

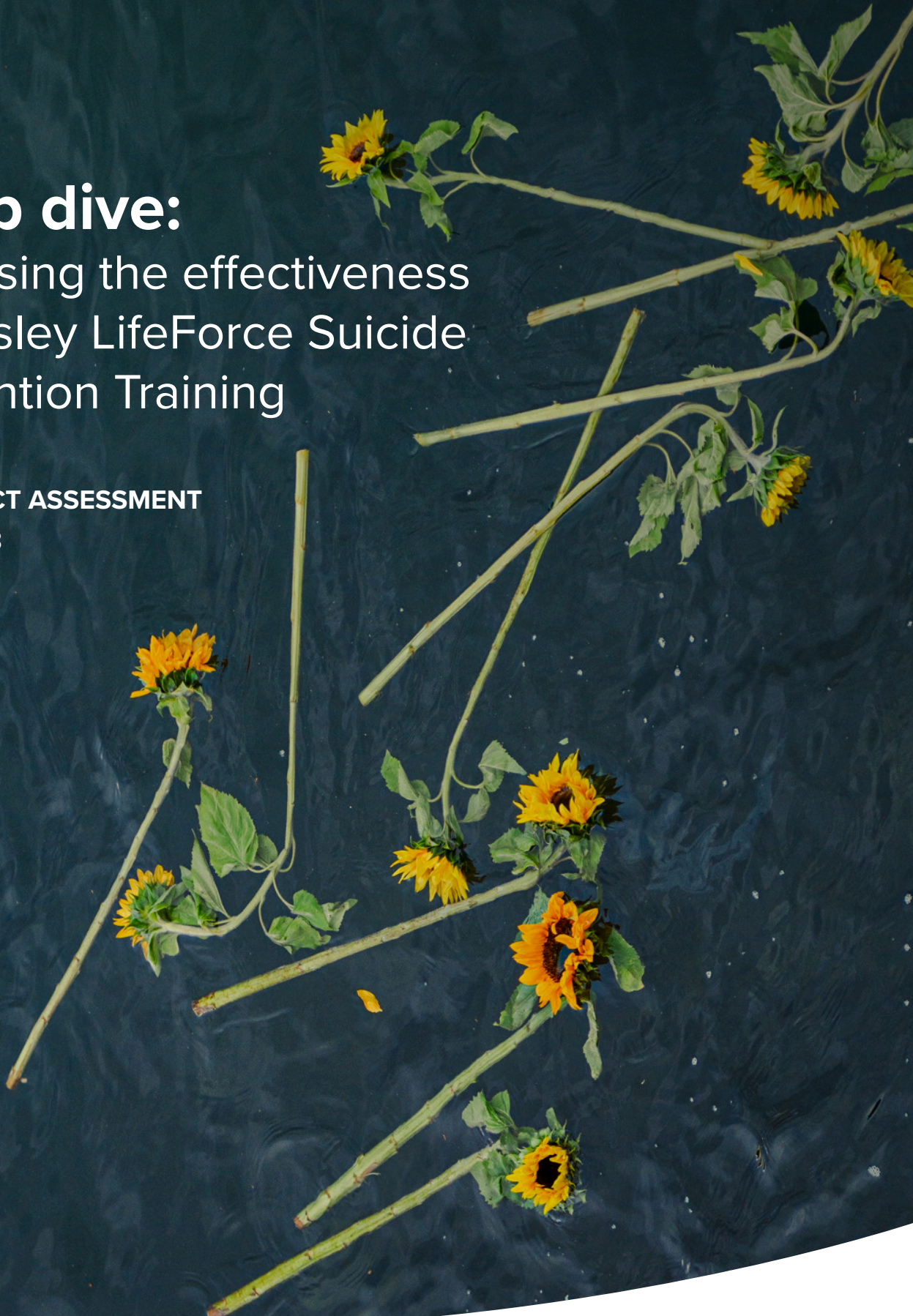


Deep dive:

Assessing the effectiveness of Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Training

NET IMPACT ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2023



Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Training study

Background

Study objective

This study sought to assess the effectiveness of the Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Training, specifically the SALT method (See signs, Ask about intent, Listen, Take action) to gauge workshop participants' improvements in understanding, skills, confidence and their ability to handle the complex responsibilities involved in suicide intervention.

The study had three main objectives:

1. Gain insights into the effectiveness of the Wesley LifeForce suicide prevention gatekeeper training program.
2. Evaluate the impacts of training on gatekeeper knowledge, attitudes and skills, and ascertain the level of success achieved by the SALT method implemented in the Wesley LifeForce suicide prevention training.
3. Assess the impact of incorporating the recommendations from the 2019 Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP) study and determine the effectiveness of their implementation.

Method

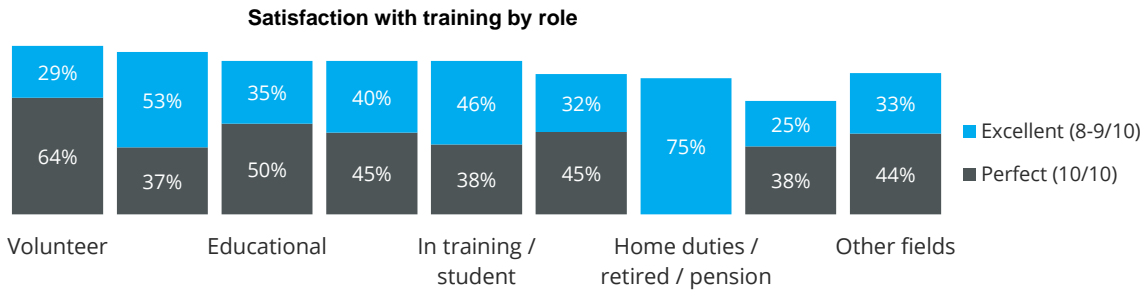
This study was collaboratively conducted by researchers from Wesley Mission, the Wesley LifeForce staff, and Catalyst Consultancy & Research.

For the evaluation, a new survey was developed and sent to workshop participants who had completed training in the past two years to assess the sustainability of effects. The survey methods included both online questionnaires and phone interviews. Catalyst Consultancy & Research was hired to conduct this primary research, gathering data from 264 workshop participants.

The study also used existing data previously collected for workshop evaluation purposes at three stages: (1) Before training; (2) Immediately post-training; and (3) Three months post-training. This historical data was reanalysed to compare results prior to the AISRAP feedback, with workshops conducted after the AISRAP recommendations were implemented.

Key Findings

Objective 1

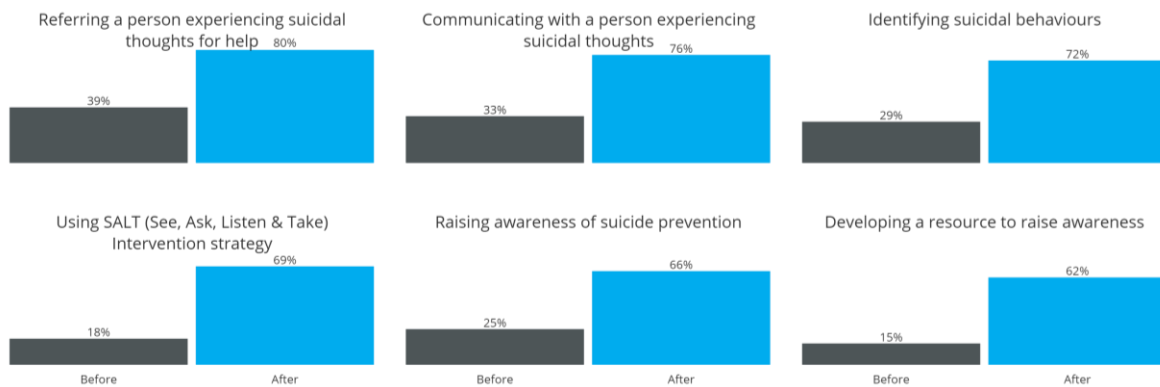


There was strong evidence that workshop participants were highly satisfied with the training, primarily attributing this to the quality and expertise of facilitators. Other factors contributing to participant satisfaction included the course structure, content and practical strategies.

Factors that participants mentioned could be improved were more in-depth training, more role plays and other delivery methods as well as fostering a safer and more supportive environment during the workshops. In relation to content and practical strategies participants also requested for more content relating to acute situations, advice on appropriate responses for different scenarios, role plays on how to handle situations involving suicide ideation and more content on Indigenous issues relating to suicidal thoughts and management.

The findings showed that the SALT method is effective in providing participants with the tools to feel effective when speaking to a person experiencing suicidal thoughts with significant increases in key knowledge and skill sets essential for this task. While these improvements dropped slightly over time, there were considerable long-lasting benefits attesting to the sustainability of training impact. There was some evidence that benefits might actually be strengthened over time, rather than diminishing which is often the case with knowledge and skill interventions.

Ability to conduct an intervention before and after training



The feedback has offered insights for improving long-term knowledge retention. Suggestions included providing quick reference guides as workshop handout materials that could be later used in workspaces or other locations. Senior and experienced training participants could also benefit from an extended or additional higher-level course to satisfy their need for greater proficiency.

Similarly, a refresher course or check-in post-training to talk through real-life cases, could further cement new learning.

The workshops had significant improvements on participant confidence in being able to conduct an intervention with a person at risk of suicide. Recalling suicide statistics following the workshop was quite strong and while less successful than other factors, did not impact perceived ability to intervene.

Objective 2

With the reanalysis of the pre-existing questionnaires – administered pre-workshop, post-workshop and three months later – the evidence was again, strongly in support of the positive impact of the SALT method incorporated in the training. The data illustrated that there was a considerable improvement immediately following the workshop and that these changes largely remained evident three months later.

Objective 3

The reanalysis of data from past surveys was used to compare courses conducted before the implementation of the AISRAP recommendations (2017-2019), with those conducted after the recommendations were incorporated into the training materials (2020-2022). The data showed that across all survey items in both time points, there was a significant and strong increase in key suicide prevention indicators following intervention, and while this generally dropped a little at three months, there was still a considerable advantage over pre-workshop measures. Importantly, workshops conducted after implementing the AISRAP recommendations exhibited a generalised better result at post-workshop and three months than the pre-AISRAP workshops, highlighting the benefits of the updated program.

Improvement Opportunities

The feedback derived from the evaluation has identified several areas for potential program improvement, including the following:

- Long-term knowledge of suicide issues could be improved.
- Investment in the development of knowledge of suicide issues and suicide risk indicators for participants would improve awareness amongst the graduates. This could be achieved through the use of quick reference guides as handout materials that could be later used in workspaces or other locations.
- Alternate options for inexperienced participants and those that have a superior knowledge base. Senior and experienced training participants reported wanting more. Perhaps this could be another course or an extended course for those who felt they needed greater proficiency to be achieved upon completion.
- Post-course check-ins may help knowledge retention and development. Participants reported that their capabilities continued to improve over time with the use of new knowledge and skills developed through the training. Perhaps a refresher course or check-in post-training to talk through real-life cases could further cement new learnings.

Citation: Wesley Mission. June 2023. Deep dive: Assessing the effectiveness of Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Training. Sydney.