

Media Release

Lifekeeper Memory Quilts – Salvation Army calls for people bereaved by suicide to participate in therapeutic memorial project

There are more deaths by suicide than by road accidents in Australia. It is estimated that for every suicide there are at least six people who suffer intense grief and a further 80-100 people who are affected.

The Salvation Army's Suicide Prevention and Bereavement Program has developed a way that loved ones can pay tribute to those lost to suicide and to encourage the community to work towards the prevention of suicide. The Lifekeeper Memory Quilts are beautifully designed to display the faces of people lost to suicide. They are then showcased at suicide prevention events across Australia.

"People know that suicide exists but aren't always aware how it affects every community in the country," says Alan Staines OAM, Director of The Salvation Army Suicide Prevention Services.

"This quilt is helping to stop the stigma related with suicide. It will honour people's lives, not their death. It will bring credibility to lives lost while also having great therapeutic value to all those who participate."

The first quilt was launched in 2009 and, with 62 faces displayed, it was a tribute to lives lost to suicide. The quilt toured throughout Australia.

This year The Salvation Army's Suicide Prevention Service is calling on all those bereaved by suicide to come forward and participate in the quilts. A quilt for each state is being made and will be unveiled at the 3rd Australian Postvention Conference in Sydney, 28 – 30th June.

Suicide remains a major issue facing the worldwide community. According to the World Health Organisation, more than one million people suicide every year. For every suicide there is at least 6 people closely affected. In the last 45 years suicide rates have increased by 60% worldwide, and ranks among the three leading causes of death for those aged 15-44 years. Suicide claims the lives of over 2000 Australians each year - more people die by suicide than in fatal car accidents.

The Salvation Army is calling on anyone who is bereaved by suicide to participate in the quilts. Alan Staines says, "This is an important project for families to honour and pay tribute to loved ones as well as bringing community awareness around the issue of suicide prevention and bereavement."

Each panel will be made of canvas with a printed image and a personal message and then stitched together to form the Lifekeeper Memory Quilt.

To participate people need to provide a photo and 20-25 words to convey their message about their loved one lost to suicide. To send in photos or for more information please contact Alan Staines at: alanstaines@optusnet.com.au

For media enquiries please contact Alan Staines directly: 0412164575 or phone our on-call media officer on 02 9266 9820 or salvosmedia@ae.salvationarmy.org

Useful sites:

suicideprevention.salvos.org.au

salvos.org.au

The National Hope-line 1300 467 354 is available 24/7 for anyone bereaved by suicide.

Photos: Photos of the National Lifekeeper Memory Quilt are available on request.