



28 February 2018

Geelong and Surf Coast to get a new suicide prevention service

A new program that supports people through the first critical weeks following a suicide attempt is now available in the Barwon region.

The Way Back Support Service will be launched in Geelong on Thursday, 1 March. It is a suicide prevention program that supports people during the critical three-month period following an attempt.

The service, designed by *beyondblue*, will be delivered by Barwon Child, Youth and Family. It was commissioned by Barwon Health and funded by Department of Health and Human Services.

A prior suicide attempt is the single biggest risk factor for suicide in the general population.

International research suggests that up to 25 per cent of those who have attempted suicide will re-attempt and the first three months is the highest risk period.

There are around 75,000 suicide attempts each year in Australia and an average eight people die every day.

People referred from Barwon Health's University Hospital Geelong to The Way Back are assigned a Support Coordinator to encourage their recovery.

The specially-trained and experienced Coordinator offers the person non-clinical care, such as helping them build a personalised safety plan and linking them to health and community services, and clinical care if needed.

***beyondblue* CEO Georgie Harman** said The Way Back helps address a gap in care for people after they leave hospital.

"National data has shown more than half of those discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt receive no support or follow-up treatment," Ms Harman said.

"About one in four people discharged from hospital after a suicide attempt will make another attempt within three months.

"The Way Back provides people who have tried to take their lives with practical support to stay safe and find their way back to living."

Barwon Child, Youth and Family CEO Sandy Morrison said: "We are proud to be working with *beyondblue* and Barwon Health to deliver this innovative new service in Geelong that will support people following a suicide attempt to rebuild their life and reconnect with their community.

"The Way Back Support Service further strengthens BCYF's vision to create a community where people are safe, connected and empowered to live well."

Barwon Health Chief Medical Officer Sean Jespersen said it was important for people to acknowledge the link between physical wellbeing, mental health and social stress.

"Having worked across specialist, primary care and NGO mental health services, I believe there is incredible value in using both clinical and non-clinical approaches to improving mental health and addressing suicide," Mr Jespersen said.

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“At Barwon Health, we are dedicated to fostering a healthier community, so I’m pleased this entire program is now committed to helping people recover from suicide attempts and improving the gaps in care after they have been physically cleared to leave hospital.”

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