



POSTVENTION
AUSTRALIA

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR POST-SUICIDE
SUPPORT

2023 Pre-Budget Submission

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POSTVENTION AUSTRALIA

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1. Introduction

Postvention Australia is a national association representing and supporting people bereaved by suicide. We provide resources, information, education and advocacy to Australians impacted by the grief and trauma of suicide.

We are driven by our members who are individuals, families and communities bereaved by suicide as well as service providers. Our focus is on sector leadership, advocacy, education, training and connection.

Our Board is made up of national lived experience advocates, researchers, academics and frontline workers who represent a diverse population. We have representatives from the LGBTQIA+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities which allow our work to be informed and guided by representatives from groups disproportionately impacted by suicide.

Approximately 9 people a day die by suicide in Australia - that's 3,000 people per year¹. For each of those deaths, up to 135 people are directly impacted and the effects can be profound, complex and long lasting.² Sadly, one in five people will be impacted by a suicide death over the course of their lifetime³ and are at an increased risk of suicide, mental health issues and disruption to engagement with education, employment and community. It is imperative that we effectively and compassionately support those left behind so that they do not fall between the cracks.

We believe that the provision of best practice, evidence-based postvention services and support are paramount in preventing further suicides. Ultimately, Postvention is Prevention. We are concerned that the current crisis intervention model of postvention funded by the Commonwealth, while providing a much-needed response, is not adequate to meet the needs of many people bereaved by suicide. Many do not receive the level of support and the type of support that they need to assist them to make a full recovery.

This Pre-Budget submission includes important recommendations around postvention, aftercare, workforce training and lived experience. We are confident the measures we have proposed for the 2023/24 Federal Budget will help the Commonwealth Government make meaningful progress against our shared commitment towards zero suicides.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). Social and economic factors and deaths by suicide: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/behaviours-risk-factors/social-factors-suicide>

² Data sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Causes of Death data

³ Data sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Causes of Death data

2. Recommendations

A summary of our three recommendations is set out in the table below. A more detailed explanation follows the table. The figures provided are for three years.

Priority Area	Recommendation	Cost
1. Postvention Care and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund a national network of suicide bereavement support group providers to share learning, ensure best practice and provide education and training. • Support education and awareness campaigns relevant to local communities. • Fund models of postvention care to individuals, families and communities that include peer support, specialist bereavement counselling and group support. We strongly recommend this course of action but do not see Postvention Australia as the provider of counselling services. 	3 million
2. Workforce Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a national network of postvention support organisations to advise on best practice, trauma informed postvention strategies and supports. • Fund trauma informed, postvention training for mental health practitioners to better support those bereaved by suicide. • Providing funding to a national organisation to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and skills between clinicians, services, government and non-government organisations, researchers, academics and institutes. 	3 million
3. Lived Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a national lived experience bereavement group to ensure people with lived experience are integral in building postvention strategies, supports and resources. 	1 million

2.1 Postvention Care and Support

Those bereaved by suicide face a unique and often prolonged grief journey, which has a significant social, mental, emotional and financial impact on them, their family, and the wider

community. Bereaved people often experience intense emotional trauma – including high levels of shame, responsibility, guilt, rejection, and blame. They also experience stigma which creates a sense of isolation.⁴

The complexity and debilitating nature of this experience requires a specialist response; one that has a deep understanding the experience and how best to respond. Generalist services and practitioners can sometimes do more harm than good when attempting to support people bereaved by suicide.

Investing in models of care, other than crisis intervention, such as peer support programs ensures that those impacted by suicide receive the information and support they need to move through their grief safely; this provides the best chance of healing and moving forward.

Whilst existing government investment is a significant piece in the puzzle, a one size fits all model is not enough and a significant amount of the work being done in this space is being done by unfunded community-based organisations who are without support, education and training.

The model proposed by Postvention Australia identifies these community-based organisations and provides them with the education, support, and resources to enable a more informed level of support; in turn, it also provides a source of support to those with lived experience who are providing support to others.

We propose community education programs which better equip community to deal with suicide and to enable an appropriate trauma informed response. These programs would also target specific population groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTQIA+ and Culturally and Linguistic Diverse communities to further enhance support and resilience.

We also propose identifying areas where support is thin on the ground or non-existent through the expansion of the NSW state-based Service Providers Directory to a national directory of service providers.

2.2 Workforce Training

For those impacted by suicide, we firmly believe that a ‘no wrong door’ approach is paramount for successful recovery. People who are impacted by suicide require a connected and compassionate response however, when faced with disconnected crisis driven services,

⁴ Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention & Postvention Australia (2017) Postvention Australia Guidelines: A resource for organisations and individuals providing services to people bereaved by suicide. Brisbane: Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention

are left to feel “unheard, judged and problematised”⁵. Ensuring that the suicide response workforce has the appropriate knowledge and awareness of postvention is paramount in providing wrap around services. These services also need to meet the need of an every increasingly diverse community.

We continually see suicide survivors disengage from established services through a perception that they do not meet their specific needs, this may be due to perceived cultural or other stigma or simply ignorance of the complexity of the experience. We need a better connected and educated network where organisations can communicate freely to share experience and ideas or potentially refer to better serve their communities.

The Postvention Australia model provides an opportunity for clinicians, first responders and others to undertake postvention specific education to enable better suicide informed care options.

Our model would establish a national network of service providers where they can share ideas and have access to accredited education and nationally endorsed resources to better serve their communities.

This network would provide a platform of support to those groups to better inform their creation providing a stronger foundation to overcome issues of burn out. This network would create opportunities for group chat or blog enabling these organisations to be better supported and less alone in the fight to provide postvention services.

By creating this network, it would provide a conduit to access best practice trauma informed process and strategies. It provides a solution to timely dissemination of information and direct access to opportunities to undertake appropriate research from a much broader community base.

It would also provide an opportunity for these organisations to have a voice through the national association. The network would not be exclusive to support organisations but would serve to provide access to clinical support as required by appropriately trained counsellors, psychologists, and other mental health professionals. In this context the network would provide referral pathways and a conduit to the sharing of knowledge and skills between clinicians, services, government and non-government organisations, researchers, academics and institutes.

⁵ National Suicide Prevention Taskforce. Compassion First: Designing our national approach from the lived experience of suicidal behaviour. Canberra; August 2020.

2.3 Lived Experience

Lived experience matters for many reasons, not least of which is that only someone who has been through an experience knows the nuances and complexities of dealing with it. People with lived experience are integral to all aspects of suicide prevention. Their leadership, knowledge and insights are uniquely placed to inform suicide postvention policy and practice. Lived experience knowledge and expertise needs to be prioritised and integrated into the planning and delivery of whole of government suicide prevention action.

Our model includes the creation of a network of people with lived experience to communicate and share their experience. This lived experience network would also provide a platform to inform and advise policy and process. It would provide a resource for research and understanding, particularly of some of the more complex and cohort specific challenges. It would be a foundation to build better, more informed and robust support services for the future.

Acknowledgement Statements

Postvention Australia operates on the foundation of being lived experience informed and inclusive. Our Board, who include national lived experience advocates, researchers, academics and frontline workers, steer the work that we do including our strategic priorities and policy position. Coupled with our members, we believe the work that we do to be a true reflection of those bereaved by suicide.

Postvention Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which we meet and work. We pay our respects to First Nations peoples and their elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and uphold the values of diversity, inclusivity and equal opportunity.