



Embargo until 5am Sept 10th 2013

National coalition of experts target suicide rates

- **World-first clinical trial of online suicide intervention launched**
- **New report shows enormous value of investment into suicide prevention**

“Suicide takes more Australian lives than skin cancer or motor vehicle accidents yet we don’t have the same national focus on prevention or intervention” says CEO of Suicide Prevention Australia, Susan Murray.

Around 2,300 people in Australia take their lives every year and many thousands more experience thoughts that life isn’t worth living. It is an issue that is on the increase internationally, particularly amongst young people.

For the majority of people, suicidal thoughts are infrequent and linked to life events. For some, however, they become entrenched as an obsessive and constant presence and this dramatically increases the risk of someone acting on these thoughts.

A world-first program developed by researchers at the Black Dog Institute and the Australian National University aims to empower people to take charge of unhelpful thoughts and learn ways to manage them on an ongoing basis.

Called “Healthy Thinking” the web-based, self-help program has been designed to circumvent the issues of stigma that often stop people from seeking face-to-face help.

“We know that many people are reluctant to acknowledge their thoughts of suicide,” says Professor Helen Christensen, Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute.

“The ‘Healthy Thinking’ trial is offering people a confidential self-help service that can be accessed 24/7 by anyone with internet access.”

According to John Brogden, Chairman of Lifeline Australia, the results of the Lifeline Return of Investment Report confirm the growing preference among consumers to use the internet when seeking help during times of crisis.

“Internet technology is a smart solution for suicide prevention,” said Mr Brogden. “Lifeline was using leading edge technology when it started a telephone crisis line in Australia 50 years ago and it is now using the internet to make the same offer of help to save lives.”

The Report, prepared by NetBalance Consultants with funding from the MLC Community Foundation showed that the Lifeline Online Crisis Support Chat has been a successful gateway for people needing to access mental health services with around 50% of all chat visitors using the services suggested to them during their session.

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Suicide Research and
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It also demonstrates the value of suicide prevention services with an incredible return of investment of \$8.40 for every \$1 spent.

Susan Murray, CEO of Suicide Prevention Australia, says these programs highlight the urgent need for investment into suicide prevention and intervention.

“Whilst support for suicide prevention programs is stable we are not seeing the expected improvements in the number of suicides which occur each year.”

“The National Coalition for Suicide Prevention aims to halve suicides in Australia by 2023, and the only way we will be able to do this is with increased and targeted funding to the suicide prevention sector.”

More information about World Suicide Prevention Day can be found at www.wspd.org.au

Australians who have experienced suicidal thoughts are invited to register their interest in the ‘Healthy Thinking’ Trial at <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/public/research/participateinourresearch/index.cfm>

Healthy Thoughts is **not** a crisis service. Anyone in suicidal crisis is encouraged to seek help at Lifeline 13 11 14, Suicide Call back Service 1300 659 467 or their local GP.

Journalists please be mindful of the MindFrame reporting guidelines

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