

Hope

saves lives



SUICIDE PREVENTION AND  
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Living Hope Bereavement  
Support Training Evaluation

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PERIOD JULY 2011 - JUNE 2012

## Acknowledgements

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Salvation Army Hope for Life has been contracted by the Department of Health and Ageing to deliver Bereavement Support Training across Australia, as part of the National Suicide Prevention Program. Hope for Life is pleased to partner with Department of Health and Ageing in this initiative and gratefully acknowledges the funding provided by the Department.

In the twelve months, July 2011 to June 2012, thirty nine (39) Living Hope face-to-face training courses were delivered and over 500 people participated in this training. This has involved people from a range of disciplines including, drug and alcohol workers, disability case workers, employment consultants, social workers, welfare workers, financial counsellors, telephone counsellors, mental health nurses, mental health workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, office workers and government workers.

## BACKGROUND

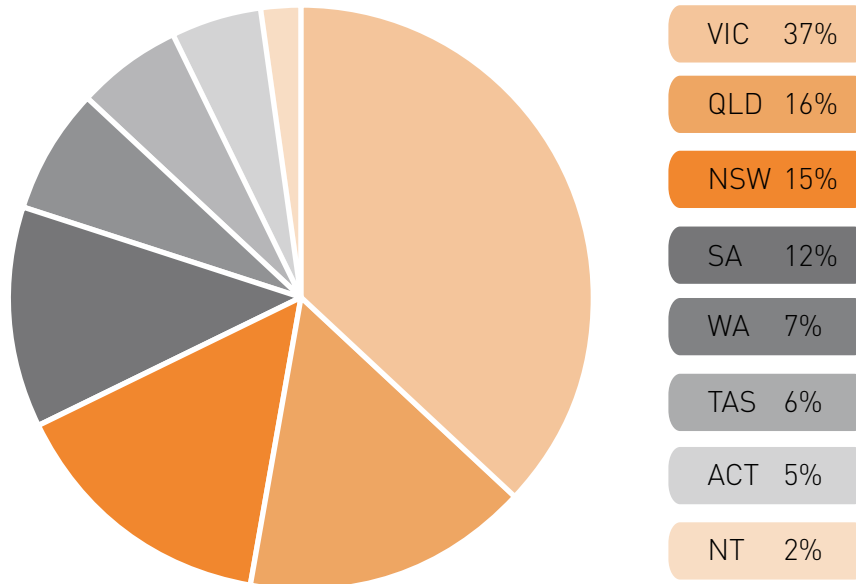
During August/September 2012, Hope for Life undertook a survey of people who had completed the Living Hope Bereavement Support Training Program in the preceding twelve months. One hundred and forty (140) people responded to the survey.

The data collected during these surveys, provide valuable information which enables us to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Living Hope face-to-face training.

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

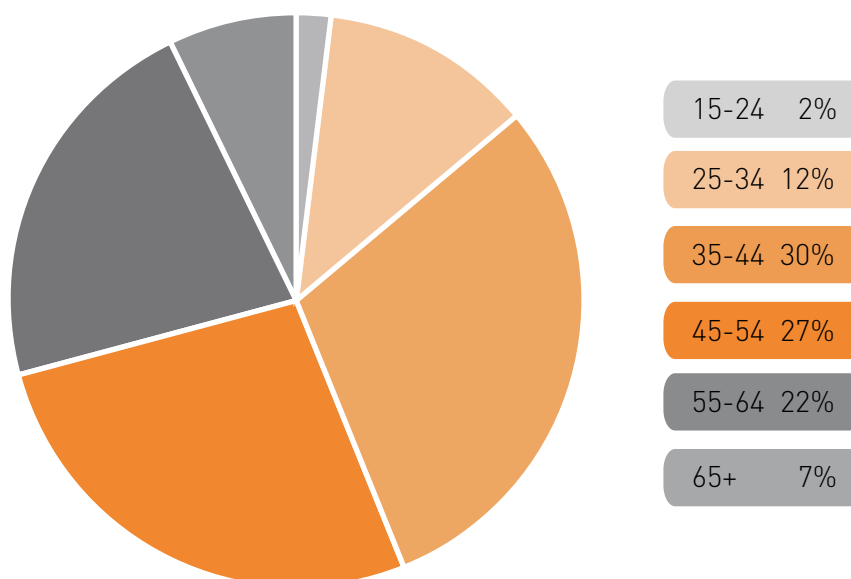
The training has been provided in every state with the bulk of the training in this period occurring in Victoria and then reasonably balanced across other states.

Where was the workshop location?



The majority of participants were female (74%) with 26% of participants being male.

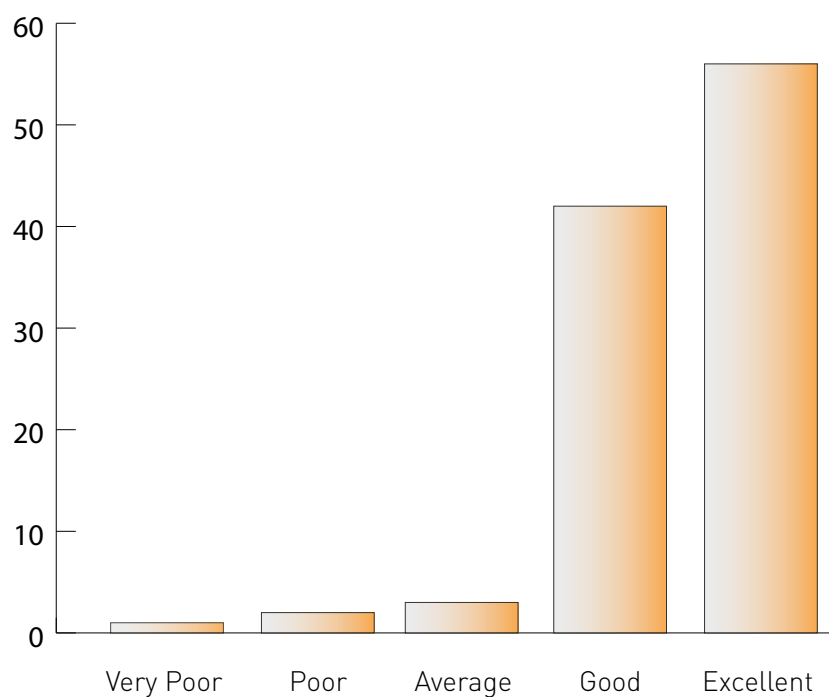
Participants fell into the following age groups:



## PARTICIPANT'S RATING FOR THE LIVING HOPE TRAINING COURSE

Participants were asked to rate the content and quality of the training course. Fifty six per cent (56%) of respondents rating the course as 'excellent' and forty two per cent (42%) rated the course as good.

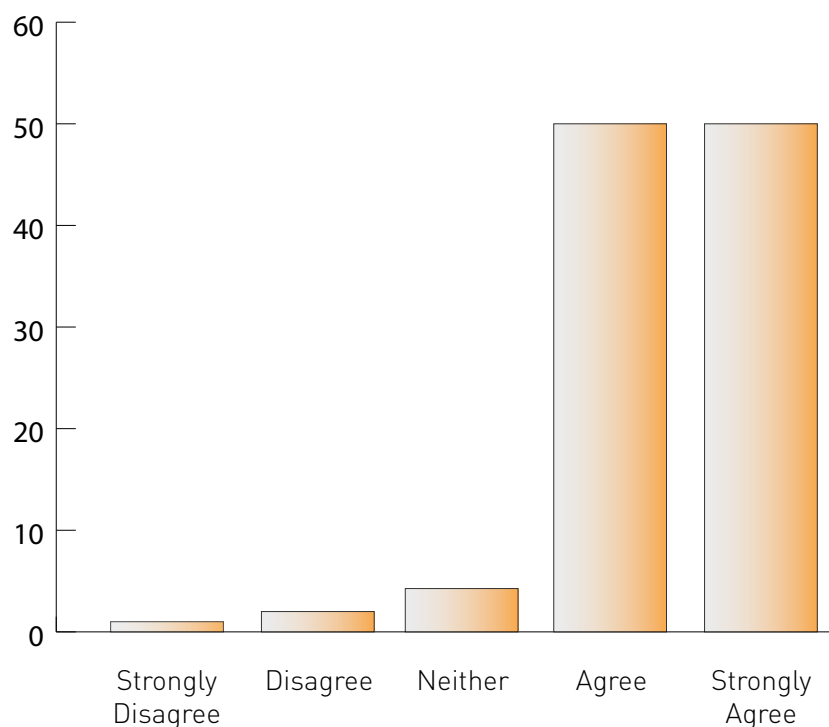
How would you rate the Living Hope Training Course?



## RAISING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL LEVEL

Survey respondents were asked to comment on whether they felt that the training had increased their level of knowledge and skills. The overwhelming majority 94% either agreed or strongly agreed that the Living Hope training had increased their level of knowledge and skills.

Do you believe that the Living Hope training has increased your knowledge and skills?



## PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF ACQUIRED SKILLS

Respondents were asked if they had had the opportunity to practically apply the skills and knowledge acquired either in their work or personal life and fifty three per cent (53%) stated that they had used the skills gained since completing the Living Hope training. The following is a sample of some of the ways in which people stated that they had applied the skills they acquired during training.

*A friend's son completed suicide only a few weeks ago so I have been using some of the skills I acquired and the support numbers, I became aware of to help her*

*Applied the skills in my personal life supporting an immediate family member and a very close friend*

*Recently I assisted a neighbour who had suicide intentions. He has now improved and is actively looking forward to improving his lot in life.*

*The son of a personal acquaintance completed suicide and my learning from the course certainly helped her*

*I coordinate StandBy Bereavement Response Service where my role consist of working with families, friends, associates etc. who have been bereaved by suicide. I have been able to apply the skills and knowledge I have acquired from Living Hope training.*

*A friend's son attempted suicide that weekend. They had engaged in some excellent strategies and I was able to support them and reinforce what they were doing well*

*The niece of a work colleague had been threatening suicide. I was able to talk to her around this and guide her to taking the appropriate action. She believed that because she talked about it a lot, that she would be okay. I referred her to both Lifeline and to her doctor ASAP. Her niece had lost her brother to suicide, so I knew she was at greater risk.*

*A client I was supporting placed a suicide note on FaceBook. My own nephew did the same thing and I called the police, explained to them he was currently receiving supports from Mental Health.*

*One of the reasons for doing the course was of the number of people I encounter who have been affected by suicide*

*My son tried to commit suicide in 2011 and the course helped me immensely to be able to cope a little better and put some things into place*

*In my work I have encountered several situation where the information and tools presented in the Suicide Bereavement Support Training were helpful to me and effective with the person I was supporting.*



*Attending suicide cases as a paramedic.*

*Two days after the course I was faced with a client (face to face counselling) whose opening statement was I had enough I want to end it all. I did not panic and went through first calming her and doing an impromptu assessment and it felt good to be able to calmly use the 'suicide' word and talk about it briefly.*

*Same day of course, I received a call from a personal friend stating that his son was talking about suicide. I was able to provide him with information for assistance.*

*I gave an overview of the course at church and at the end told people to contact me if they needed to chat. One lady called me and we talked about her brother who had completed suicide 15 years ago and no one in the family spoke about it or mentioned his name*



## SHARING INFORMATION

Respondents were asked if they had the opportunity to share the information that they had acquired during the Living Hope Bereavement Support Training and 64% indicated that they had shared their knowledge with either an individual or a group. Typical responses included sharing the information with work colleagues, family or friends.

Other responses included:

*Talked about it with other counsellors and work colleagues*

*Have shared with friends and family; my sister who is a teacher and my friend who works in aged care*

*Shared information with Leadership Groups within churches*

*I work in schools and have on a number of times found myself engage with students on the subject matter. Suicide is real. In fact two days ago one of the students I had a chat with lost his father through suicidal death.*

*I work as the Bundaberg representative of The Compassionate Friends and SOSBSA (Survivors of Suicide Bereavement Support Association) and yesterday was approached by the local media to help with an article for Suicide Awareness Day. The article appeared in the Bundaberg News Mail.*

*Shared information with family of a bereaved person*

*Someone within my church had lost her son to suicide. I was able to utilise some skills and learnt to listen to her story.*

*I have recommended the course to others, and now have a greater understanding of suicide & feel confident in being able to help others (friends of the bereaved) to understand more.*

*I wrote an article for a newsletter highlighting the workshop and some lessons learnt.*

*Provided information to group of young people*

*Gave a friend whose brother was suicidal a brochure for the suicide call back service for her and her family.*

*I shared my knowledge and my son's dilemma with others as it helps to talk about suicide and for me to not bottle it all up*

*Promoted the course to another who was interested & has subsequently also attended the course.*

## PROVIDING SUPPORT TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN BEREAVED BY SUICIDE

Respondents were asked if they have been in a position to support a person who has been bereaved by suicide since completing the course and 42% responded in the affirmative. These are some of the specific ways in which course participants have supported people who have been bereaved.

*Supported a wife who lost her husband to suicide*

*I have had the opportunity to talk to a number of bereaved people and their friends or relations (One a suicide that occurred some time ago) that I believe was helpful to them.*

*Have assisted a number of people through the trauma of losing a loved one to suicide and helping those that were contemplating suicide.*

*On a number of occasions I have been providing support / assistance to people recently bereaved by suicide.*

*I had a situation of dealing with someone who had lost a family member recently and had not been able to talk to anyone because of the shame. They were able to trust me and speak to me and with my training I was more skilled in what to do with that information and how to make both of us comfortable. She has been able to move on a lot better with her life which looked very hopeless before this meeting.*

*I have been dealing with a family whose husband/father took his life.*

*Have been supporting a woman who ho is grieving the loss of her husband.*

## GENERAL COMMENTS

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments in relation to the training and in particular the impact of the training on personal and professional skills development. The following is a sample of the types of comments provided:

*I now have a better understanding of the process of this specific bereavement process*

*It reinforces what I have learnt from another counselling course that we first need to arrive at the person's place before we can bring him/her out from his/her place.*

*I found it very informative and opened my eyes up to a lot of things and the need in our community for support services*

*This course should be taught in all high schools*

*Helped me in my role as a manager and pastor*

*It has helped me to be a better listener and avoid some of the pitfalls associated with attending to my clients and their needs.*

*It was very in depth, educational and encouraging and I appreciated the trainer teaching us all the information that we require.*

*This training made a huge impact on me. I have lost a stepson to suicide and have never spoken about it myself, as family did not want it spoken about. I have been able to share it with some close friends, and it has helped in my healing process. I love to talk about my son.*

*The training was excellent, however found it to be emotionally draining. I was totally exhausted following the 2 days training.*

*I felt the course gave me more confidence in the direction that I already take in the course of my work and personal life - it re-enforced my theories and practices in bereavement grief.*

*I think it can apply to working with clients of DV who I deal with a lot.*

*Yes over all I think it's a great course I think any one in a community service sector or mental health area should do this course..*

*I found his course to be very informative and has made me feel more secure when talking to people about suicide.*

*The training changed my outlook towards suicide, and did have a huge impact upon me.*

*In all very very good, would highly recommend others to do course*

*More international (different) cultural aspect within the training would be very helpful*

*Provided me with enhanced skills*

*I think it is an excellent workshop that provides useful skills and is backed up by excellent resources- both hard copies and online.*

*The training provided an excellent opportunity to link with a range of people and experiences - as well as explore current trends, literature, and ways of working with / supporting the bereaved.*

*I enjoyed the course immensely and the components of the course even though relate to bereavement of people who have been affected by suicide have built on basic counselling skills learnt already.*

*It has helped me become more aware of not having to have the answers.*

*The course certainly made me aware of what is useful/helpful and what isn't. I now realise great patience is vital.*

*Understanding the grieving process and the way it was presented has helped me realise that I am doing O.K. as far as handling my personal grief.*

*Very practical information given, good if working with young people.*

*It helped to consolidate knowledge and give an understanding of the processes following any bereavement*

*Just that it developed my knowledge and has given me the confidence for if and when I may need to support others in bereavement.*

*I think it gave me the opportunity to work more on my listen skills, rather than always trying to fix a situation some time we just need to be there and listen.*

*I believe this training is very important to anyone working in community services as it is very likely that you would need to use these skills at some point.*

*This is an excellent course to provide the skills for being aware of suicide and the ramifications of it on family and friends etc.*

*Suicide. I found that this workshop gave information that added to the bank of information I already have as well as I learned much more. I would like to see many more folk attend this workshop because it certainly has a different dimension to the help and care of survivors of suicide.*

*The training has helped me so if any of my youth is talking about suicide I can now feel that I can help them.*

*I thought it was extremely well organised and instructed and will help me immensely in the future to feel more comfortable around people discussing suicide*

*Very valuable insight to the particular grief process a suicide bereaved may go through & the impact on others within the circle of extended family & friends.*

*I would recommend this training for anyone working with at risk youth particularly. I felt that my confidence in dealing with suicide and its aftermath, particularly in a school setting, was increased significantly.*

## CONCLUSION

The priority aim of the Living Hope Bereavement Support Program, is to raise awareness about the impact of suicide in our community and specifically developing an understanding of the issues affecting those who have been bereaved by suicide. In addition, Living Hope, aims to assist everyone in the community to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to be able to support bereaved people. Research demonstrates that those who have lost a loved one by suicide have an increased risk of suicide themselves and it is critical that they are surrounded by people who are prepared to provide a listening ear, a helping hand and an understanding heart.

The Living Hope training course provides the opportunity to explore these issues in safety, to gain vital information, to develop useful skills and to share experiences with like-minded people.

A caring community is one where people can confidently reach out to others. We believe that suicide is everybody's business and that we can all play a part in reducing suicide and in particular being there to support families who have lost a loved one.

This evaluation of Living Hope confirms the importance of delivering training that specifically targets potential care givers within the community who may be in a position to support a friend, family member or colleague who has been bereaved by suicide.

Report compiled - February 2013

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