

Community the key to helping people at risk of suicide

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A community-led suicide prevention trial in country South Australia has helped reduce the stigma around depression, increased community awareness, and provided helpful guidance to community members when

responding to people in distress, according to a new report released today.

In evaluating the trial, University of South Australia researchers say it has been an unqualified success involving and educating up to 775,000 residents in Whyalla, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Port Lincoln and the Yorke Peninsula since 2017.

The findings were released today—World Suicide Prevention Day—by Country SA PHN (CSAPHN), which commissioned the analysis from UniSA's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Research and Education Group.

Results show [suicide prevention](#) training, events and education, led by the community, has strengthened services in country SA, with clear evidence of people at risk being helped.

Key findings reveal:

- Increased compassion and awareness of [suicide](#) and suicide prevention;
- Increased confidence to communicate and connect with people in distress;
- Decrease in judgment and stigma and a drop in reported depressive symptoms.

"The trial has been immensely beneficial. Working with a community-led approach to suicide prevention has made a real impact in increasing awareness of suicide and our regional communities' capacity to support those in distress," said Kim Hosking, Country SA PHN, Chief Executive Officer.

"In the largest suicide prevention activity ever to be undertaken in

country South Australia, nearly 775,000 people were engaged through the trial, with more than 4,500 people undertaking relevant suicide prevention training. This level of engagement has flowed to an increase in capacity building as people applied what they learnt."

"The most effective strategies were those that were community driven, relevant and relatable to the [local population](#), and included participant engagement and connection," said UniSA Lecturer in Nursing, Dr. Kate Rhodes, who led the National Suicide Prevention Trial's evaluation.

"The evaluation demonstrates the desired effectiveness of suicide prevention programs and events for both community and professional groups alike.

These are promising results for they contribute to the major aim of interrupting the trajectory towards suicide by encouraging people to accept and receive help from others, as well as help offering and advocacy on behalf of others."

The final evaluation report will be formally launched on World Suicide Prevention Day, this Friday 10 September, during the National Suicide Prevention Trial Evaluation Webinar. Country SA PHN and the University of South Australia will be hosting this online event to celebrate the achievements from the NSPT and reflect on the outcomes from the trial strategies and activities.

The trial was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health. The Federal Member for Grey Rohan Ramsey will introduce the webinar. A panel of evaluators and lived experience representatives will be taking part and will be available to answer questions about the evaluation research and the topic of suicide prevention. Interested members of the community are welcome to attend.

Provided by University of South Australia

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