematic and structured supervision for Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporters. Further research on trigger factors and protective factors will inform improvements to training/supervision of Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporters.

Rail Suicide Prevention – Evaluation of Rail Station Posters

- TrackSafe Foundation commissioned the Lifeline Research Foundation to evaluate a trial of posters promoting help seeking on Melbourne rail stations, which was conducted with Lifeline and *beyondblue*. The Social Research Centre administered survey research of rail travellers.
- The posters were moderately successful in reaching male rail travellers – especially those looking for work;
- Train travellers identified the intended messages from the posters, ie: seek help, talk to someone about depression, and call Lifeline. Some travellers thought the posters were a message about suicide prevention;
- The posters may have reinforced brand and service awareness for Lifeline and *beyondblue*, with train travellers showing high recognition of these services. However, the posters did not generally prompt travellers to consider using these services more than they might otherwise.

Impact: The evaluation findings informed future decisions on general use of rail station posters, and prompted a more targeted approach to rail suicide prevention.

Evaluation of DV-alert Program

- An 18 month evaluation of the DV-alert Program was completed in July, 2013. This evaluation examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the DV Alert Program, and the utilisation of the program in behaviour change. Roberts Evaluation was engaged as independent external evaluators.
- The evaluation findings show that DV-alert has been a highly effective program within its scope, and has achieved intended results in terms of knowledge, skills and confidence on DV issues to the target audience of health and related professional workers, especially in rural and remote communities.
- Around three quarters of DV-alert Workshop participants reported a highly favourable shift in their capabilities on domestic violence (DV) issues; that is, they believe they have significantly increased knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise, respond to and refer cases of DV.
- The evaluation findings show that the course content and delivery style has been generally regarded as culturally appropriate by all participants, including persons from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The pre-workshop visits to indigenous communities, cultural awareness training for trainers, and the use of two trainers to assist with cross-cultural issues were identified as particularly effective.
- A lasting impact from the DV-alert Program may be seen in the post-workshop six-month surveys which show two-thirds of participants have made at least one more contact in the DV sector and one-third have established new networks of people they can draw on for support/assistance on DV issues. This suggests an increase in community capacity and leadership on DV.

Impact: The DV-alert team has been involved in data collection throughout the evaluation from multiple points, ie: program staff, trainers, and administrative staff. This has built a commitment to continual improvement of the program.

The evaluation methodology on the behavioural impact of this awareness raising and skills program may be suitable for application to other Lifeline suicide prevention/education programs.

Evaluation of Pilot Training Course Trial – Lifeline 13 11 14

- Lifeline is piloting a new approach to the training and development of volunteers answering 13 11 14 calls. Consultants Westwood Spice have been commissioned to evaluate a trial involving five pilot Lifeline Centres. There are five domains for the evaluation: capacity, cost-efficiency, speed, motivation and quality.
- The key changes to the existing training course are:
 - six rather than fourteen weeks of training before initial assessment;
 - workbook based activities previously delivered by the workbook are now part of online learning; and
 - blended approaches to training and development, so that more learning is workplace based on the job.
- As at the end of November 2013, the evaluation findings showed high levels of satisfaction amongst trainees/students, and Lifeline Centre staff; The results also suggest that capacity to answer calls for the pilot Lifeline Centres has increased in 2013 over 2012 and earlier due to students becoming available for service earlier.
- The evaluation will continue to examine longer term findings regarding competency of telephone volunteers, retention of volunteers and costs for training and supervision of volunteers.

Impact: This evaluation is generating evidence to guide Lifeline's decision making: the changes to the training have been introduced across all Lifeline Centres for 2014. Continual improvement processes for the new training course have been implemented as a bi-product of the evaluation.

safeTALK in Schools

This research project, supported by the QBE Foundation, and conducted by Melbourne University Orygen Youth Health Centre, will examine the safety and efficacy of conducting LivingWorks safeTALK workshops with secondary school students in the Northern Territory, using a delivery method pioneered by Lifeline Central Australia.

The research project has cleared academic ethics approval and will commence in 2014.

Impact: Limited research evidence exists regarding the delivery of suicide awareness raising programs to school students; this research study will establish the safety and efficacy in an Australian context, to inform policy and program development.



IASP Congress 2013 presentations on National Suicide Prevention Strategies.

6. Research Collaborations

Young and Well Co-Operative Research Centre & Inspire Foundation

- The Lifeline Research Foundation is the partner representative for Lifeline for the Young and Well Co-operative Research Centre. This CRC has been formed with 72 partner organisations. A program of research across three streams associated with the mental health, safety and well being of young people is being implemented.
- The Lifeline Research Foundation is a member of the review group for the Link Project Trial of an online 'linkage service' by Inspire Foundation that will aid young people help seeking and navigation of service systems. The research team is from Melbourne University.
- The prototype for this online service is being built and in 2014 will be used for the conduct of the trial. Lifeline has contributed to the design of the pathways and messages contained in the Link prototype.

Impact: Lifeline will be able to test the capability of an online information and self help tool for young people to create pathways to its crisis support services. The CRC is a major national initiative in research relevant to Lifeline's interests. Lifeline is participating as an 'end user' to shape the research.

Centre for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention – UNSW

- The Lifeline Research Foundation is a member of the Centre for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention, a Federal Government funded initiative to facilitate more research in suicide prevention.
- The Lifeline Research Foundation is contributing to a research project, commissioned by the National Mental Health Commission, to investigate the experiences of individuals who have experienced a suicide attempt, and of those who care for them. Survey research is being administered in 2014.
- Other relevant research projects are being explored with the Centre.

Impact: Very little Australian research has been conducted on the experiences of people with lived experience of a suicide attempt and/or the care of another in these circumstances. The current research project will generate new knowledge. Further research interests of the Centre relate to online and technology applications for suicide prevention, which are highly relevant to Lifeline.



Melbourne University and Victorian Coroners Department

The Lifeline Research Foundation is a partner on a research project funded by the NHMRC through Melbourne University to develop and trial a Victorian Suicide Register.

This research will examine ways to compile and apply existing data from the National Coroners Information System into forms that can be utilised for planning suicide prevention programs and responses. Lifeline will be an 'end user' partner in the research project.

Impact: Improved use of data and planning for suicide prevention programs has been identified as a priority in achieving improved results in Australia. Lifeline as a major non-government service provider in suicide prevention is well placed to contribute to the trial of improved use of data for program development.

Melbourne University and BeyondBlue

The Lifeline Research Foundation is a partner on a BeyondBlue funded research project to examine data on male callers to helplines, in relation to media and community promotion of issues associated with suicide, depression and anxiety.

Impact: Men account for four out five suicides in Australia each year; research to better understand male use of helplines and to consider the effect of any promotion or media attention regarding helplines on male help seeking behaviours will inform future actions to attract male callers to helplines.

7. Advocacy

Advocating for Lifeline's core capabilities in crisis support, education/training and community outreach to be applied to suicide prevention in Australia.

Discussion Papers

Three Discussion Papers were released by the Lifeline Research Foundation in 2013:

- **TeleHealth:** promoting greater investment in telehealth in Australia and for recognition of crisis support within an overall system or model for telehealth in Australia;
- **Strategic Suicide Prevention:** identifying the key factors for integrated and effective national approaches to suicide prevention, including the use of crisis intervention and community based suicide prevention programs.
- **Legacy and Future of Helplines:** an outline of the historic development of helplines and the research and theory basis for crisis intervention and crisis support; proposing greater recognition of crisis support services such as helplines in primary mental health care and suicide prevention.

Position Papers

Lifeline's Approach to Suicide Prevention – a position paper outlining the research evidence for and practice principles surrounding Lifeline's crisis support services.

International Liaison

The Executive Director is Convenor of the Helplines Special Interest Group, under the International Association for Suicide Prevention. More than 25 helplines have joined this group. Work is underway to examine common standards of practice and share research work on helplines and crisis services.

The Lifeline Research Foundation has represented Lifeline Australia in the establishment of an international alliance to represent helplines before the World Health Organisation.

8. Influencing

Building the evidence base to gain greater acceptance of crisis support and suicide prevention as a component of public health in Australia (where reform and funding in the future will lie)

Contributions to Policy and Practice in Suicide Prevention

The Lifeline Research Foundation has participated in the following:

- Expert Group on Small Towns Resource on Suicide Prevention (NSW Mental Health Commission and Suicide Prevention Australia)
- Expert Review Group on Community Matters – guides on conversations and communication about suicide prevention (Hunter Institute for Mental Health)
- Lifeline White Ribbon Dinner – spoke on the relationship between domestic violence and suicide prevention
- Mental Health in Multicultural Australia Symposium – contributed to the development of project directions, especially on cultural competence in suicide prevention
- Peer Review of Operation Life website – Department of Veterans Affairs

Board and Committee Memberships

The Executive Director holds the following memberships:

- Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) Board
- Trauma Informed Care Advisory Group (Mental Health Coordinating Council)
- Woollahra Council Stakeholders Group – Gap Park
- RUOK? Day Scientific Advisory Group

Conferences and Presentations in 2013

Lifeline Foundation has presented at the following:

- Suicide Prevention Australia Conference – on the effectiveness of telephone crisis lines and online crisis support chat services
- International Association for Suicide Prevention 2013 Congress – contributed to a Symposium on Helplines
- Health Informatics Conference 2013 – presented on the use of Lifeline services by users with mobile phone/devices

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