



*Emma and Mark on their wedding day.*

## Support After Suicide helps Emma navigate parenting while grieving

When Emma walked out of her first counselling session with Support After Suicide counsellor Greg, it felt "like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders".

"I was really nervous before the first session because I'd never used a psychologist or counsellor, or any of those types of services, before. But straight away I felt comfortable, and supported, and the program has become an amazing help to me."

Emma's husband Mark took his life in June 2021. The same day he died, Emma was referred to Support After Suicide by Victoria Police.

"I got a message from Claire from Support After Suicide asking if she could e-mail me some resources and information. We spoke on the phone a few days later and she said that whenever I was ready, I could get in touch, and Support After Suicide could arrange counselling for me."

As Emma navigated her initial grief with the support of family, she reached a point where she decided to reach out for help.

"The funeral was on a Friday and the next day I was lying in bed and my mind went to some dark places. I knew I needed help to be the best support and the best parent that I can be."

*Continues on page 2*

In this issue:

**Support After Suicide**

Page 3

***Dropping off the Edge 2021***

Page 6

**The Afghanistan crisis**

Page 7



## COVID-19 highlights need for strong, effective mental health system

As we head into summer and the festive season, many of us are grateful to have moved into a period of 'COVID normal' which includes opportunities to connect and reconnect with loved ones.

While the extremely challenging past 18 months has given us time to reflect on what is most important to us, such as family, the impact on our mental health and wellbeing after so much disruption remains unknown.

It is clear that a strong and effective mental health system will be even more important moving forward than ever before.

Jesuit Social Services delivers a range of programs to improve mental health and wellbeing, including Support After Suicide, which provides services including counselling, support groups and online resources for people bereaved by the suicide of a loved one.

We have delivered this program in Victoria since 2004, and were pleased that the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recognised the importance of postvention services that support people bereaved by suicide in its final report in early 2021.

This year, Support After Suicide expanded into New South Wales, ensuring we can support more people through the complex grief and trauma associated with suicide.

In this newsletter, you will read about Support After Suicide's work and the story of Emma, one of the program's participants. You will also read about the work the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) has been doing to advocate for and support the people impacted by the humanitarian crisis impacting Afghanistan, and how our Jobs Victoria Advocates Program is supporting people on the pathway to employment.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support of Jesuit Social Services. I wish you and your loved ones a safe and enjoyable festive season.

Best wishes,  
Sally Parnell  
Acting CEO, Jesuit Social Services

## Support After Suicide helps Emma navigate parenting while grieving

*Continues from page 1*

Since 2004, Support After Suicide has provided support including counselling, group support and online resources for people left behind after a loved one has taken their own life. In the past year, the program has expanded to now support people in parts of New South Wales, as well as Victoria.

Emma says it was a relief knowing that the specialised service was available.

"Suicide is a very unique experience and it was so valuable knowing that they understood the situation I was experiencing, and could provide the help and support I needed," she says.

Emma has continued to meet with Greg fortnightly – often remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions – since their first session. One of the things she has found most beneficial has been Greg's advice about approaching the situation with Will.

Emma also referred a friend of Mark's to the program.

"One of his closest friends was really struggling with what had happened and I was very open about how I'd felt after talking to Greg and the amazing help the program had been. I suggested he reach out to the program and now he's been seeing a counsellor and had a similar to experience to me.

"I am lucky to have strong family support, but this program has been such an important part of my life for the last few months."



Mark, Emma and Will.



## Support After Suicide's first year in NSW

Support After Suicide has been helping people in Victoria navigate the grief and trauma associated with suicide for more than 15 years. As of February 2021, in a new partnership led by StandBy, Support After Suicide has expanded its grief counselling service into New South Wales.

John, the new program manager in NSW, comes to Jesuit Social Services with over 38 years of bereavement counselling experience.

What John has found through his many years of working in the grief counselling space is that he finds purpose in helping others.

"I want to make a difference and I love working with people. I like to try and help them make sense of things, work with them and support them as best I can."

When the opportunity came up to lead Support After Suicide as its first NSW Manager, John didn't have to think hard about applying.

"I'd known about the work down in Victoria for some time and they've done an amazing job. When the opportunity came up, I grabbed it with both hands."

John currently heads up a team of two highly skilled, highly experienced counsellors. The team works out of offices shared with StandBy, often receiving participant referrals through StandBy's peer support programs.

Until very recently, the NSW Support After Suicide team has conducted their one-on-one counselling sessions over the phone or video call due to COVID-19 restrictions. Since the easing of restrictions, however, John says participants now have the option to meet in person for their sessions.

"We're still seeing people via phone or Zoom. And those sessions are good. But we can now get on the road to see people in their homes, in a café, or welcome them here at the office.

"We're happy to meet people wherever they feel most comfortable."

Looking to 2022, John plans on offering group counselling in addition to one-on-one sessions.

"At the moment, we are doing some family sessions. We might see a sibling of someone who has taken their life along with their parents or we might do an educational session with a school where a student has died through suicide.

"Next year, we're looking forward to being able to start holding group sessions and we hope to offer these sessions both online and in-person.

"Ultimately, we're trying to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people as best we can."



---

*John, Manager of Support After Suicide in NSW.*

## Advocating for a mental health system that supports everyone to flourish

A focus on mental health and wellbeing has become increasingly important for communities and all levels of government during the COVID-19 pandemic. Building and nourishing strong mental health and wellbeing enables us to navigate challenges, reach our full potential and heal. This year, Jesuit Social Services has contributed to a wide range of reforms that will help reshape the mental health system and improve outcomes for all members of society.

Jesuit Social Services believes in a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing. We work closely with those who become involved with the justice system and those who have multiple and complex needs. We argue that a well-resourced and more effective mental health system can allow people on the margins to thrive.

March this year marked the release of the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System* final report. Its landmark recommendations provide a roadmap for an evidence-based, person-centred system that meets the needs of all people experiencing poor mental health as well as their families, carers and supporters. Louise Flynn, General Manager of our Support After Suicide program, was quoted numerous times in the final report, highlighting the insufficiency of services available for families bereaved by suicide, particularly in rural and regional areas. We were pleased to see the Commission recommend the implementation of postvention services that support people bereaved by suicide.

We recently provided feedback on the proposed *Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing*. The Centre will make a positive impact on the lives of Victorians by providing translational research, mental health workforce development, and modelling of international best practice. We are pleased to see that the Centre will host a *State-wide Trauma Service*, which will develop and deliver training for trauma-informed care.

Jesuit Social Services also contributed to a sector consultation for the Integrated Alcohol and Other Drugs and Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework. This framework will improve outcomes for people living with both mental illness and substance issues by providing an integrated service response.

Earlier this year, we advocated for the *National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* to take a strong stand on the need to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years. Children involved in the youth justice system already experience complex trauma and poor mental health. Repeat contact with the system is retraumatising and contributes to the risk of reoffending. Raising the age can help protect the mental health of an already highly vulnerable group.

In our submission to the Federal *Inquiry into Mental Health and Suicide Prevention*, we highlighted the critical need for a trauma-informed workforce and specialist suicide postvention services. We reiterated these asks in our submission to the *National Mental Health Workforce Strategy*, also highlighting the need for a greater integration of care for people with multiple and complex needs. This will ensure care is provided holistically rather than in isolation.

The current focus on mental health offers an historic opportunity to drive systemic and cultural change. Jesuit Social Services will continue to advocate tirelessly for a just society, the cornerstone of which is a strong system of supports that enables everyone to flourish.

### Further reading

To read the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System* final report, visit: [jesuit.social/rcvmhs](https://jesuit.social/rcvmhs)

## A safe place to be vulnerable leads Lucy to job-ready confidence

The Jobs Victoria Advocates Program provides the tailored support, information and referrals needed to connect job-seekers with employment. Jesuit Social Services started delivering the program in Melbourne in early 2021 and has since supported more than 600 job-seekers – including Lucy\*, who was referred to the program after a period of prolonged unemployment.

Lucy is capable and qualified, with a Bachelor of International Relations and multiple qualifications in Community Services. But Lucy suffers from mental ill-health, including anxiety and depression, making it hard for her to communicate and interview for roles with confidence. The flexibility of the Jobs Victoria Advocates Program was what she needed.

Lucy's Advocate, Candice Zavattiero, helped her engage with mental health and career counselling support. This has included giving her advice with resume-writing, finding roles suited to her qualifications, and help with general confidence-building.

Candice said the program is voluntary – driven by a participant's own goals, which makes building trust crucial to its success.

"People don't fit inside a box," she said.

"Some participants are job-ready, but lack confidence. We give them a safe space to ask questions and show vulnerability around employment, which can be quite difficult. Once you build that rapport, you can answer questions, and provide referrals and resources."

One referral Candice made was to Lucy's local Skills and Jobs Centre, where she could attend webinars and receive practical support with job-searching.

Jobs Victoria Advocate Program Manager Bianca Barbarisi said many people referred to the program aren't aware of the services available to them and need support to access help.

"Sometimes all people need is that human interaction – a hand to help you get where you want to be," she said.

Over time, and with Candice's support, Lucy has made significant progress with her job applications – she's identifying roles she's suited to, writing clear and compelling applications, and receiving offers for job interviews when previously she'd had none.

Lucy said the support of the program has made searching for a job easier.

"I've been dealing with long-term unemployment for many years and it's definitely taken a toll on my life and my mental health.

"Having someone who is both non-judgemental and professional to talk to and share ideas with has really made a difference for me.

"Unemployment is still not where I would choose to be in life, but having Candice to guide and support me has made it easier to deal with."

*\*Not their real name.*



Candice Zavattiero, Jobs Victoria Advocate with our Jobs Victoria Advocate Program.

## Dropping off the Edge 2021 highlights entrenched disadvantage across Australia

Jesuit Social Services has conducted research into place-based disadvantage for more than 20 years, beginning with the ground-breaking *Unequal in Life* report in 1999.

We are pleased to announce that on 18 November we launched *Dropping off the Edge 2021*, the fifth report in the series that now investigates disadvantage in every community in each State and Territory across the country.

The report finds that a small number of communities continue to bear the brunt of multilayered disadvantage and experience disproportionate levels of unemployment, housing stress, early school leaving and other significant challenges.

*Dropping off the Edge 2021* is our most comprehensive research yet, measuring disadvantage on 37 unique indicators and including intergenerational and environmental indicators for the first time. This includes teen pregnancy, children with no parent in paid work, heat stress, poor air quality, green canopy and access to nature reserves.

CEO Julie Edwards says the report paints a stark picture of the disproportionate distribution of disadvantage across Australia.

"This disadvantage is persistent and multilayered – for example the 10 most disadvantaged communities in Victoria, and nine of the 10 most disadvantaged communities in New South Wales, also ranked as highly disadvantaged in the 2015 report," she says.

"Each of these communities has inherent strengths and resilience which we want to see fostered and supported so that people can flourish. For nearly 45 years, Jesuit Social Services has worked in a strengths-based way with people and communities to help them reach their potential."

We will use *Dropping off the Edge 2021* to advocate to State, Territory and Federal Governments for tailored, targeted and long-term work to create better outcomes for future generations.

For more information about *Dropping off the Edge 2021*, visit [www.dote.org.au](http://www.dote.org.au)

## Finding focus outside during Melbourne's lockdowns

COVID-19 forced many of our programs into remote or outdoor delivery. For Connexions, which supports young people with concurrent mental health and substance misuse problems, the time spent outside wasn't just a way to get by – it allowed us to introduce a new way of working.

Connexions practitioner Naomi Lopez is a keen gardener, with a background in horticultural therapy. She's seen first-hand the benefits of being in nature – and with one participant, Grace\*, who has a history of complex trauma, she found their time spent outside together during lockdowns allowed Grace to engage more deeply with the program's support.

"Traditionally we had met in a cafe she had identified as feeling comfortable and familiar with," said Naomi. "COVID forced us out of that space, and we ended up walking around in local parks and exploring the community garden."

Listening to bird calls, tasting feijoa flowers and watching colours change on leaves helped Grace find focus and mindfulness, which calmed her hyper-arousal and helped her engage.

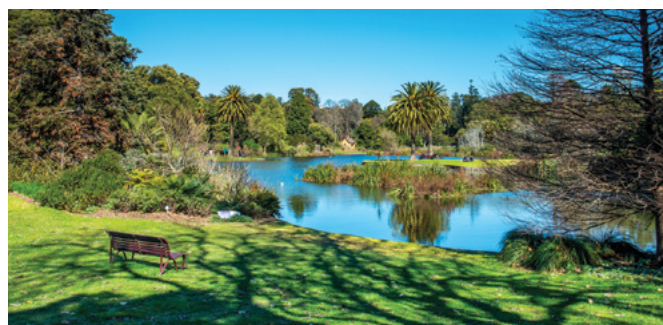
"It had a profound impact," Naomi said. "Going from a state where it was difficult to understand what she was saying, to

being able to really actively engaged in conversation. It was amazing."

Evidence shows significant physical and psychological benefits to spending time outdoors, including lowered blood pressure and reduced stress levels. Connexions manager Julia Carroll said the team now plans to integrate nature-based therapies into its work, even as Victoria's lockdowns end.

"We've all had to step back and ask, 'how do we engage now? And think, yes, this is something we can incorporate more and be far more intentional about.'"

*\*Not their real name.*





## The Afghanistan crisis: it's time to give refugees a permanent home

It has been almost four months since the fall of Kabul and the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan.

We have witnessed the devastating impact this has had on the people of Afghanistan - those who are stranded there, those who are trying to escape and those who can only watch on from other countries like Australia.

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA), a campaign Jesuit Social Services co-convenes with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, recently held a webinar called *A Call for Prayer and Action for Afghanistan*. The event brought together over 200 members of the CAPSA and wider Australian community to hear from expert speakers and collectively take action.

Attendees were fortunate to hear from a range of moving and insightful speakers, including Shabnam Saba, Chair of the National Refugee Advisory and Advocacy Group, who reflected that "there is not a single person from Afghanistan who has not been impacted".

Participants also heard from Zaki Haidari, JRS Australia's Refugee Leadership Coordinator, who lives in Australia as a Hazara refugee on temporary protection. Zaki reflected on the negative impact that being on temporary protection has had on him and thousands of others, noting that "we cannot build our lives here". Multiple studies have upheld that using temporary protection has an overwhelmingly negative impact on the mental health of recipients.<sup>[1]</sup>

Zaki left webinar participants with a rallying call to urge the Federal Government to provide permanent protection to refugees, and in particular Hazara refugees impacted by the Afghanistan crisis, living in Australia "so that they can start their life once and for all... at least then we will have a place to call permanent home".

For more information on CAPSA, visit [capsa.org.au](https://capsa.org.au)

<sup>[1]</sup> [jesuit.social/kaldor-tpv](https://jesuit.social/kaldor-tpv)

## A warm welcome in Melbourne

As hundreds of Afghan families fled Kabul in August and September, community members in Melbourne were waiting with open arms.

Nasser Yawari is an Afghan-Australian who works on Jesuit Social Services' Jobs Advocates Program (learn more about this program on page 5). As a trusted and connected member of the Afghan diaspora community in Victoria, he was one of the first in touch with exhausted families as they disembarked evacuation flights from Kabul and entered Melbourne's quarantine hotels.

Nasser contacted our Ecological Justice Hub, which has spent six Victorian lockdowns harvesting, packaging, cooking and delivering fresh meals and grocery packs to community members in need.

Within 24 hours, the Hub was able to expand its service, in collaboration with refugee support service AMES and The Big Umbrella Foundation, to deliver hot, culturally appropriate meals and fresh groceries to 30 families quarantining in three city hotels, demonstrating what true welcome can look like.

Hub coordinator Stuart Muir Wilson said Jesuit Social Services' thoughtful, quick and collaborative response is an example of

how our organisation honours its Ignatian heritage – living with one foot raised, ready to go wherever the need is greatest.

"The team and I were able to do this because the Hub is responsive, pragmatic and solutions-oriented, with demonstrated on-the-ground experience," he said. "Thanks to the insights of Nasser and AMES we knew what people needed, could react quickly, and were trusted to deliver the nourishing and comforting food people were after during an incredibly vulnerable time."



---

**COVID-19 has had significant impact on many areas of our lives with the toll on our mental health and wellbeing demanding particular attention.**

**For people who are in vulnerable situations or on the margins of society the strain on their mental health has been particularly severe.**

**We are committed to ensuring that every person gets the support that they need to make it through this crisis and beyond.**

---



**Help us make sure that those navigating the loss of a loved one to suicide get the support they need when they need it most.**

#### **Want to help Jesuit Social Services?**

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

**I would like to make an ongoing monthly gift of:**  
**\$** \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify amount)

**I would like to make a one-off donation of:**

☐ **\$75**      ☐ **\$150**

☐ **\$500**      ☐ **\$1000**

☐ **\$**

☐ Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will.

#### **Contact and payment details**

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

First name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Cheque enclosed    OR    ☐ VISA    ☐ Mastercard

Card number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

You can also donate online. Please visit [jss.org.au](https://jss.org.au), click DONATE and select 'Summer Appeal 2021' in your campaign selection.. We still welcome donations by mail but please note there could be a delay in processing your generous donation.