



LIVINGWORKS

The world leader in suicide prevention training solutions



SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO MENTAL HEALTH

JANUARY 2020

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Message from LivingWorks Australia CEO

Following an extensive review of the draft Productivity Commission Review and consultation comments, I agree with much of the report and am pleased to see that, in the most part, recommendations align with work underway or previously noted that need to be implemented in a coordinated way at all levels of Government.

However, one thing that immediately stood out for me was reinforcement of the need to evaluate programs and activities.

Instead of rebuilding or renovating, where can we buy off plan and customise?

In going with this building analogy, when it comes to suicide prevention, there are definitely some new builds and big renovations that are needed such as more effective hospital and aftercare services, but there are other areas that will not.

When it comes to suicide intervention training for schools, workplaces and communities, we should not be spending money on rebuild efforts. We must ensure what works in suicide prevention isn't knocked down in the search for a bigger, better, newer house. We must also look beyond awareness and basic mental health literacy or first aid as early intervention and focus on skills-based learning in suicide prevention.

As the report suggests, let's focus on evaluation and look to continue/expand on what works and stop what research tells us isn't working. It's about sharing the safest building plans and conditions (with expert support where needed) so communities can build on the strong foundations they have and lessons learned from others, rather than rebuild.

It is also about knowing when we can buy an off-plan solution, investing in a proven structure. LivingWorks welcome investment in accrediting evidence-based programs as suggested in the Productivity Commission's draft report so that smart, safe spend of Government funds is made simpler and more transparent.

Every program Living Works offers is not only of the highest quality but is also accessible to everyday Australians in their own communities and workplaces. We have been given the highest three-star rating of excellence on the Suicide Prevention Australia Suicide Prevention Hub for our ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills) Program which acknowledges the consistent delivery of this short course by professionally trained local peers.

We work with industries such as Construction, Defence, Education to offer a range of programs and services to ensure appropriate workplace and role-based suicide prevention skills training. We also work with Primary Health Networks (PHNs), Local Health Districts (LHDs) and partner with universities and research institutions to implement population and place based interventions and ensure impact evaluation.

Contact: Shayne Connell, CEO, LivingWorks Australia

We take our commitment to community development seriously with strong links with local action groups, councils, small businesses and individuals and are passionate about connecting areas and communities in need with training sponsorship opportunities.

To date we have:

- Empowered over 2,000,000 people to save lives from suicide
- Estimates suggest that our training has prevented over 300,000 suicide attempts
- Over 50 peer-reviewed studies support our programs' effectiveness with that research and evaluation being updated to include new digital interventions
- 8,000 trainers worldwide with more than 600 of them based in Australia
- Run training courses from Australia to Zambia and over 30 countries in between
- 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.
- Commenced work to inform and develop principles for training CALD communities in suicide prevention.

As the report said today, "Australia's approach to suicide prevention holds promise, but there are opportunities to improve going forward."

I look forward to working with my sector and community colleagues to get moving on some of these recommendations and welcome a smarter and safer way forward for all of us.

Shayne Connell

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
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www.livingworks.com.au
The world's leading suicide intervention training

LivingWorks Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians, both past and present, of the lands on which we live and work.

Contact: Shayne Connell, CEO, LivingWorks Australia

Recommendations

1. Scale community driven suicide prevention

LivingWorks trainers are everyday Australians who want to make a difference in their communities. Currently we have more than 600 trainers in cities, small towns and communities across the country, ranging in professional skills, cultural background and personal motivation for change. This training network is ready to be mobilised and scaled up to meet a growing need for skills-based training in suicide prevention. We know from history and current events that we have some of the most resilient communities in the country who come together to support each other in tough times. However, do they have the right skills when it comes to combatting suicide? Communities need to be supported to develop solutions that suit their needs and environment. By supporting LivingWorks to upskill Australians to train in their communities, people will be learning from those they know and trust.

2. Mandate workplace driven suicide prevention training

Workplace mental health is a clear priority in the Report however suicide prevention and intervention training needs to be given the same standing as physical first aid in all Australian workplaces. This is happening within a range of industries such as Construction and Defence, however LivingWorks would like to see consistent and nationwide workplace health and safety standards mandating suicide intervention training. Using our role-based approach to training, every single employer and employee could commit to undertaking one hour of online training through LivingWorks Start, complemented by more comprehensive training being completed by appropriate roles such as safety officers, human resources, identified first aid representatives etc. For example, these roles could complete the two day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).

3. Strengthen early intervention training for young people, schools and parents

The Productivity Commission Report makes some strong recommendations around young people, school-based support and parent education when it comes to mental health. LivingWorks calls for wellbeing leaders to be trained appropriately in suicide intervention, with wider training also offered to young people themselves and their families and carers. We know this works from our research both here and internationally (see Evidence section). We must go beyond basic mental health literacy to ensure the wellbeing of our young and most vulnerable.

4. Support rollout of culturally appropriate training for priority populations

In 2018 and 2019, we were proud to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTI communities to develop culturally appropriate suicide intervention training programs for these priority populations. I-ASIST and the LGBTI ASIST programs are now being piloted across the country, alongside research bodies and driven by communities themselves to ensure initially positive reception to these evidence-based programs is translated into long term health outcomes. SafeYARN is also being developed as part of this commitment to make culturally appropriate suicide prevention and intervention training available across the country. LivingWorks is calling for these programs to be supported to roll out nationally with investment in ongoing evaluation.

About LivingWorks and LivingWorks Australia

LivingWorks is a mission-driven organisation with an industry-leading approach to suicide prevention: we want to empower everyone to play a role. Guided by our values and our commitment to across-the-board quality, we're here to help make communities everywhere safer from suicide.

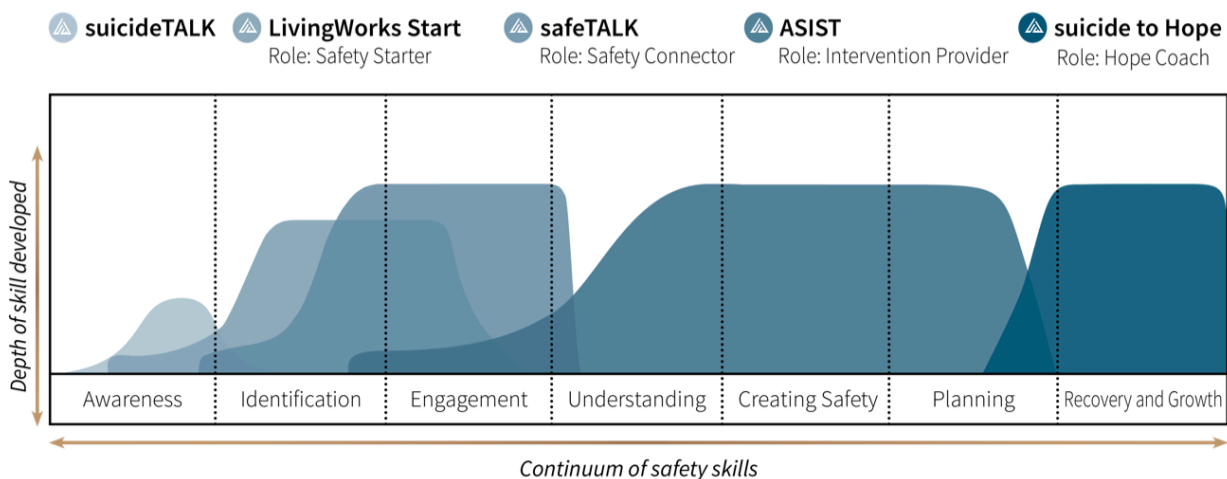
Our vision is a world free from suicide loss—a world where no one experiences the pain of a co-worker, friend, or family member taking their own life.

Our mission is to make that world possible through high-quality training programs that empower everyone to make a difference, no matter who they are or what they do.

We believe that when people with complementary, integrated skills come together, they achieve a greater impact than any of them could alone. That's why we focus on a community-wide, collaborative approach that empowers everyone to play a role.

From beginners to professionals, we offer programs for all skill levels in the belief that every person can learn to make a difference. When these trainees come together to build safety networks in their communities, they create a powerful, life-saving transformation.

Effectively addresses role-based training



Contact: Shayne Connell, CEO, LivingWorks Australia

With over 30 years as the world leader in suicide intervention training, LivingWorks has a long and storied history. Our history began in Canada in 1983 and has featured prominently in Australia since 1995.

With more nations and organisations becoming aware of the importance of suicide prevention efforts, LivingWorks' Suicide Intervention Workshop (SIW) continued to expand around the world.

In 1995, Lifeline Australia received Commonwealth funding for a three-year field trial, and the program was subsequently adopted nationwide under the auspices of Lifeline. LivingWorks programs have subsequently featured in a range of national, state and territory initiatives throughout Australia and been adopted by many community organisations. A national network of over 600 trainers has continued to ensure a strong nationwide presence for LivingWorks programs in Australia.

In 2019, we were proud to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTI communities to develop culturally appropriate suicide intervention training programs for these priority populations. I-ASIST and the LGBTI ASIST programs are now being piloted across the country, alongside research bodies and driven by communities themselves to ensure initially positive reception to these evidence-based programs is translated into long term health outcomes.

Summary of training programs offered

These training programs can be offered by role, across workplaces or communities or be undertaken by individuals. We would recommend review of the safety skills continuum against the need or setting and apply the full model where possible to give greatest safety network coverage. Programs in the model include:

suicideTalk

Ranging from 90 minutes to a half a day, suicideTALK invites all participants—regardless of prior training or experience—to become more aware of suicide prevention opportunities in their community. Find out more at <http://www.livingworks.com.au/programs/suicidetalk/>

LivingWorks Start

In just one hour online, LivingWorks' newest program, LivingWorks Start teaches trainees to recognise when someone is thinking about suicide and connect them to help and support. It is a population based interactive tool and suitable for all ages.

SafeTALK

With LivingWorks SafeTALK, every individual can learn and practice powerful, life-saving skills in just four hours. Using a simple yet effective model, LivingWorks safeTALK empowers everyone to make a difference. With over 120,000 people attending each year, it's the world's fastest-growing suicide prevention training. Find out more at <http://www.livingworks.com.au/programs/safetalk/>



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LivingWorks ASIST

LivingWorks ASIST is the world's leading suicide intervention program. Trusted by professionals yet learnable by anyone, LivingWorks Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is the only workshop of its kind. Updated continually to reflect new knowledge, LivingWorks ASIST has been empowering people to provide skilled, life-saving interventions for over 35 years. Over 80,000 people in Australia have attended ASIST which is available in all states and territories.

Find out more at <http://www.livingworks.com.au/programs/asist/>

Suicide to HOPE

LivingWorks suicide to Hope provides skills any professional can use to help them work through their lingering thoughts of suicide and attain a higher quality of life. It is appropriate for clinical and healthcare settings and professionals/teams to undertake in groups. Find out more at

<http://www.livingworks.com.au/programs/suicide-to-hope/>

Contact: Shayne Connell, CEO, LivingWorks Australia

Why Australia must go beyond mental health first aid/literacy

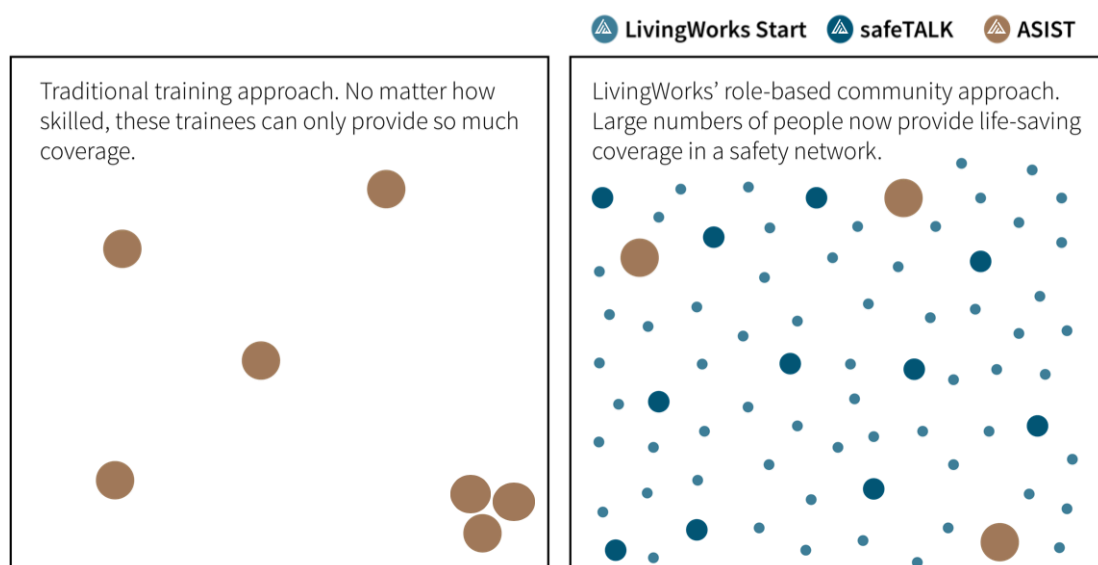
Thoughts of suicide are surprisingly common. At any given time, around 1 in 25 people is thinking about suicide to some degree.

For most people, thinking about suicide isn't about wanting to die. Instead, it's about tension between their reasons for staying alive and their desire to escape from pain that feels unbearable. Within this tension lies the risk of death—but also the possibility of intervention, hope, and life. This is where someone with the right skills can help tip the balance and change a life forever.

This is where LivingWorks training comes in. LivingWorks' approach to suicide prevention is based on integrated training that empowers everyone to play a role. Each individual can make a difference, and together, a group of trainees creates a safety network for those in need. The result? Communities, workplaces, schools, and organisations that are safer for everyone.

With the problem suicide presents in this country, we cannot take a traditional training approach and simply educate people in basic mental health literacy. It may be effective in reducing social stigma of mental illness and mental stress but there is limited evidence to suggest that it equips people and communities with the lifesaving skills needed.

A great comparison here is CPR training. Within CPR training you receive physical lifesaving skills in the context of health literacy. Why would you simply offer a lecture on health problems and appropriate language when it comes to physical health? Training people in suicide first aid will also equip them with mental health literacy/basic first aid skills as a matter of course, but, more importantly, will equip individuals with the skillset to do something about those issues in times of emergency as well as be better able to see the signs that someone is at risk.



Evidence behind the skills-based suicide prevention work we do

LivingWorks training has the most robust evidence base in the industry. Over 50 peer-reviewed studies and government reports show that LivingWorks programs increase trainee skills, improve outcomes, and save money. We encourage rigorous evaluation of our programs as we uphold the gold standard of evidence-based suicide prevention training.

Third party evaluations supporting LivingWorks Start

In just one hour online, LivingWorks' newest program, LivingWorks Start teaches trainees to recognise when someone is thinking about suicide and connect them to help and support. Like all of LivingWorks' core programs, LivingWorks Start is evidence-based. Here's what third-party evaluations of LivingWorks Start confirmed:

- Improves trainee skills and knowledge
- Improves trainee readiness and confidence
- Safe and effective for trainees as young as 15 years old
- Meets SAMHSA's Tier III evidence-based training criteria
- Based on best practices in online curriculum development.

Key studies supporting LivingWorks SafeTALK

With LivingWorks SafeTALK, every individual can learn and practice powerful, life-saving skills in just four hours. Using a simple yet effective model, LivingWorks safeTALK empowers everyone to make a difference. With over 120,000 people attending each year, it's the world's fastest-growing suicide prevention training.

- **A Formative Evaluation of the safeTALK Training in Manitoba.** *Kaplan, G. (2018).* This study assessed the impact of safeTALK training across nine Manitoba schools, with participants including teachers, students, parents, and support staff. Findings indicated that safeTALK improved participants' self-assessed abilities to recognize when someone had thoughts of suicide and take appropriate steps in connecting them to safety. The study looked for iatrogenic safety effects as a result of training and found none, indicating that safeTALK posed no danger to any participants. A smaller follow-up study also looked at interventions, finding that a plurality of safeTALK participants reported carrying out an intervention based on their training.
- **Universal Suicide Prevention in Young People: An Evaluation of the safeTALK Program in Alice Springs High Schools.** *Robinson J, Bailey E, Spittal M, Pirkis J, Gould M (2016).* This study was conducted by researchers from Orygen, Australia's National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, in collaboration with the University of Melbourne and New York's Columbia University. It examined the impact of safeTALK training for high school students in Australia, finding increases in knowledge about suicide, confidence in talking about issues related to suicide, willingness to talk about suicide, and likelihood of offering



and seeking help. The study also found that safeTALK was safe for the school students and that it had no ill effects on their mental health.

- **Evaluation of safeTALK Training in a Convenience Sample of 500 Niagara Region Residents, Health Professionals and Volunteers.** *Niagara Region (2015)*. Conducted by the Niagara Suicide Prevention Coalition and Distress Centre Niagara, this study discovered that over 90% of participants felt “mostly prepared” or “well prepared” to ask someone about suicide after attending safeTALK, whereas less than 50% felt this way beforehand. In summary, the researchers wrote: “The resounding feedback was that those undertaking the training found it extremely useful if not for themselves, then for others (especially young people and general lay groups).”
- **A Review of Operation Life Suicide Awareness Workshops: Report to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.** *McKay, K, Hawgood J, Kavalidou K, Kolves K, O'Gorman J, De Leo D (2012)*. Conducted by the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, among others, this study found “...real and substantial improvements following safeTALK in (participants’) perceptions of their capabilities in dealing with a person who may be considering suicide and that these improvements did not deteriorate over a three-month period” (p. 43). Participants included veterans, veteran family members and veteran support providers.
- **Preventing Suicides in the Toronto Subway System: A Program Evaluation.** *Eynan R (2011)*. From the University of Toronto, this dissertation examined the impact of safeTALK and one other training program among transit workers, including constables, train operators, supervisors and others. The author found increased “knowledge of suicide and suicidal behavior, enhanced positive attitudes toward the suicidal individual, suicide intervention, and improved intervention skills” (p. ii) through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- **Evaluation of Suicide Awareness Programmes Delivered to Veterinary Undergraduates and Academic Staff.** *Mellanby RJ, Hudson NP, Allister R, Bell CE, Else RW, Gunn-Moore DA, Byrne C, Straiton S, Rhind SM (2010)*. Published in the journal *Veterinary Record*, this study found that safeTALK increased the likelihood that veterinary students would recognize signs of suicide risk, ask about suicide, and connect someone at risk with help.
- **Evaluation of the Scottish safeTALK Pilot.** *McLean J, Schinkel M, Woodhouse A, Pynnonen A, McBryde L (2007)*. Conducted by researchers from the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health, this study focused on the use of safeTALK among a variety of audiences including mental health, physical health, education, law enforcement and corrections. The study found high levels of satisfaction and increased skills and confidence to intervene with someone at risk for suicide.

Key Studies supporting Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

LivingWorks ASIST is the world’s leading suicide intervention program. Trusted by professionals yet learnable by anyone, LivingWorks Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is the only workshop of its kind. Updated continually to reflect new knowledge, LivingWorks ASIST has been empowering people to provide skilled, life-saving interventions for over 35 years.



- **Suicide intervention training for college staff: Program evaluation and intervention skill measurement.** *Shannonhouse L, Lin Y-W D, Shaw K, Wanna R, Porter M (2017).* Published in the Journal of American College Health, this study examined the impact of ASIST training for college staff including faculty, counselors, administrators, and other support personnel. The results showed improvement in both self-assessed competencies and objective measures using the SIRI-2 scale compared to a control group. Areas of improvement included suicide intervention skills, attitudes toward suicide, knowledge of suicide, and comfort, competence, and confidence in responding to individuals at risk. The authors wrote: “these results agree with others that show ASIST increases SI- [suicide intervention] skills.”
- **Suicide Intervention Training for K-12 Schools: A Quasi-Experimental Study on ASIST.** *Shannonhouse L, Lin Y-W D, Shaw K, Porter M (2017).* Published in the Journal of Counseling and Development, this study found that ASIST-trained school staff, including teachers and counsellors, saw improved knowledge and competencies on an objective scale (SIRI-2) compared to a control group. The areas of improvement included suicide intervention skills, attitudes toward suicide, knowledge of suicide, and comfort, competence, and confidence in responding to individuals at risk. The authors wrote that their findings provide “support for the use of ASIST in schools, particularly those in rural areas with limited access to mental health services.”
- **Analysis of the Benefits and Costs of CalMHSA's Investment in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).** *Ashwood JS, Briscoe B, Ramchand R, May L, Burnam MA (2015).* Conducted by researchers from the RAND Corporation, this cost-benefit analysis found that California's implementation of ASIST will significantly reduce suicide attempts, deaths, and associated costs for years to come. Drawing on a wide cross-section of data, the research illustrates how ASIST training is a cost-effective way to save lives on a large scale.
- **Impact of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.** *Gould MS, Cross W, Pisani AR, Munfakh JL, Kleinman M (2013).* Published in Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, this Randomized Controlled Study found that callers who talked to a crisis line counselor trained in ASIST were statistically less suicidal, less depressed, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful than callers who talked to a crisis line counselor trained in a method other than ASIST. On the basis of this study, ASIST was listed on the United States NREPP (National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices) under the new, stricter guidelines.
- **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training: Trainee Experiences, Recommendations, and Post-Training Behavior.** *SAMHSA and ICF/MACRO (2010).* This qualitative study of ASIST training participants found increased self-efficacy, heightened awareness, improved communication skills, increased information sharing and increased interventions due to ASIST training.



- **The Use and Impact of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) in Scotland: An Evaluation.** *Griesbach D, Russel P, Dolev R, Lardner C (2008)*. This Scottish study of ASIST found increased knowledge, helping attitudes, skills and interventions in ASIST-trained caregivers in addition to broad reductions stigma and increased suicide prevention awareness within communities and organisations.
- **Making it Safer: A Health Center's Strategy for Suicide Prevention.** *McAuliffe N and Perry L (2007)*. Published in *Psychiatric Quarterly*, this study demonstrated that ASIST training in a large community hospital contributed to improved clinical outcomes for consumers. Outcomes associated with ASIST training included increased identification of those at risk for suicide and a corresponding reduction in hospital admissions as hospital staff were better able to assess risk and provide appropriate alternatives to hospitalisation.

Evidence for LivingWorks suicide to Hope

Once someone is safe after a suicide crisis, what's next? LivingWorks suicide to Hope provides skills any professional can use to help them work through their lingering thoughts of suicide and attain a higher quality of life.

- Initial studies suggest improvements in trainee skills and readiness
- Initial studies suggest improvement in client outcomes
- Evidence-informed with over 90 articles and studies consulted
- Based on proven recovery and growth approaches
- Developed using adult education best practice.