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Online community gives hope to people who are in suicidal crises

Australians who are struggling to cope with life and at risk of suicide are finding hope and support from *beyondblue*'s online community.

New research reveals members of [beyondblue's online forums](#) posted to the 'Suicidal thoughts and self harm' section at times of crisis, when 'not coping' and feeling lost and hopeless. People also frequently discussed difficulties with their relationships.

The *beyondblue* forums are a place for everyday Australians to safely and anonymously discuss with others how they are thinking and feeling. All posts are monitored by a team of moderators who can quickly respond to people at immediate risk.

The research, commissioned by *beyondblue* and conducted by Swinburne University, found the support people receive helps them to work through their thoughts and feelings of suicide and find ways to cope.

Members of the forums provided support to each other by:

- Continuing conversations to keep people engaged and offer an ongoing sense of hope;
- Providing a sense of belonging when they are feeling disconnected from family and friends;
- Offering perspectives that made those at risk rethink their situation and take positive actions;
- Sharing positive stories of working with health professionals and using therapeutic techniques and medication.

***beyondblue* CEO Georgie Harman** said the research findings demonstrated the value of online peer support.

"Every day, Australians are getting support from one another online by having open and honest discussions about suicide," Ms Harman said.

"The *beyondblue* forums provide a safe space for people to share their feelings, experiences and coping strategies that work for them. That often includes encouraging others to seek professional help for the first time."

A national [beyondblue-commissioned survey released in February](#) found Australians want to help people at risk of suicide but 50 per cent of respondents believe this requires the skills of a professional. Thirty per cent of respondents believed discussing suicide could encourage a person to take their own life.

Ms Harman said the research into the forums debunked several suicide myths.

"People who are at risk of suicide do want to talk about how they are feeling, and talking can help reduce their risk," she said. "They want someone to listen and show them care and support – you don't need to be health professional to have a conversation about suicide and talking about suicide won't trigger it."

The *beyondblue* forums are open to anyone living in Australia who wants to seek support for mental health issues or suicide. Register via <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums>

Mental health professionals are available at the *beyondblue* Support Service via phone 24/7 on **1300 22 4636** or via www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses (within 24 hours).