



Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Networks

Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Networks provide meaningful avenues to harness and nourish the value of lived experience in suicide prevention.

Wesley LifeForce is unique in the Australian suicide prevention sector because it comprises a vast network of local community grassroots initiatives, which are structurally supported through an overarching national program.

Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Networks (Wesley LifeForce Networks) are supportive of a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to suicide prevention.

Community networks (or community coalitions) can mobilise and coordinate local community services to establish a whole-of-community approach to address relevant local health issues, which has also gained increasing attention in the field of suicide prevention.

Wesley LifeForce Networks have been working with the community to support the development of local community suicide prevention networks since 2007. The program is the only (nationally operating) community-based suicide prevention networks program in Australia and internationally.

By bringing together key members of the community who are dedicated to suicide prevention, Wesley LifeForce helps community members to take ownership of the issues and work towards real solutions to address the problem of suicide in their region. Typical Network activities are uniquely tailored to local communities, which are aimed at preventive initiatives that focus on awareness raising, reducing stigma, fostering help seeking, training and capacity building.

Longitudinal analyses of national suicide data showed that on average, the introduction of Wesley LifeForce Networks reduced the suicide rate by seven per cent. This pattern of effects was most pronounced nine months following Network establishment, with a significant reduction of 17 per cent in suicide rates.*

Wesley Mission commissioned the University of Melbourne to evaluate its Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Networks service, noting it's the only community-led suicide prevention program available nationally and the only program internationally to be recognised in published literature.

University of Melbourne evaluation findings

- Active collaboration and cross-promotion with organisational partners was found to be mutually beneficial. Providing opportunities for information sharing, as well as financial and in-kind support.
- **Impacts on service providers:**
 - increased awareness of suicide prevention services amongst community members
 - increased confidence and capacity to assist people at risk of suicide
 - inclusion of people with a lived experience in suicide prevention
 - improved linkages with services and referral pathways.
- Provided a powerful conduit to engage people with a lived experience in suicide prevention activities, and to foster a sense of community and connection.
- Coordination of local suicide prevention efforts improved and followed a whole-of-community approach.
- The flexibility of Wesley LifeForce Networks to directly influence activities on the ground was welcomed by organisational partners.
- Strong local community services support built community efficiency and achieved stronger outcomes for the local people.
- Network members felt a sense of connection with the local community and the Network provided a sense of meaning and purpose.
- Networks gave the local community a sense of personal support and an avenue for capacity building alongside an opportunity to support others.

In view of often complex and fractured nature of varied suicide prevention programs and services across jurisdictions, a continued investment in the effective coordination of suicide prevention sector efforts is paramount. Wesley LifeForce Networks provide a vehicle to not only foster broader engagement in suicide prevention but to strengthen the coordination of suicide prevention efforts within and across local communities.

With minimal seed funding, there's scope for large impact in the community through strong local partnerships and mobilisation of resources for suicide prevention.

As local grassroots initiatives that are structurally supported through an overarching national program, Wesley LifeForce Networks complement other regional suicide prevention initiatives provided by Primary Health Networks, which are more strongly focused on service provision and coordination.

For more information and where to find your local Network, search: Wesley Lifeforce Networks.

* Reference: Reifels L, Williamson M, Schlichthorst M, Too T, Morgan A, Roberts R, Mercer P, Munkara-Murray K, Jordan H (2021). Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Networks Evaluation: Final Phase 1 & 2 Report. Centre for Mental Health, The University of Melbourne.

How to get involved?

Join a Wesley LifeForce Network, which brings together people and organisations in local communities to raise awareness about suicide, while empowering members to develop suicide prevention strategies at a grassroots level.

Call 1800 100 024 or email lifeforce@wesleymission.org.au

Book suicide prevention training with Wesley LifeForce Training, which aims to educate and equip Australians with the tools to recognise and help someone who is at risk of suicide.

Visit wesleymission.org.au/suicide-prevention-training

Wesley LifeForce is not a crisis service.

If you need assistance immediately call emergency services on 000 or Lifeline on 13 11 14

Do all the good you can
because every life matters