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### **The importance of community awareness**

All of those who work in the area of suicide prevention and bereavement support are acutely aware of the need to continue to educate the wider community about the incidence and impact of suicide in Australia. Whilst there is much greater awareness around the issues in 2012, there is still much more work to be done.

Too many lives are lost each year to suicide and for every person who dies by suicide, there are loved ones and families who feel the devastating loss and intense grief. The ripple effect can be felt across the whole community, in our homes, our schools and in our workplaces and we need to continually reinforce the messages and in particular try to bring hope to those within our community who are at risk.

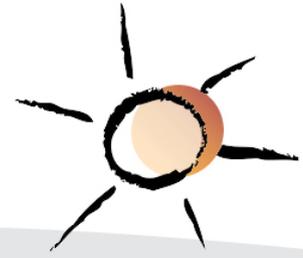
It is heartening to see the diverse range of groups who are focusing on specific aspects of health and well being to support people who may be particularly vulnerable. One of the groups that we have been working with in the past few months is RUOK?

### **RUOK? Day**

Hope for Life is proud to partner with RUOK? in this important initiative. R U OK? Day is a national day of action held on the second Thursday of September. It provides an opportunity to raise awareness about mental health and well being by encouraging all of us to regularly ask each other 'Are you ok?' The aim being to generate a conversation at a national level about suicide prevention and to eliminate the stigma surrounding the open discussion of suicide, this special day in September enables us all to sponsor specific events aimed at raising awareness and looking out for our family, friends and work colleagues.

This of course is only the beginning to the development of a culture of caring and openness we hope to see realized across Australia. It's the spirit of mates-ship that sees each of us being concerned about our fellow citizens and genuinely interested in their well-being.

RUOK? Day fell on September 13<sup>th</sup> this year and was a huge success with one in three Australians becoming involved in some way. Well done Australia, we are proving that we really care about each other enough to enquire RUOK? For further information and access to partner information visit the web site at <http://www.ruokday.com>



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### **Four Corners Program: Youth suicide and the families that mourn.**

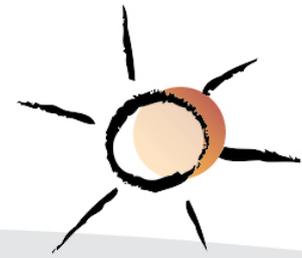
Hope for Life has been one of many groups working with community members in the City of Casey in Victoria, where there have been a number of youth suicides. The local community took it upon themselves to hold a town hall meeting and focus on what they could do to support the young people in the area.

The ABC television program, Four Corners took up the story and this went to air on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012. The portrayal of the issues was very powerful as this community joins together to deal with this serious social issue; determined to bring the issue of suicide into the open and to develop strategies that will protect young people, build resilience and raise awareness about the risk factors and warning signs. Professor Patrick McGorry was a key speaker at this meeting and various mental health and suicide prevention services have combined to provide support and information.

**"There is No 3G in Heaven", reported by Liz Jackson and presented by Kerry O'Brien, was screened on ABC television on Monday 10th September. If you missed it you can view this episode again on [ABC iview](#) and at 4 Corners.**

### **Headspace**

Headspace has a particular mandate to target young people in raising awareness about mental health issues and suicide prevention initiatives. In October, the Minister for Mental Health Mark Butler launched a new suicide support service that will be provided in secondary schools across the country by *headspace*. This project will provide postvention support in school communities where a suicide has occurred and provide resources and training for school staff to help them to identify and support students who may be at risk of suicide. You can find out more about this program and other *headspace* mental health and suicide prevention initiatives at the *headspace* website <http://www.headspace.org.au>.

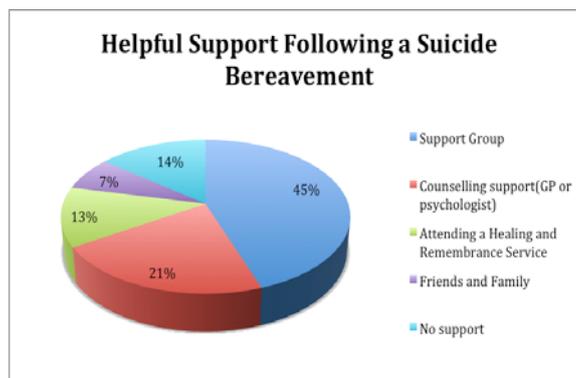


### Hope for Life Bereavement Survey

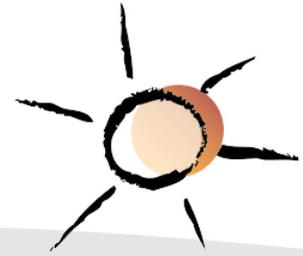
Hope for Line recently undertook a survey of people who have been bereaved by suicide, to identify their current needs and to find out about their experience following the death of their loved one. We particularly wanted to find out more about the sort of support they received and the type of support that they found most helpful to them. A significant number of survey respondents (45%) stated that they found attending a support group to be most beneficial to them following the death of their loved one. Twenty one per cent sought counselling from either their local General Practitioner, a Psychologist or a specialised grief counsellor, some of these respondents also attended a support group.

There are an increasing number of opportunities for people who have been bereaved by suicide to attend a Healing and Remembrance Service, to pay tribute to their loved one and to remember the life they lived. Thirteen per cent of survey respondents stated that they found this to be helpful to them in their grief journey.

Friends and family members are a crucial part of the support people need during times of devastating grief; we cannot overstate the important role played by caring individuals during times of stress and sadness. Someone who understands, who listens non-judgementally, who cares unconditionally and who is prepared to just be there, can help to ease the pain.



Sadly for some of the respondents (14%) to our survey, there was no support available to them when their loved one died.

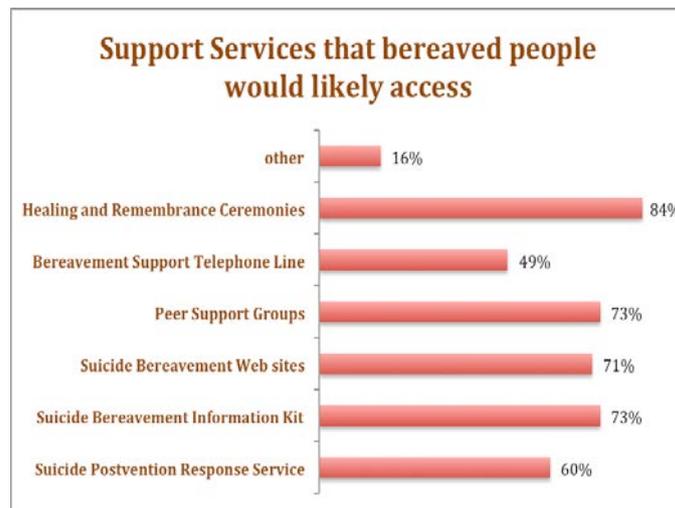


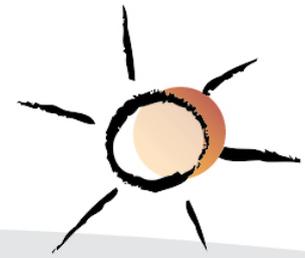
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### ***Preferred Support Services***

The survey also canvassed the type of support services that people bereaved by suicide might access. Six specific types of bereavement support services were listed in the survey and respondents were able to list all the services that they felt would be helpful following the death of a loved one. Further, respondents were given the option to suggest other types of services that they would like to see made available.

A significant majority of people (84%) said that Healing and Remembrance services are an important support to them in their grief journey. People who have been bereaved by suicide find comfort in talking to people who understand what they are going through and Peer Support Groups provide the opportunity to meet with people who have had similar experiences. In the Hope for Life survey, 73% of respondents said that they would, and in fact many have, accessed Peer Support Groups.





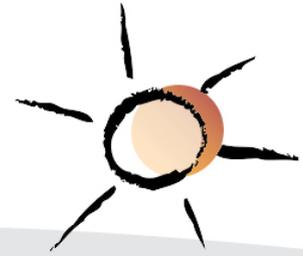
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The shock of a suicide death can leave people numb, disoriented, bewildered and confused. It is important to provide information about the services that are available and to connect them with people who can assist them through the many practical matters that need to be attended to following the death of a loved one. Suicide prevention and postvention web sites as well as specific Information Kits are ways in which people can become informed about the myriad of issues that they have to deal with. People who have experienced a suicide bereavement, talk about financial pressures and the need to understand how to rearrange their financial affairs, they also need legal assistance to work through issues such as probate, frozen assets, wills, mortgages and property matters, insurance claims and various other issues.

Other helpful measures that respondents to the Hope for Life survey mentioned are:

- Regularly accessible and affordable private grief counselling
- Structured closed support groups and workshops
- Memorial walks and events on occasions such as World Suicide Prevention Day

Finally, a number of people commented on the importance of providing support for children who may have lost either a parent, a sibling, other family member or a friend. They need access to information and workshops where they can express their feelings and meet with other children in a peer support or sibling support group.



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### **Lifekeeper Memory Quilt Launched across Australia**

Hope for Life developed the Lifekeeper Memory Quilt as a way to support people who have been bereaved by suicide and provide them with a fitting tribute to remember their loved one. The National Lifekeeper Memory Quilt which was unveiled in 2009 contains the images of 62 people.

A further five state Lifekeeper Memory Quilts have been developed in 2012 and special unveiling ceremonies will be held across Australia during the months of October and November. Each unveiling ceremony will include a Healing and Remembrance service, the dates and locations is provided below. If you are interested in attending any of these services or if you would like to have more information about the Lifekeeper Memory Quilts please contact Envoy Alan Staines Email: [alanstaines@optusnet.com.au](mailto:alanstaines@optusnet.com.au) Mobile: 0412 164 575

#### **NSW Lifekeeper Memory Quilt**

Date: Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> October commencing at 10.30 a.m.

Venue: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Salvation Army Territorial Head Quarters, 140 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills

#### **Victorian Lifekeeper Memory Quilt**

Date: Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> November commencing at 10.30 a.m.

Venue: The Salvation Army Centre, 69 Bourke Street, Melbourne

#### **South Australian Lifekeeper Memory Quilt**

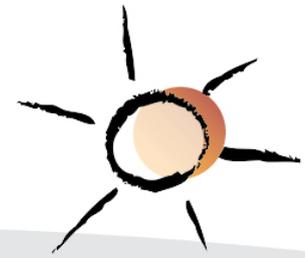
Date: Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012 commencing at 10.30 a.m.

Venue: The Salvation Army Adelaide Congress Hall, 277 Pirie Street, Adelaide

#### **Queensland Lifekeeper Memory Quilt**

Date: Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> November commencing at 10.30 a.m.

Venue: The Salvation Army Carindale Corps, 202 Gallipoli Road, Carina



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### Learn more about how you can become involved in raising awareness about suicide prevention

Hope for Life has a range of measures that will inform you about the impact of suicide and equip you to be a support for people who have been bereaved by suicide. We also have programs that are designed to involve people who have been bereaved by suicide, to support them in their grief journey and to provide opportunities for them to support others. These include:

- Hope for Life Champions Program
- Lifekeeper Memory Quilts
- Hope for Life website
- Living Hope Bereavement Support Training Program

Don't forget Hope for Life training courses are offered free and can be accessed via our web site or we can deliver face-to-face training in your workplace, school or community. By being informed you may help to save a life.

When you complete this training you will feel better equipped to:

- Know what to do
- Know what to say
- Know where to go for help

For more information please contact Hope for Life National Coordinator:

Stephanie Wilks

**Phone** 02 9356 2120

**Mobile** 0435 967 265

Email [Stephanie.wilks@aue.salvationarmy.org](mailto:Stephanie.wilks@aue.salvationarmy.org)

Or - to do the Living Hope course on line, visit the Hope for Life web sites

[www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au](http://www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au)



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