



GREAT SOUTH COAST
**Suicide Prevention
Place Based Trial**



Australian Government

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

6 July 2022

COMMUNITIES COMBAT SUICIDE IN THE GREAT SOUTH COAST

Communities in Warrnambool and South West Victoria have played a pivotal role in a new approach to reducing the region's rate of suicide through research, training and participation in community-specific initiatives.

According to data from the Australian Institute of Health And Welfare, people in rural communities are twice as likely to die by suicide when compared with Australia overall¹. Between 2010 and 2020, age-standardised suicide rates tended to increase with increasing remoteness².

In response, the **two-year Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial (GSCPPBT) was implemented between 2020-22**, representing a joint commitment between the Western Victoria Primary Health Network and the Australian Government.

Twelve community-based projects were implemented with the aim of reducing suicide rates, reducing suicide attempts, building resilience and wellbeing and improving systems to prevent suicide in an ongoing way. Participating communities included indigenous Australians, sporting clubs, schools, farmers and general practitioners.

A key outcome has been the funding of free suicide prevention training for all Great South Coast residents aged 15+. This is [widely available now](#).

The GSCSPPBT was steered by a local leadership committee comprising health care professionals, representatives of community organisations, volunteers and people with lived experience.

Identifying Western Victoria as a priority population with many of its regional towns isolated in terms of mental health support and access, the GSCPPBT sought to support suicide prevention at a community level across each of the region's five LGAs - Warrnambool, Glenelg, Corangamite, Southern Grampians and Moyne. A similar trial was also taken for the Ballarat Goldfields region.

Rowena Clift, WVPHN CEO said, "At WVPHN we acknowledge the complexity of suicide, a one-size-fits-all approach to suicide prevention is not always applicable; a place-based approach recognises that people and places are inter-related. For this reason implementing different trial projects in Ballarat Goldfields and the Great South Coast supports the accessibility of intricate information and insights to better inform suicide prevention strategies, a shared focus of both regions within Victoria".

¹ In 2019, the rate of suicide in major cities was 11 per 100,000 population, 19 in remote areas, and 24 in very remote areas (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/rural-remote-australians/rural-remote-health/contents/health-status-and-outcomes>).

² <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/geography/suicide-by-remoteness-areas>



Cr Anita Rank, Chair - Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial Leadership Group and Mayor - Glenelg Shire Council said, “One of the great outcomes of the trial has been the opportunity to deliver free online suicide prevention training in the region. We encourage everyone to do this training and learn the skills necessary to be able to recognise signs of suicidal thinking, and be able to have a conversation to help prevent suicide”.

SUMMARIES AND KEY OUTCOMES OF THE GREAT SOUTH COAST SUICIDE PREVENTION PLACE BASED TRIAL (GSCPPBT) PROJECTS

LivingWorks Start Training

750 training courses by LivingWorks were funded and offered free to everyone aged 15+ in the Great South Coast. LivingWorks Start is a 90-minute online training course that teaches participants how to recognise when someone is having thoughts of suicide and how to respond to keep them safe. This training equips the participant to build professional skills, raise awareness, and feel prepared to help people in need of accessing available services. ([More project information](#)) [Access the training here](#).

Taking The First Step - Young Men Aged 18-25

The Men’s 18-25 Years Suicide Prevention Research Project ‘*Taking the First Step*’ sought to better understand the attitudes and help-seeking behaviours that contribute to men’s mental health, well-being and service access in the Great South Coast region. Completed in July 2021 and implemented by **HeadSpace**, 81 young males took part in this project - 66 via survey and 15 in focus groups.

The ‘*Taking The First Step*’ Suicide Prevention Research Project reaffirmed the critical importance of support from the partners, family and friends of young males at risk of suicide. When young males experience distress, the people closest to them are found to have the greatest influence in encouraging them to access support services and be involved in their recovery journey.

The project identified that while young men aged 18 to 25 in the Great South Coast region have high levels of mental health literacy, they aren’t necessarily reaching out to professional services when experiencing distress. Instead, they are more likely to seek initial help from family and friends. This has highlighted the need for [community training](#) to recognise when someone is having thoughts of suicide, how to respond and how to connect them with care. ([More information](#))

Outside The Locker Room: Men Aged 26+ Welfare and Education Program

The Men’s Health and Wellbeing project was delivered through sporting clubs in the Great South Coast, seeking to establish a foundation for improving access for males aged 26 years and older to mental health support services in the region.

Completed in August 2021, the project was run by **Outside the Locker Room** who delivered its welfare and education program (Suicide Prevention). A total of 12 programs were run across 10 sporting clubs, engaging with a total of 339 participants. The project has resulted in an ongoing partnership between leading mental health organisation Outside The Locker Room and AFL Western District. ([More information](#))



National Centre For Farmer Health: Farmer Health Suicide Prevention Project

The Farmer Health Suicide Prevention Project delivered two ground-breaking initiatives that laid a foundation for improving access to appropriate and effective mental health support in rural farming communities.

Led by **Deakin University's National Centre For Farmer Health** between 2020-22, the initiatives included a framework to train and support farming community members to provide one-on-one delivery of an evidence-based mental health program to their peers as well as **Steering Straight**, a self-managed mental health action plan.

While the framework will underpin ongoing work in community-based suicide prevention, *Steering Straight* is already being utilised by farmers across Australia. It has also attracted international attention, with farmers in New Zealand and Canada requesting access to the plan. ([More information](#))

Live4Life: Youth Health & Wellbeing Project

Live4Life, the only mental health education and youth suicide prevention model designed specifically for rural and regional communities, was boosted to train 24 Teen Instructors and 10 Youth Instructors (aged 18+) to deliver Mental Health First Aid education to more than 600 teens and adults.

These trained community members will work with local advisory groups, community groups and schools to implement the Teen and Youth Mental Health First Aid training now and into the future. Youth Live4Life aims to improve mental health literacy and encourage positive help-seeking behaviours of young people. The Teen Mental Health First Aid course teaches secondary school students in Years 7-9 and 10-12 how to provide Mental Health First Aid to their friends. ([More information](#))

Larter: Improving General Practice Capacity Project

A research project investigated the factors impacting General Practitioners (GPs) and other staff working in General Practice from supporting people at risk of suicide, and identified opportunities to build a strengthened response to suicide in general practice. Its recommendations will be embedded into the workforce development strategy across the region to help build the capacity of General Practice in suicide prevention. The findings will also be considered in the re-design of service models to help streamline access to ongoing care for people at risk of suicide, and to reinforce collaborative shared care with GPs for those most at risk.

The project was conducted by Larter and involved 55 GPs representing 45 general practices in the Great South Coast and Ballarat. ([More information](#))

headspace/Brophy: Yarning Circle Expansion Project

Four iterations of the **Ngootyoong Yarning Circle Group** program were successfully delivered by headspace and Brophy to 24 Aboriginal young people. The Yarning Circle program is designed to build participants' mental health literacy and provide access to culturally safe early-intervention health and wellbeing knowledge and support.

As a result, the program will be continued, enhancing access to headspace services for Aboriginal young people as a priority group for mental health intervention. ([More information](#))

- ENDS -

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Pictured: Members of the GSCSPBPT Leadership team on 22 June 2022 (L-R) Anne Waters, Michael Struth, Anita Rank, Elizabeth Barrett, Rowena Clift, Alison Kennedy.

Video: Members of the GSCSPBPT Leadership team discuss the final outcomes of the program.

Available for interview:

- Rowena Clift, Chief Executive Officer - WVPHN
- Cr Anita Rank, Chair - Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial Leadership Group and Mayor - Glenelg Shire Council
- Anne Waters, Regional Manager - headspace Warrnambool
- Todd Morgan, Chief Executive Officer - Outside The Locker Room
- Alison Kennedy, Director - National Centre for Farmer Health & Associate Professor - Deakin University
- Bernard Galbally, CEO - Youth Life4Life

Project Background Information:

More information and imagery from the projects can be found here: [GSCSPBPT Project Information](#)

Access Suicide Prevention Training:

[Training is offered free to anyone with a Great South Coast postcode](#)

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