

Media Release

Monday, 6 January 2025

Small grants boost grassroots initiatives focused on suicide prevention

South Western Sydney PHN is funding grassroots initiatives aimed at reducing the stigma of suicide and mental health by promoting social connectedness, reducing loneliness and increasing help-seeking for priority populations.

A total of nine community grants were funded in 2024 by South Western Sydney PHN under the Department of Health and Aged Care's Targeted Regional Initiatives for Suicide Prevention program.

The program aims to build resilience and knowledge within the local community by increasing mental health literacy, help-seeking and knowledge of local services, all protective factors for suicide prevention.

Local activities boosted under the grants program include peer-led supports and small group spaces, community development activities, a podcast awareness and communications campaign, an online hub and creative campaigns which promote group supports and increase local knowledge.

South Western Sydney PHN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Keith McDonald PhD, said the grants were an important part of the multifaceted approach needed to tackle high suicide rates among priority populations.

"These grants support new and established grassroots initiatives which target priority populations where they live and work, giving them greater access to supports when needed," Dr McDonald said.

"We are proud to support peer approaches which really focus on reducing stigma and promote help-seeking through increased awareness of, and access to, relevant local services.

"The local grant recipients have found creative and innovative ways to bring community together and increase mental health literacy around suicide and help-seeking, all important tools for future resilience."

Activities undertaken under the grants program run until December 2025.

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This program is supported by funding from the Australian Government through the PHN program.

South Western Sydney PHN is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting general practitioners, practice nurses and other primary health providers to deliver the best possible care for their patients. Our aim is to improve access to quality local healthcare for all residents living in the Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee LGAs. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, water and skies of South Western Sydney, the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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Successful grants are:

NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors - STARTTS - Group supports for Assyrian and Mandaean men

Delivering psychosocial education and lifestyle and wellbeing group interventions for Assyrian and Mandaean communities. Group activities focus on developing mutually supportive relationships among members, and reducing isolation and stigma around help-seeking for mental health support. Group members will be supported to identify signs of personal distress, learn coping strategies and be supported with knowledge and access of local services.

University of Sydney – Design-a-thon and online hub

Hosting a design-a-thon event where young people will collaborate to create an online hub for mental health literacy amongst culturally and linguistically diverse youth who identify as LGBTQIA+, along with an ongoing campaign to support the hub. The hub will include information in multiple languages and real stories of people seeking help for mental health concerns.

The Men’s Table – Peer-led group support

Establishment of four Men’s Tables across South Western Sydney engaging men within their own communities in regular face-to-face group discussions. Men’s Tables are a safe and inclusive environment for participants to build social support networks and further develop help-seeking behaviours.

Mentoring Men – Community Development Officer

Co-funding of a Community Development Officer role within Mentoring Men to serve as a vital link between the organisation and the communities it serves. The Community Development Officer will foster relationships, onboard and support mentees and mentors, focus on engagement and work to expand the reach of Mentoring Men’s programs.

Batyr Australia – Batyr@school program

Batyr will extend its programs into schools to support young people to have positive conversations about mental health and help-seeking, with a focus on schools with high culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. The program delivers evidence-based, peer-to-peer mental health suicide prevention activities for high school students. The program aims to reduce stigma and strengthen help-seeking behaviours, mental health knowledge and community connection.

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Mackillop Seasons – Seasons for Growth Adult program

Mackillop Seasons will deliver the Seasons for Growth Adult program, a two-day training program for up to 40 professionals to deliver small group grief education programs within their local community. The program focuses on training, mentoring and building capacity within communities to provide location-based small group programs for adults and parents following experiences of suicide.

Parents Beyond Break-up – Drop-in support groups

Facilitation of four new weekly ‘in-person’ support groups for separated men and dads in South Western Sydney. The drop-in sessions will be supplemented to include volunteer peer mentors who will work across the region ensuring less populated areas are covered with support.

Prosper Australia – ‘Looking for Change’ podcast series, training and communications campaign

Multiple approaches to combating suicidal ideation associated with financial hardship, including the creation of a podcast and visual series, online training package and training webinar, development of awareness raising material such as a conversation starter kit for financial counsellors and emergency relief providers, and a direct communications campaign highlighting support services, fostering awareness, encouraging help-seeking and reducing stigma.

Folkal/Ironbark – Eight-week therapeutic photography and support group

Facilitation of a series of support groups working in conjunction with therapeutic photography programs aimed at those experiencing suicidal ideation, as well as carers of suicidal persons and those bereaved from suicide. The support groups remain the same for the duration of the eight-week program giving participants an opportunity to form relationships, increase social connectedness and reduce stigma through shared experiences in safe space. At the conclusion of the group sessions participants can also participate in a photovoice public awareness campaign using their photographs.

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