

The Way Back Support Service

A Beyond Blue initiative providing non-clinical care and practical support to individuals following a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis.

On average, 65,000 people attempt suicide in Australia each year¹, and eight per day will die².

Those who have previously attempted are among the most at-risk of attempting again. These are the people The Way Back supports.

After a person has been referred to the service by clinical staff, they're contacted by a Support Coordinator within one working day of receiving the referral. The Support Coordinator then guides them through safety planning and a personalised aftercare program for up to three months.

This includes engaging them with services addressing some of the issues leading to their distress. This can mean anything from financial advice, to connecting them with community groups, or helping them attend health care appointments.

A recent Australian study found coordinated assertive aftercare is among the most effective strategies for reducing suicide reattempts, providing a potential reduction of up to 19.8 per cent³.

The Way Back Support Service has run in trial locations since 2014. Encouraging results led to a 2018 Australian Government announcement of Commonwealth funding for a national rollout to up to 30 sites.

We believe this service will save lives.

Encourage. Support. Connect.

The Way Back Support Service aims to prevent further suicide attempts by providing proactive, non-clinical support and coordinating access to community services.

Support Coordinators:

- maintain contact and provide encouragement and support
- facilitate access to a range of community support services (e.g. legal support services, housing or social support services)
- encourage uptake of hospital discharge plans and safety plan utilisation
- support attendance at medical and allied health appointments
- assist clients to connect with support networks (e.g. friends, family and other community and social supports)

Who is eligible?

Individuals presenting to the Launceston General Hospital (LGH), North West Regional Hospital (NWRH) and the Mersey Community Hospital (MCH) following a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis* will be eligible for the service.

The Way Back Support Coordinators will work with staff at LGH, NWRH and MCH and with the Statewide Mental Health Services (SMHS) Acute Care Team (ACT), to engage with clients while they are in hospital (where admitted) and after discharge, to arrange for follow-up contact.

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Referrals

The Way Back Support Service operates during business hours, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm (excluding public holidays). The service is based in Anglicare Tasmania's Launceston, Devonport and Burnie offices with Support Coordinators being available to the LGH, NWRH and MCH daily to meet with new clients.

Presentations to hospital on weekends or after hours will be followed up via phone call during the next business day.

Crisis intervention is redirected to existing clinical pathways through Access Mental Health (1800 332 388). Clients are routinely provided with information on emergency mental health contacts and are encouraged to use 24/7 crisis helpline services if they feel suicidal or are concerned about someone else's safety.

How are clients linked in?

The referral pathway is integrated within the Launceston General Hospital (LGH), North West Regional Hospital (NWRH) and Mersey Community Hospital (MCH). All presentations to the LGH, NWRH and MCH emergency departments following a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis* will have the opportunity to be part of the service. This is not a clinical service and will be offered free of charge, in addition to any existing services.

Some exclusions will apply:

If an individual is already being supported by an intensive assertive outreach service that includes support for their mental health needs. Examples include (but aren't limited to):

- Intensive National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Package
- any other intensive assertive outreach service (Discretion may be applied in considering the suitability of existing services to support the individual through their suicide crisis.)

Support for partners, family and friends

To assist in the client's recovery, *Guiding Their Way Back* is an online booklet that provides education and advice to partners, family members and other support people available at beyondblue.org.au/thewayback

Further information

You are welcome to call the **The Way Back Support Service at Anglicare Tasmania** on **1800 243 232** or email wayback@anglicare-tas.org.au

* subject to service capacity

¹Slade, T., Johnston, A., Teesson, M., Whiteford, H., Burgess, P., Pirkis, J., Saw, S. (2009) The Mental Health of Australians 2. Report on the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra

²Causes of Death, Australia, 3303.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, September 2018

³Krysinska K, Batterham PJ, Tye M, et al. Best strategies for reducing the suicide rate in Australia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*. 2016;50(2):115-118.

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