

New service paves The Way Back from suicide

Beyond Blue's suicide aftercare initiative The Way Back Support Service, which provides critical support for people after a suicide attempt, is now available in Central Queensland, Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast.

Beyond Blue Chief Services Officer Alistair Stott said The Way Back provides practical support for people for up to three months after they leave hospital.

"People who have attempted suicide often experience severe distress in the days and weeks afterwards and are at high risk of attempting again," Mr Stott said.

"The Way Back addresses a significant gap in the current service system and eases this distress by guiding them towards the right support and informing them about how to stay safe."

The service was commissioned by Commonwealth-funded primary healthcare organisation Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN and is delivered in Central Queensland by AnglicareCQ, in the Wide Bay by Richmond Fellowship Queensland (RFQ), and on the Sunshine Coast by Open Minds.

The PHN's CEO Pattie Hudson said The Way Back Support Service had shown promising results in helping people since it started as a pilot program in 2014.

"The PHN is proud to play a role in bringing The Way Back Support Service to the region," Ms Hudson said.

"It's a dynamic model that combines an evidence-based approach to recovery with that all-important personal connection and integration with existing health services."

"The Hospital and Health Services will provide the pathway to the service and ensures we have the best understanding of a person's needs and mental health, so that we can give them the best possible care."

People are referred to The Way Back by the Hospital and Health Service in their local area, and are assigned a support coordinator to guide them through their recovery.

RFQ Area Manager Karen Suey said coordinators would provide people with practical support for to help them find their way back to life.

"We recognise that tailored, timely support is critical to people's safety," Ms Suey said.

"Our coordinators use several techniques, like face-to-face and over the phone contact, help build a personalised safety plan as well as link them to health and community services that address some of the issues leading to their initial distress.

"Individualised support promotes strength and resilience, and delivers assertive outreach to participants."

Federal Member for Wide Bay and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Llew O'Brien said the Liberal and Nationals Government invested \$44 million in The Way Back program nationally.

"This funding for The Way Back Support Service provides additional support for those who are statistically shown to need it the most, and helps them connect back into their lives and communities," Mr O'Brien said.

"Our goal is simple – to lower the Australian suicide toll to zero; to show that each life matters; and that we are doing everything we can to provide hope and help to those who need it."

MEDIA RELEASE

8 March 2021



The Way Back Support Service is just one example of how the federally-funded PHN and state-funded HHS work together to achieve positive health outcomes for the community, as outlined in their Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Alcohol and Other Drugs Joint Regional Plan 2020-2025.

While referrals to The Way Back Support Service must be made via the HHS, mental health professionals are available at the Beyond Blue Support Service 24/7 via phone on 1300 22 4636 or via www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat between 3PM – 12AM AEST. Email responses are otherwise provided within 24 hours.

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For more information contact: Jasmin Midgley, Senior Media and Communications Officer, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN on 5456 8100