

WA Postvention Services & Supports

FIRST
RESPONDERS
GUIDE



AnglicareWA



The Journey. Coming Together, working together

In particular, we wish to acknowledge the Custodians of the lands where our offices operate. We would like to thank the Noongar, Miriuwung Gajerrong, Tjurabalan, Yawuru, Nyikina, Ngarluma, Kariyarra, Nyiyaparli, Martu, and Wangkatja Peoples for their wisdom and generosity, and pay our respects to Elders of these lands both past and present.

Acknowledgement of Country

Anglicare WA delivers services across many Countries in WA, from Balanggarra Country in the North to Minang Noongar Country in the South. We acknowledge Aboriginal Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands that our services operate on.

Postvention Acknowledgement

We recognise and honour the continued contribution of those with a lived experience of suicide bereavement. The courage, insight and wisdom of these unique experiences, strengthens the work that we do. We also acknowledge and remember the lives that have ended due to suicide and we encourage ongoing support and care for yourself and each other. The WA Postvention Services and Support Guide is the result of dedicated effort and the generous support of several organisations who service and support the WA community. We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed their time and energy to help bring this guide to life. Special thanks go to WA Primary Health Alliance, StandBy Support After Suicide, Thirrili, Roses in the Ocean and Workplace Aware.



What is Suicide Postvention?

Suicide postvention describes activities or interventions occurring after a death by suicide, to support those bereaved or affected (family, friends, professionals, peers, responders, community) to cope with stressors and manage the experience of loss and grief. It is estimated that nearly half of all Australians know someone who has died in this way.

People exposed to suicide may experience higher levels of shame, responsibility, guilt, rejection and blame (self and/or others) in addition to other more general grief reactions such as shock, denial, sadness, confusion and anger.

Postvention is a significant form of suicide prevention as research shows that for these reasons, exposure to suicide may increase suicidal ideation so it is important to offer appropriate supports in the event of a suicide loss.

Postvention in a first responder setting

Frontline staff exposed to suicide or sudden death as part of their work may find their wellbeing significantly impacted.

Depending on their social, geographical and psychological proximity to the event, staff may have varying responses to the loss. Left unaddressed, responses can develop into debilitating long-term psychological distress that affect the ability of staff to cope with stressors and do their job.

Some first responder agencies have suicide postvention strategies in place and the First Responder Working Group (Mental Health Commission WA) has a shared Toolkit which can be employed to identify and support impacted staff (for more information contact workplaceaware.com.au).

This booklet is designed to provide individual staff and volunteers helpful information and resources for support and can be shared with peers and community members as required.

Supports for your community

Access to specialist suicide loss and bereavement (postvention) services enables individuals and communities impacted by suicide to receive timely, appropriate support. The services listed are free to access and available to anyone impacted by a loss.

Anglicare WA Postvention Services

StandBy Support After Suicide

The StandBy program is focused on supporting anyone who has been bereaved or impacted by suicide at any stage in their life, including: Individuals, families and friends, witnesses, First Responders and Service Providers. StandBy is accessible seven days a week, providing free face-to face and/or telephone support at a time and place that is best for each individual. Supports are available Australia wide. The program offers coordinated evidence-based support and resources (including connections to local services and groups) that is individualised for each person's unique circumstance. This support is continued for up to two years to ensure those that engage with StandBy are not alone and receive ongoing support. **1300 727 247 standbysupport.com.au**

Metropolitan Community Postvention Coordinators

In the Perth metropolitan area, when a large group or community is impacted by a suicide, the Community Postvention Coordinator program can offer support and facilitate postvention responses to reduce risk and facilitate recovery. The program engages service providers, people with lived experience and cultural representatives to provide advice, referral and develop a coordinated postvention plan. **metropostvention@anglicarewa.org.au**

CYPRESS (Children and Young People Responsive Suicide Support)

It's a free and long-term support service for children and young people between the ages of 6 and 18 who have been bereaved by suicide. Please note CYPRESS is a metropolitan wide service, offering formal clinical counselling services to children and young people at north and south Perth metro locations. **1300 11 44 46** (this service is available in the Perth Metro region only). **anglicarewa.org.au/get-support/services-directory/cypress**

Active Response Bereavement Outreach (ARBOR)

ARBOR is a free service for adults 18+ offering short-medium term grief counselling, practical and emotional support, appropriate referral support, volunteer lived-experience peer support, and support groups to people recently bereaved by suicide. ARBOR is here to support people going through suicide bereavement and support them in navigating any challenges they may experience. **1300 11 44 46** (this service is available in the Perth Metro region only). **anglicarewa.org.au/get-support/services-directory/arbor**



Supports for your community

Thirrili - Indigenous Suicide Postvention Service

Thirrili responds to the collective trauma of suicide with coordinated services to provide holistic care. Drawing upon community resources and interdisciplinary services, we offer support through developing a care plan, following Wellbeing Songlines aligned to individual and community knowledges, strengths and lived experience. Our service is a culturally safe support system that respects the grieving process and paves a path toward healing. We understand the importance of staying flexible, we respect and uphold local cultural protocols and practices related to mourning and Sorry Business. **1800 805 801** thirrili.com.au

Roses in the Ocean

Roses in the Ocean is the national lived experience of suicide organisation offering services and supports ranging from grassroots capacity building to service delivery to system reform. Their workshops provide opportunities for people with a lived experience of suicide, and organisations and government, to develop their capacity, confidence, and expertise to integrate and partner with each other.

rosesintheocean.com.au/what-we-do/workshops/

Peer CARE Companion Warmline

Peer CARE Companion Warmline is a 'warmline' call-back service which has been created by Roses in the Ocean to provide a safe place for people with a lived experience of suicide to connect with others with a similar lived experience of suicide. Whether you have lost someone to suicide, are supporting a loved one in crisis, have survived an attempt, or have been living with your own suicidal thoughts, they will connect you with a trained and supported Peer CARE Companion who has a similar lived experience of suicide. **1800 77 7337**. Please note: This is NOT a crisis service.

Support for you and your mates

We acknowledge that working or volunteering in emergency services often involves exposure to traumatic situations, undertaken in service of protecting and caring for the community. While supporting others is at the heart of this work, it's essential to also care for yourself and your workmates. Below is a list of support services available to first responders.

Beyond Blue

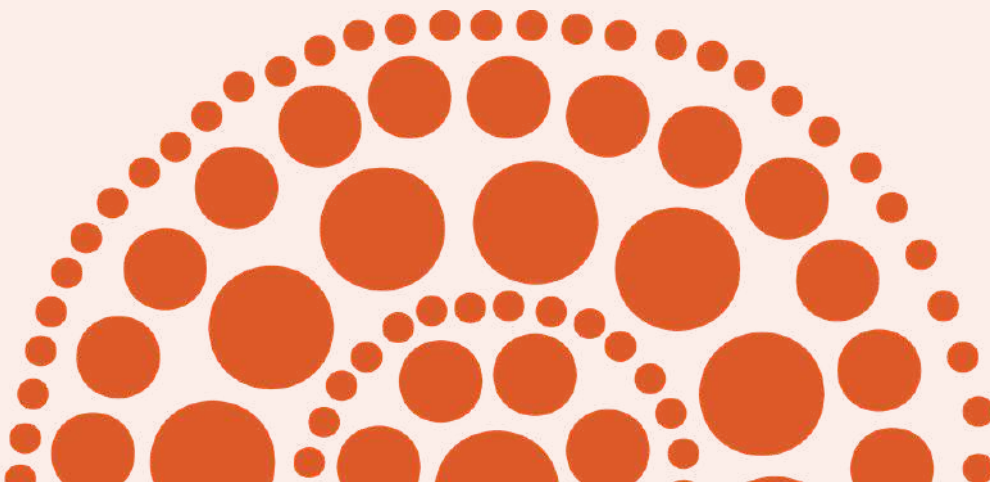
We all have good days and bad days. Then there are those days when something isn't quite right, you've got something on your mind, or things just seem too much. Beyond Blue offer 24/7 talk or chat services with a counsellor, the NewAccess mental health coaching program offering 6 free sessions with a mental health coach or online peer support communities. These services are there to help connect you to the support you need when you need it. For more information on the Beyond Blue services head to beyondblue.org.au/get-support or call 1300 22 46 36

Black Dog Institute

It's not always easy to know how you're feeling — especially after a traumatic or stressful event. The Black Dog Emergency Worker Support Service offers free and confidential mental health support for emergency service workers and volunteers. To take a quick mental health check, book a free and confidential consultation with one of the clinicians, or explore their resources at your own pace head to blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-services/national-emergency-worker-support-service

Soldiers & Sirens

A small but hard-working not-for-profit founded by two ex-WA Police Officers to address the mental health challenges often experienced by those working in uniform. Police, Firefighters, Paramedics, Prison Officers and Veterans have witnessed many traumatic events in their daily work, which can take a significant toll on their health, relationships, families, careers and social lives. For some, it can result in diagnoses such as depression and/or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). At Soldiers & Sirens, they provide the psychological knowledge, lived experience and compassion to create a safe and uplifting community to ensure we are stronger together. They provide referral services to trauma-based therapy pathways and peer support from those who have served. soldiersandsirens.com.au



Buddy Up

Buddy Up are an event based community for current and ex-serving Defence, First Responders and their families. We facilitate hundreds of events Australia-wide to strengthen the physical health, social connection and wellbeing of our members, to ensure this community is thriving. Our community hosts outdoor adventures, fitness and wellbeing activities, social and family friendly events. For those that show up in service of the community, this is your community showing up for you. This is your space to decompress, connect and grow. buddyupaustralia.org

Fortem

Australia's leading not-for-profit organisation delivering support to first responders and their families. Fortem provide an integrated range of confidential services tailored to each first responder and their family to promote resilience and to transform struggle into strength. Services include social connection and wellbeing activities, psychology and counselling and strategic career management. fortemaustralia.org.au

Phoenix Australia

Experts in trauma-related mental health and wellbeing. Although their Responder Assist program is based in Victoria, their website has some excellent toolkits and information and is worth a visit. phoenixaustralia.org/responder-assist/emergency-workers

Disaster Response Network

Established in 2009, the DRN is a national network of APS member psychologists who provide wellbeing services to frontline and emergency support workers and volunteers who assist communities impacted by disasters, emergencies and other collective trauma events. The DRN offers a range of individual and group-based wellbeing services that can be tailored to the preparation, response and recovery phases of these events. psychology.org.au/disaster-response-network

Employee Assistance Programs

EAPs for first responders in Western Australia provide free, confidential, and specialised psychological support for staff, volunteers, and their families. These services are tailored to manage the high-stress, trauma-exposed nature of emergency work, with 24/7 access available. There are several EAP providers supporting First Responder services in WA, to find out who is supporting you, have a chat to your Human Relations Department.





Additional resources

There is some excellent work happening across WA and Australia focused on supporting the health and wellbeing of the first responder community. Below is a selection of resources, toolkits and research that are worth exploring.

Answering the Call: The University of Western Australia

Answering the Call is the first national survey of mental health and wellbeing among police and emergency services personnel in Australia. Involving more than 21,000 current and former employees and volunteers, the research examines the impact of traumatic work, workplace culture, and barriers to seeking support. The findings highlight the importance of supportive workplaces and are informing government and policy decisions through the beyondblue Police and Emergency Services Program.

uwa.edu.au/projects/answering-the-call

Beyond Blue Phase 3 Report

National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services is a summary of the three phases of Beyond Blue's research examining mental health and wellbeing in Australia's police and emergency services sector.

esf.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Beyond-Blue-phase-three-report.pdf

MESHA

MESHA - Military and Emergency Services Health Australia work with military and emergency service communities to deliver research, programs and training to current and former serving military and emergency service members and their families to optimise and sustain their mental health and wellbeing. mesha.org.au/programs-and-resources/information-guides

National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework

The National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework guides how governments and recovery partners provide support for mental health and wellbeing before, during and after a disaster.

nema.gov.au/our-work/resilience/supporting-mental-health-and-wellbeing

WA Ex-Service Organisations and Veteran Programs

A comprehensive list of WA Ex-Service Organisations and Veteran Programs.

wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/wa-ex-service-organisations-and-veteran-programs

Thrive At Work - First Responder Toolkits

The Mental Health Commission has partnered with Curtin University's Future of Work Institute (FOWI) to develop a series of co-designed toolkit resources for first responder workplaces, aimed at strengthening mental wellbeing, preventing harm and protecting first responders in both volunteer and paid roles from psychological risk. Developed in close collaboration with first responder agencies and informed by the Thrive at Work Framework, the toolkits provide practical, evidence-based workplace prevention strategies with a focus on peer support, debriefing and mentorship.

thriveatwork.org.au/services/first-responder-toolkits



Self Care

Whether responding to a suspected suicide or another traumatic event, it's important to recognise that these experiences can be stressful for both you and your teammates. The impact may not be immediate, and some incidents may seem to have little effect, but practising regular self-care is vital to staying in touch with how you're feeling and maintaining balance in your life.

The basics:

Resting your mind and body is a key part of self-care. Sleep can be difficult after a traumatic event, but even taking time to rest and relax can make a meaningful difference to how you feel. Regular exercise and healthy eating are also important for your overall health and wellbeing, and together with rest, they play a significant role in supporting mental health. If you find you're struggling with sleep or daily routines, it may be helpful to speak with your GP or someone you trust.

What works for you:

Self-care can look different for everyone. Whether it's taking time to relax, connecting with friends or family, spending time in nature, or enjoying your favourite movie, it all counts and all plays an important role in your overall wellbeing. Making time each week to do things you enjoy can support your health and wellbeing, particularly during challenging times. Regularly engaging in activities that bring you joy can also help restore balance when you're dealing with stress or difficult experiences.

When you need a hand:

Reaching out for support can often be the hardest step, but it's important to remember that you don't have to manage everything on your own. Sometimes talking with a friend or trusted teammate may be enough to help you get back on track, while at other times you may need additional support. The services listed on the previous pages are a great place to start and are run or supported by people who understand the work you do and the pressures you face. These pressures may not always be work-related, such as relationship or financial concerns, but they can be influenced by your work or impact your ability to perform at work.

If things begin to feel more difficult, consider speaking with your GP. If you need to talk to someone urgently, please contact one of the crisis support lines listed on the following page.

DON'T FORGET...

Self care is the intentional, daily practice of taking action to promote one's own physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

What do you do for self care?



Support lines

Losing someone suddenly can have significant impacts and it is a good idea to reach out for support if you are having trouble sleeping, thinking about it too much, feeling short-tempered or easily upset for longer than a few weeks. Talking through your experience and feelings with trusted peers, friends or professionals helps ease distress and creates shared understanding.

1300 727 247 Standby Support After Suicide

Help for people, families and communities who have lost loved ones, friends or colleagues to suicide or a critical incident resulting in death

1300 659 467 Suicide Call Back Service

A national 24/7 telehealth provider that offers free professional phone and online suicide related counselling

1800 805 801 Thirilli Ltd

A national Indigenous Postvention Service that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities affected by suicide and other traumatic death

1800 77 7337 Roses in the Ocean, Peer CARE Companion Warmline

A call-back service providing people with a lived experience of suicide safe peer connection

1300 11 44 46 ARBOR

Suicide bereavement support for adults

1300 11 44 46 CYPRESS

Suicide bereavement support for young people (aged 6-18)

Grief Services

1300 845 745 Griefline

National helpline and support groups for grief and loss

13 92 76 13Yarn

A confidential and culturally safe crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Islanders to yarn without judgement

9261 4444 Lifeline WA Grief and Bereavement Program

Counselling for families and individuals



Postvention partners



To download a copy of this booklet or to request additional hardcopies, **scan the QR code** with your phone camera or email **metropostvention@anglicarewa.org.au**



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