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Better suicide prevention safety planning with Beyond Now app

In 2016 **Beyond Blue** and **Monash University** developed a world-first smartphone application and website to help save lives when people are in a suicidal crisis.

Since its launch the free Beyond Now app has been downloaded **69,000 times** and **25,500 suicide prevention safety plans** have been completed.

Beyond Blue has now refreshed the app – which was originally developed with funding from The Movember Foundation – so it is even more user-friendly, personally meaningful and accessible. The refresh of the app was made possible by generous funding from The Lionel and Yvonne Spencer Trust.

The app is a simple and practical tool for people to create their own suicide safety plan on their smartphone and share it with others. The Beyond Now suicide prevention safety plan can be accessed easily and discretely when suicidal thoughts, feelings or distress take hold.

The plan is ideally completed in the company of a trusted health professional, friend or family member. It involves making a list of reasons to continue living; of contacts who can be relied on in a crisis; of emergency numbers; of things that will distract the mind when suicidal thoughts arise.

One of the priorities driving the Beyond Now app redesign was to improve appeal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities. These groups are at greater risk of suicide and suicide attempts.

In 2017, suicide was the fifth leading cause of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths.

Kungarakan and Yanyula man and Beyond Blue Board Director, Professor Steven Larkin, said the changes made in the app are designed to make it more meaningful.

“Having a culturally relevant suicide safety plan prepared before that moment of suicidal thinking or crisis could save lives,” Prof. Larkin said.

“At Beyond Blue, we listened to feedback from people who have used the app and we made improvements based on their experiences to make the app as effective as possible.

“The changes in the app include art and design elements by an Aboriginal designer, more inclusive illustrations and content which represent our diverse population and the ability for users to upload their own personal photos, videos and sound clips to their safety plan. Suggestions for different actions were included, like helping my mob, visiting country, connecting to culture, and yarning to people. Aboriginal counsellors or health workers were added as a professional service that can offer support.”

Beyond Blue CEO, Georgie Harman, added that LGBTI people experience greater suicide risk and increased suicide attempts than the general population.

“The updated app includes more content to reflect our diverse population, and people can now upload their own photos, videos and sound clips to their safety plan,” Ms Harman said.

“A Beyond Now safety plan is in your pocket, to be accessed and edited at any time. A copy can be emailed to trusted friends, family or health professionals. It’s there when you need it most.”

Beyond Now is free to download from the Apple Store or Google Play. If you don’t have a smartphone or would prefer to use your desktop or laptop, Beyond Now is also available to use online.

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Mental health professionals are available on the Beyond Blue 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. If you would like to speak to an LGBTI specific service, QLife can be contacted on 1800 184 527. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet provides information on social and emotional wellbeing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers via their website healthinonet.ecu.edu.au