

Saturday, 1 July, 2023

The Way Back Support Service transitions to governments from today

Beyond Blue formally hands over its foundational suicide aftercare model, The Way Back Support Service, to governments around Australia today.

Suicide aftercare supports people who have been discharged from hospital after a suicide attempt by offering them personalised, practical, one-on-one support in the community.

The Way Back participants are paired with trained support co-ordinators who help develop a personalised safety plan to link the person with health and community supports and clinical care as required.

The service offers proactive aftercare, which means a person recovering after a suicide attempt or crisis receives support as they recover, rather than simply being discharged from hospital into the same life circumstances that contributed to their attempt.

The Way Back complements clinical supports and represents a substantial effort to address some of the key unmet needs in Australia's suicide prevention system.

An independent evaluation of The Way Back showed participants experienced improvements in wellbeing and reductions in suicidal thinking. On average, measures of suicidality decreased 63 per cent, psychological distress decreased 28 per cent and wellbeing improved 86 per cent.

The Way Back was designed and piloted by Beyond Blue in 2014 with philanthropic funding.

From 2019, the service was scaled up with funding contributions from the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. Beyond Blue also contributed funding to the endeavour and welcomed philanthropic support from the Paul Ramsey Foundation and a number of individual donors.

Today, the service operates at 38 sites nationally – in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. The Way Back has supported more than 20,000 people across 23 of the Commonwealth's Primary Health Network (PHN) regions.

As of 1 July 2023, these services may no longer be known as the Way Back but will continue to provide much needed support under new arrangements.

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said The Way Back – its design, development and collaborative delivery – demonstrated Beyond Blue's contribution to Australia's mental health system as a service incubator.

"The Way Back is a great example of what can be achieved when governments, philanthropists and the community come together to develop solutions to complex issues, pilot these solutions and then scale them up," she said.

"We are proud of our contribution to suicide prevention service delivery in Australia and, while Beyond Blue will no longer be involved in the day-to-day running of The Way Back from July 1, we will continue to share insights gleaned from The Way Back and its implementation over the past decade."

Ms Harman said these insights had signalled an opportunity for Beyond Blue to focus on delivering supports that help people get well, stay well and feel better earlier.

"There are many learnings from The Way Back, including that people want more support before they reach crisis point," Ms Harman said.

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“Indeed, participants in The Way Back told us they would have benefited from the support that aftercare offers before they experienced suicidal crisis.”

More than 3,000 Australians take their lives each year and 65,000 attempt suicide. The Productivity Commission’s [Mental Health Inquiry](#) confirmed that up to one quarter of people who attempt suicide will re-attempt, with the risk of re-attempting being higher in the weeks and months afterwards.

ENDS

Beyond Blue Support Service: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au/get-support