

## Create a community safety net with suicide prevention training

With strong evidence showing the continuing COVID-19 pandemic is proving to be a difficult time for those already struggling with their mental health, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN is providing free online suicide prevention training.

Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR) is a 'gatekeeper' training program which, in less than one hour, teaches anyone to recognise and respond to signs of suicidality.

The PHN's Senior Manager for Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, Michelle McAllister, said the disruption to daily life as a result of the coronavirus made now an ideal time to learn how to help reduce suicide.

"We know social distancing measures, while necessary to help flatten the curve, are creating a very uncertain and lonely time for many people, and a tense time for others," Ms McAllister said.

"Circumstances have changed for many people, and this training is a very practical way to spend some of the extra time you might find yourself with – by learning to recognise and support those who are at risk of suicide.

"Suicide is an issue that affects entire communities, and it takes a community to make a difference.

"By completing this training you become part of a new community safety net, which is even more important now than ever."

The PHN recently funded 1,000 licences for the QPR training, which is recognised by the Black Dog Institute as the leading evidence-based program for building skills to help someone with a suicidal crisis.

By learning how to 'question', you can gain the knowledge and skills to identify the warning signs that someone may be suicidal, while the 'persuade' portion of the training gives empowers you to engage in meaningful conversation with those who may be having suicidal thoughts.

The third and final step in the training has been designed with the general public in mind, so we can all become comfortable building the bridge between 'questioning' and 'persuading' to suggesting professional care, which may include the general practice setting as a first port of call.

Data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in September 2019 revealed there were 3,046 deaths by suicide in 2018, or an average of 8.3 each day, with the proportion of total deaths attributed to suicide almost three times higher in males than females.

Queensland had the second highest number of suicide deaths (786) across the country last year, with the rate the highest in NSW (899).

"These statistics show us an issue but they don't show the individuals and stories behind those numbers," Ms McAllister said.

"For every suicide there is a community, a network of family, friends and work colleagues who are affected."

Access the QPR training by visiting [ourphn.org.au/preventsuicide](http://ourphn.org.au/preventsuicide) and following the prompts through to 'get started'. The organisation code is SCPHN.

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