



LIVINGWORKS

MEDIA RELEASE

New campaign calls on Australians to use and learn suicide first aid skills to support Victorians in lockdown

September 8, 2020 - A campaign will launch tomorrow to mobilise thousands of suicide first aid trained community members to support Victorians via a new online platform.

LivingWorks, a global leader in suicide first aid training, has partnered with local health providers in Melbourne and new tech start-up Crisis Heroes, to develop a unique online space where those already trained in suicide first aid can make their skills visible and reach out to those in need.

“We don’t have a clinician on every street corner or immediately available online,” said LivingWorks Australia CEO Shayne Connell, “but we do have more than 200,000 everyday Australians trained in suicide first aid, with at least 50,000 of these people living in Victoria. This network of safety is all around us, you just can’t see it. This is where this pilot partnership comes in, offering an additional layer of community outreach and support.”

Shayne goes on to say, “It takes a village to protect someone from suicide. We know from our friends at R U OK? that a conversation can change a life. We need to complement these essential conversation skills and recently announced government funding for mental health services with building community capacity for suicide first aid.”

Isolation, economic and employment uncertainty, financial stress, relationship breakdown, family violence and drug and alcohol misuse are all known suicide risk factors that may be exacerbated by COVID-19 restrictions. Approximately 40% of people who die by suicide have not been in recent contact with the health system which means friends, family, colleagues, teachers, neighbours and online communities are in a unique position to spot the signs that someone is struggling and connect them with care.

Co-founder of Crisis Heroes, Mark Acheson, says of the partnership, “As Melbourne locals we wanted to support Victorians doing it tough right now. We came up with Crisis Heroes, a free online platform for people to offer and give support to one another, be it running errands, walking someone’s dog or providing emotional support via our online chat function. Since Melbourne’s stage 4 lockdown, we’ve seen a 78 per cent increase in people requesting support, most of these in the form of an online chat. By partnering with LivingWorks we’re bringing more people to the platform with the skills to support someone to stay safe.”

LivingWorks recognise that people within Victoria may not always have the capacity to support each other right now, so are welcoming all Australians trained in suicide first aid to register on the Crisis Heroes platform and support those in need.

This pilot campaign is also encouraging people who have not trained in suicide first aid, but are willing and able, to complete the introductory online suicide first aid program, LivingWorks Start.

South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN) and North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) in Victoria are funding a number of Start licences for residents of Melbourne’s South East and North West. To find out more about the pilot and register for training visit www.crisisheroes.com/livingworks.

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About LivingWorks Suicide First Aid Training

LivingWorks is the world's leading provider of suicide first aid training. LivingWorks has more than 35 years of history and expertise and has trained more than 2.3 million people worldwide, with 200,000 of those in Australia - <http://www.livingworks.com.au/>

- LivingWorks runs training courses from Australia to Zambia and over 30 countries in between
- Recently launched a 90 minute online suicide first aid course [LivingWorks Start](#) to upskill people during coronavirus - this has already seen approximately 3000 people trained in Australia
 - 95% of people report feeling more confident in asking about suicide and supporting someone post training
- Over 50 peer-reviewed studies support our programs' effectiveness with that research and evaluation being updated to include new digital interventions
- Estimates suggest that our training has prevented over 300,000 suicide attempts
- 8,000 trainers worldwide with more than 600 of them based in Australia and 160 of those in Victoria
- 200,000 people trained nationally and 50,000 based in Victoria
- Partnered with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTI organisations and communities to adapt ASIST into culturally appropriate, locally designed and delivered evidence-based programs
- Translated programs into languages such as French, Korean, Norwegian, and Lithuanian
- Prioritised Australian research in areas relating to upskilling homeless youths in suicide prevention, Indigenous suicide intervention training programs, suicide safety of older people, measuring confidence pre and post participation in LivingWorks training, extending evidence in relation to SafeTALK in schools and use of online technologies for suicide intervention skills-based training.

About Crisis Heroes (and the new functionality)

[Crisis Heroes](#) is a free online community platform empowering everyday people to request or lend a hand in light of COVID-19.

- Crisis Heroes was founded in March this year after a failed attempt by cofounders Mark Acheson and Matthew Platts to travel overseas.
- As they were forced into quarantine for two weeks, they had their friends and family to support them, but realised other people may not be as fortunate.
- Together with Nicolas Hoban they built Crisis Heroes within a week and launched it to market.
- As cases increased and the lock-down laws were implemented in Victoria, they promoted the chat functionality on their platform and saw more than 1,000 Victorians register within two weeks.
- As at 3 September, the Crisis Heroes platform users consist of:
 - 2998 users (65% female) - both people offering and seeking help
 - 44% of users between 20-39 years
- Since stage four lockdown in Melbourne, requests for support have increased by 78 per cent.
- To support LivingWorks trained suicide first aiders to be more visible, Crisis Heroes have developed a new functionality to enable people to nominate themselves as being LivingWorks trained. Following approval by the LivingWorks team, individuals will be able to show their virtual LivingWorks badge on their Crisis Heroes profile and access resources to support them in helping others.

Note for Media - including Helplines

Please include [help seeking information](#) in all media coverage relating to suicide and we encourage all media outlets/journalists/editors to report responsibly using guidelines developed by the [National Mindframe Initiative](#). Some suggested wording below.

If you, or someone you know, is in need of urgent support, please call Lifeline Australia 13 11 14.

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