Beyond Blue supports ongoing suicide prevention effort as data points to fewer suicides

Suicide rates in Australia are at a five-year low as governments, the mental health and suicide prevention sectors and the community continue working together to support those at risk.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ preliminary 2020 Causes of Death data, released today, shows that 3,139 people died by suicide in Australia in 2020, down 5.4 percent from 2019 when 3,318 people took their lives.

“Every suicide is a tragedy and every number represents a person, a family, an entire community affected by suicide,” Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said.

“This data is important and helps us understand the big picture for policy purposes, but of course it can’t show us the full story – the pain and the complexity of a person’s death.”

Suicide rates for men and women decreased compared to 2019. Last year, 2,384 men took their lives, down from 2,502 in 2019, and 755 women died by suicide, down from 816 in 2019, for a total rate of 12.1 per 100,000 people.

“The data shows a reduction in the rates, but we can’t be complacent. We know the social and economic impacts of this pandemic are ongoing, and that means we need to redouble our efforts to support those at risk of suicide,” Ms Harman said.

“We don’t have to simply accept that suicide is inevitable. We know that prevention and early intervention efforts make a difference and will remain essential, in times of crisis and beyond.”

The ABS identified depression, acute and chronic substance use, suicidal ideation and relationship issues among the main risk factors for suicide, noting there were multiple risk factors present for each death.

“The data demonstrates that suicide is complex. There is no single cause. Life circumstances as well as mental illness can contribute,” Ms Harman said.

Ms Harman commended the significant, ongoing effort to support people experiencing suicidal distress in Australia.

“Beyond Blue looks forward to collaborating with people with lived experience, governments and our sector colleagues on the vital structural reforms required to ensure Australians have the mental health and suicide prevention support they need through the challenges ahead,” Ms Harman said.

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Beyond Blue Support Service - 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au/get-support
Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service - 1800 512 348 or coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

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