

## NEWS

# Compassion and intent must be met by scale: LivingWorks Australia on Budget 2021

**May 12, 2021** - On behalf of more than 650 Australians training workplaces and communities in suicide first aid, LivingWorks Australia welcomes the Budget 2021 investment in mental health and suicide prevention.

As an organisation that has been built on lived experience of suicide and continues to be led by local Australian trainers who are driven by their personal experiences of suicide and that of their communities, we are encouraged by this week's Budget announcements.

However, this compassion and intent must be met by evidenced based implementation and scaling of the skills and services we desperately need across the public health system and broader community.

Given LivingWorks' success in recent years supporting Federally and State suicide prevention trials, we are pleased to see an extension of these suicide prevention activities prioritised as well as further funding for priority populations such as Indigenous communities, people recovering from a suicide attempt and veterans.

To date suicide prevention trials and other programs have enabled:

- Gatekeeper training (LivingWorks ASIST and SafeTALK) for diverse communities and demographics such as high risk workplaces like construction with MATES in Construction
- Co designed culturally appropriate suicide first aid programs for Indigenous communities alongside with University of Queensland's Associate Professor Maree Toombs
- Co designed suicide first aid programs that ensure safe spaces for LGBTI communities to learn, alongside the LGBTI Health Alliance
- Growing the evidence base for suicide intervention skills (SafeTALK in Schools) for young people and those around young people in partnership with Orygen and Lifeline Australia
- Working with veterans and defence personnel in partnership with government agencies and support bodies alongside Open Arms.

A number of the initiatives announced including adult mental health centres, expansion of youth centres and hospital and community aftercare services have extensive implications for the mental health and suicide prevention workforce.

From the work we do, we see first-hand how important it is for health professionals, peer workers and community leaders to have appropriate training to equip them to work safely and compassionately in this space. It is essential that in designing these new and expanded services, an evidence based training and capacity building plan is embedded from the start. This includes but is not limited to suicide first aid through LivingWorks ASIST, recognised as gold standard both locally and internationally.

Australians in workplaces, clinical/health, education, Defence & Veterans, and community settings are already learning lifesaving suicide first aid skills from local experts but this needs to be scaled nationally.

Both the Productivity Report and Suicide Task Force Final Report called for community and workplace training to recognise and respond to suicide earlier, through workplace and the community – and to connect those vulnerable to ongoing improved care and support.

We have the policy directives/reports and now the funds allocated. Let's build on what we know works when it comes to suicide prevention.

Some of the key Budget areas announced for mental health and suicide prevention include:

- Establishing the National Suicide Prevention Office to oversee the national approach to suicide prevention (\$12.8 million over four years)
- \$158.6 million over four years for aftercare services, contingent on an agreement with the States and Territories. Importantly this includes not only those presenting to hospitals, but also funds for aftercare services in the community
- \$487.2 million for a network of adult mental health centres with centralised intake (Head to Health)
- \$278.6 million over four years from 2021-22 to expand and enhance headspace youth mental health services, in conjunction with the states and territories
- Initiatives for priority populations including:
  - \$79.0 million to implement initiatives under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy
  - \$16.9 million to provide mental health services and support to Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse communities
  - \$11.1 million (over two years) to improve outcomes for people with complex mental health needs
  - The 2021-22 Budget will provide \$460.4 million to ensure the Department of Veterans' Affairs has adequate capacity to meet veteran support needs and enhance its capacity to address veteran suicide, including through faster processing of compensation claims.

Full Budget 2021 papers can be found at [budget.gov.au](https://budget.gov.au)

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## About LivingWorks

LivingWorks is the world's leading provider of suicide prevention solutions. It has more than 35 years of history and expertise and has trained 2.3 million people worldwide.

Its programs have been evaluated in more than 50 peer-reviewed articles, and its ASIST and safeTALK programs are recognised best practices, used by crisis hotlines throughout the world. LivingWorks' vision is a world free from suicide loss.

It strives to accomplish this by providing high-quality training programs that empower everyone to be part of the solution.

To date we have:

- Empowered over 2,000,000 people to save lives from suicide
- Estimates suggest that our training has prevented over 300,000 suicide attempts
- Over 50 peer-reviewed studies support our programs' effectiveness with that research and evaluation being updated to include new digital interventions
- 8,000 trainers worldwide with more than 650 of them based in Australia
- Run training courses from Australia to Zambia and over 30 countries in between
- Partnered with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTI organisations and communities to adapt ASIST into culturally appropriate, locally designed and delivered evidence-based programs
- Developed a world first 90 minute whole of population (and customisable by demographic) online interactive introduction to suicide first aid training, LivingWorks Start.
- Translated programs into languages such as French, Korean, Norwegian, and Lithuanian
- Prioritised Australian research in areas relating to upskilling homeless youths in suicide prevention, Indigenous suicide intervention training programs, suicide safety of older people, measuring confidence pre and post participation in LivingWorks training, extending evidence in relation to SafeTALK in schools and use of online technologies for suicide intervention skills-based training.
- Commenced work to inform and develop principles for training CALD communities in suicide prevention.

<https://www.livingworks.com.au/>