

MEDIA RELEASE

MEDIA RELEASE – OCTOBER 10, 2024

Suicide data demonstrates need for better access to specialised postvention support for those left behind: Jesuit Social Services

New data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics today shows that the number of suicides across the country remains too high and has continued to increase in some jurisdictions, demonstrating the need for all people bereaved by suicide to have access to specialised postvention support, says Jesuit Social Services' Support After Suicide program.

"Today's statistics show that more than 3,200 people took their own lives last year, with the number expected to increase as more coronial information becomes available. This is simply devastating. Beyond the tragic loss of each person, each suicide is felt by up to 135 people including family, friends, colleagues and first responders," says Dr Louise Flynn, General Manager at Jesuit Social Services' Support After Suicide program.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' annual Causes of Death report finds that over three quarters of people who died by suicide in 2023 were male, and that suicide was the 16th leading cause of death last year. Between 2022 and 2023, the suicide rate increased in Western Australia and Tasmania, and it remained similar in Victoria and Queensland.

"Research shows that those left behind after the suicide of a loved one experience higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation than other bereaved people and will experience a complex and prolonged period of bereavement. It is clear that all people bereaved by suicide must have access to specialised, adequately funded and resourced support to manage this experience," says Dr Flynn.

Support After Suicide has been supporting Victorians who have lost a loved one to suicide for 20 years. In 2023, the program provided direct support to over 850 people, including facilitating 175 support groups and providing more than 3,550 hours of support. Support After Suicide is one of the few services to provide long-term evidence-based support to those bereaved by suicide.

With Support After Suicide's waiting list growing, Dr Flynn says that now is a critical time to ensure that all states and territories fund evidence-based postvention services with strong connections to local communities.

While Support After Suicide is currently funded through the Primary Health Networks, funding is precarious and insufficient to meet increasing demands.

"An additional \$1.5m in funding for Support After Suicide would service immediate need and allow for expansion to ensure all Victorians, particularly those in rural and regional Victoria bereaved by suicide have access to the support they need," says Dr Flynn.

Media enquiries: Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au.