

22 January 2025

## Have Your Say: Suicide Prevention Training across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith areas

Suicidal distress is a human response to overwhelming suffering, and we all can provide immediate help to people who are in suicidal distress. In 2020-2022 one in 6 (around 3.3 million) Australians aged 16–85 had experienced serious thoughts about taking their own life at some point in their lives, and the same research also shows approximately 150 people in Australia attempt to take their own life each day.

Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, is seeking community feedback via a survey on what types of Suicide Prevention Training is needed in the community across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith areas. Tragically, suicide rates are higher than average in these areas, and it is often the case that words or actions indicating suicidal distress are missed. Suicide prevention training and education programs can assist people to identify the signs and respond compassionately.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, is encouraging community members to complete the 5-minute anonymous survey at [nbmphn.com.au/SuicidePreventionTrainingSurvey](https://nbmphn.com.au/SuicidePreventionTrainingSurvey) to assist the organisation to plan and deliver suicide prevention training in 2025 that meets community needs.

“We want to deliver more suicide prevention training this year and this survey is intended to help us build upon the success of the training we have already rolled out, as well as identify and address any remaining needs or gaps. We want to ensure that the community training we offer continues to be relevant, accessible and effective for those who need it most. Whether you are a parent, teacher, student, volunteer, worker, or find yourself supporting people in distress in any other way, we want to hear from you,” said Ms Reay.

“The factors contributing to suicide are complex and not always related to mental illness. I think people would be surprised to learn that recent data shows around a quarter of Australians who reported having suicidal thoughts or behaviours in the past 12 months had no symptoms of a mental disorder or had never met diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder,” she said.

“Research indicates that a third of Australians aged 16 - 85 years report that they were close to someone who died by suicide or have attempted to take their own life. This means that if you haven’t been directly impacted or affected by suicide, you probably know someone who has,” said Ms Reay.

Ms Reay said that there can be some hesitancy in helping when someone discloses their struggles for fear of saying the wrong thing or not knowing how to handle the situation. Evidence shows that [suicide prevention training](#) and education programs can assist everyday people to respond appropriately and compassionately to early signs of distress, which can help those at risk or in crisis with appropriate supports when they need it most.

To date, funding provided through the Commonwealth Government’s Targeted Regional Initiatives for Suicide Prevention has enabled Wentworth Healthcare **to support 45 workshops and upskill over 1,100** community members in how to talk about suicide and how to recognise the early warning signs.



Over 90% of previous workshop participants said their reason for attending training was to 'improve their communications skills with people in distress'. In 2023, post-training, 92% had achieved this same goal and reported they felt well prepared to help a person thinking about suicide, including how to ask someone directly about suicide and respond safely regardless of the answer.

"Community Suicide Prevention training can combat the hesitancy that some people may feel in broaching the topic of suicide, by empowering them with the knowledge and skills needed to support those in crisis when the opportunity arises," said Ms Reay.

"I encourage people in our community to take this survey, which will take no more than **5 minutes** to complete, to assist us in our planning. Participants may remain anonymous, though those who choose to provide contact details will receive information about training opportunities that result from the survey," she said.

To have your say, visit [nbmphn.com.au/SuicidePreventionTrainingSurvey](https://nbmphn.com.au/SuicidePreventionTrainingSurvey) by **Friday, 28 February**.

**If the content of this article has brought up strong emotions for you and you would like to seek support**, please contact **Lifeline on 13 11 14** or reach out to one of the services listed below.

The **Head to Health (Medicare Mental Health)** phonenumber, **1800 595 212**, is open Monday to Friday 8:30 am - 5:00 pm (closed on public holidays). For those who can travel or who are in the Penrith area, the Head to Health (Medicare Mental Health) Centre is **located at 111 Henry Street**, and is open every day, including public holidays, for walk in mental health support from 1:30 pm - 9:00 pm except Tuesdays, when it is open 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm.

**Co-located with Head to Health (Medicare Mental Health) Centre is Safe Haven**, a service that provides a safe alternative to the emergency department for individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts or distress. Open from 1:00 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, Wednesday to Sunday (including public holidays), and 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm on Tuesday. **No appointment or referral is required.**

The **StandBy Support After Suicide phonenumber, 1300 727 247**, is available between 6:00am and 10:00pm, 7 days a week, or visit [standbysupport.com.au](https://standbysupport.com.au) for more information. StandBy is Australia's leading suicide postvention program dedicated to assisting people and communities with feelings of loss, grief and other experiences related to a death by suicide and other people who are impacted by suicide such as witnesses and first responders.

Anyone with or without a referral can contact the **Suicide Call Back Service** on **1300 659 467** for phone or video support, or visit [suicidecallbackservice.org.au](https://suicidecallbackservice.org.au) for more information.

**13YARN** offer a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter who can provide crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on **13 92 76** or visit [13yarn.org.au](https://13yarn.org.au) for more information.

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