



MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE USE

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The Salvation Army launches new Hope Line aimed at anyone who has been bereaved through suicide.

Figures show one Australian life is now being lost to suicide every 5 hours and globally one person around the world dies every 40 seconds due to suicide.

The Salvation Army's Envoy Alan Staines is helping to launch the new 'Hope for Life' campaign. He is highlighting that suicide prevention is everybody's business. The Salvos are urging people across Australia to also do a new online training program which will show them – in less than 60 minutes – how to potentially spot the signs that someone is considering suicide.

An online training program for clergy, chaplains, funeral directors and people working in health, education and emergency services across Australia has also been launched to show them how to offer more support when someone is bereaved through suicide.

The Salvation Army has launched a major new program 'Hope for Life' which will highlight that suicide prevention is everybody's business... as figures show close to 1800 Australians now die through suicide every year.

People are being urged to do a new Salvation Army program called QPR (question, persuade, refer) which – in less than 60 minutes – will show people how to potentially spot the signs that someone around them may be considering suicide. The new QPR program was written by clinical psychologist Dr Paul Quinnett.

People across Australia who have been bereaved through suicide are also being urged to ring a new national Hope Line that has been launched by The Salvation Army specifically for people bereaved through suicide. Anyone bereaved by suicide can ring 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and get support by just calling 1300 467 354.

The Salvation Army's Envoy Alan Staines highlights that one Australian life is now being lost to suicide every 5 hours. In 2006 more people died through suicide than on the nation's roads. Globally one person dies through suicide every 40 seconds.

The Salvation Army's Hope for Life website is full of details of how to support someone affected by suicide and also contains details of many agencies people can ring for additional support. The website is located at suicideprevention.salvos.org.au.

Envoy Alan Staines – who was awarded an OAM for his work in this field – said “It is vital suicide prevention becomes everybody's business. This is a major problem in Australia and it's not going away. There were 1799 suicides in Australia in 2006. That's 1799 too many. We can all do more. We must. In real terms for each tragic death another 8 people are often affected which means the ripple affect leads to around 16,000 Australians being affected by suicide. The real extent of this problem is quite unknown. The World Health Organisation estimates up to 20 million people across the world survive a failed suicide attempt every year.”

The Salvos have also launched a major online training program aimed at care givers, pastoral care workers and people that work with people bereaved through suicide. The training program (which is also available as a face to face program) is called Living Hope and it specifically focuses on showing people working in a range of industries how to offer more support to people bereaved through suicide.

The Salvos highlight that clergy, chaplains, funeral directors, people working in emergency services, health, social welfare and education can all benefit from the new Living Hope online training program. Full details about this program can be found at suicideprevention.salvos.org.au. You can also find out more by calling 02 8736 3240.

A number of well known personalities are supporting the campaign including 7 time Commonwealth Games gold medallist and Olympic swimming medallist Hayley Lewis who lost her sister to suicide and media personality Sally Loane who lost her brother to suicide.

Alan Staines added “There are far too many myths about suicide. It's a myth to think only experts can prevent it. It's a myth to think people who talk about suicide will not do it. It's a myth to think you cannot stop suicide from happening. It's a myth to think suicidal people only want to die. Many want to live a better, happier life. What they are saying is that they need help and relief from the intense emotional pain they are experiencing.”

Statistics also now show (according to the World Health Organisation) that suicide takes more lives than war and murder put together annually and the World Health Organisation estimates around one million people each year die through suicide... this is predicted to rise to 1.5 million by the year 2020.

Many people deeply affected by suicide will speak out as part of the campaign. Cindy Mills' daughter Victoria died through suicide at the age of 17. There was no warning. Cindy Mills said "Nobody thought Victoria's issues would lead to suicide. She had been turning everything around. It was horrific and horrendous. At first you are on auto-pilot dealing with the sheer horror. I knew I needed to get help. Thanks to the Salvos, I have moved forward. I urge anyone bereaved through suicide to ring the new Hope Line."

Joseph Pizzolo – who lost his son Paul to suicide – said "We all need to take this issue very seriously. If someone around you is talking about suicide in any way, listen to them. Offer advice and assistance before it's too late."

Sally Loane – who's worked in Australian media in TV, radio and press – said "The night I learned my brother John had taken his life, I dreamed about him. He was trying to talk to me in the dream and walk towards me, but it was one of those dreams where time was frozen, and neither of us could speak or touch. I woke up crying."

"This was the beginning of a terrible new day when I no longer had a younger brother who could entertain us with stories of his life as a vet, flying planes into remote north Queensland properties to work with the cattlemen of the bush. It was also the start of a long and painful process of grieving for my mother, father and sister. There was no more John, no more brother, no more only son. We have precious memories and photographs, and the raw pain has faded with the years - but there is no forgetting and certainly no "getting over it"."

Professor Ian Webster – the Chair of the National Advisory Council on Suicide Prevention – said "Suicide prevention must become a national health priority, a first priority for mental health and drug and alcohol services and a principal task for primary health care and other human services."

"For every suicide death there are as many as 20 to 50 suicide attempts which present to Emergency Departments and front-line services. Better treatments and assertive follow-up are needed for the better management of these events and to prevent suicide in the long-term."

"Suicide in a family, or of a loved one, is devastating; leaving the person with unanswered questions and mixed emotional feelings. But it is not only the people who are close to the person who are affected. Doctors and nurses feel the loss, they can feel as if they have failed the person. Police officers, teachers, ambulance officers, railway workers, lawyers, work friends, employers – the ramifications can be very wide – can all be affected and need support."

"The major problem to be overcome is the poor understanding of the pervasive and important role that mental health plays in our society. Australia needs a more sophisticated appreciation of the mind and mental processes and how these processes influence almost every aspect of our health and well-being."

Dr Sheila Clark – one of Australia’s best known experts in the field – said “Experiencing the suicide of someone close is devastating. People often feel overwhelmed by shock, grief and guilt. Too often these people experience a second trauma when they discover there is no appropriate or sympathetic help around. The programs developed by the Salvation Army offer sensitive, compassionate and skilled support.”

Envoy Alan Staines added “The fact is there are warning signs that may indicate somebody is in a very real crisis. They may be giving possessions away or withdrawing from people. Frequently these people feel there is no light at the end of the tunnel. They feel a huge sense of hopelessness. Alcohol, drugs or gambling may be playing a role and people may be involved in substance abuse to dull their pain. Treatment is available to help people with substance abuse issues.”

Hope For Life project manager Wilma Gallet said “The question, persuade, refer training program gives the general public a greater knowledge and understanding of the myths and facts about suicide and helps them to develop the skills that may help if someone’s in trouble. Through this program you won’t become an instant expert but you will know how to ask the right questions and persuade the person to get the help they need.”

Envoy Alan Staines said “There is very little said about people bereaved by suicide in Australia. They are the ones left with stigma, anger, denial and questions without answers. My passion is to do more for these people.”

Anyone wanting more information about Hope for Life should visit suicideprevention.salvos.org.au. To find out more about the Living Hope training program call 02 8736 3240.

If you’ve been bereaved through suicide the national Hope Line can be reached by calling 1300 467 354.

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