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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**1 September 2020**

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**This World Suicide Prevention Day, Lifeline will call on Australians to send the clearest signal yet to those who are struggling, that they are not alone.**

Annual Out of the Shadows events go virtual in a show of support for those bereaved by suicide and those who are struggling with their own mental health.

Every year, Lifeline centres across the nation bring their communities together to observe World Suicide Prevention Day through Lifeline's Out of the Shadows events. Local community walks traditionally take place at sunrise and create a safe place of acceptance to mourn loved ones lost to suicide and reduce stigma by bringing suicide out of the shadows and into the light. However, this year with physical distancing restrictions created by Covid-19, Out of the Shadows will be providing opportunities for connection virtually.

This year, Lifeline plans to send a powerful message of hope by encouraging Australians to visit a virtual reflective garden to plant a flower and leave a message of remembrance or support, to show those who are struggling that they are not alone.

Lifeline Australia's Chairman, John Brogden said coronavirus restrictions have heightened the need to demonstrate support and provide a safe space for those impacted by suicide to mourn and reflect:

*"Losing a loved one to suicide is different to any other loss, the stigma surrounding suicide is still very real. Often those who are grieving or experiencing suicidal ideation can experience tremendous marginalisation. The COVID-19 restrictions are exacerbating isolation, there are many left to grieve or struggle with their thoughts alone. Through Out of the Shadows, we aim to ensure that people feel connected and aware of the support and compassion that is around them."* He said.

In 2018, the last reporting period, there were 3,046 lives lost to suicide in Australia, with each life lost leaving families, friends, colleagues and communities devastated. Mr Brogden implored Australians to visit the garden and plant a message of hope:

*"There are over 10 Million Australians who have been directly impacted by the loss of a family member, relative, friend, colleague or fellow student. There are many more who are struggling with their own mental wellbeing and it is particularly difficult with the uncertainty and change in routine that has been brought about by COVID. The things we used to keep busy with, can often no longer be done, many of our opportunities for connecting with others have been removed.*

*So this year, we are calling on every Australian to make this garden bloom and help Lifeline send the clearest signal yet to those who are struggling, that they are not alone."*

To visit the virtual garden, go to: [www.outoftheshadows.org.au](http://www.outoftheshadows.org.au)

Members of the community are also invited to safely hold private reflective sunrise walks to observe Out of the Shadows on World Suicide Prevention Day. Walks must be held in accordance with COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions in each participant's state. To join the virtual community of walkers via Zoom, participants are encouraged to register their walk on the Out of the Shadows website at: [www.outoftheshadows.org.au](http://www.outoftheshadows.org.au)

*"All through the COVID-19 outbreak, we have been encouraging the community to connect with those they think may be doing it tough. We all have the power to make a positive difference to the lives of others, so we*

**NB:** Lifeline's 24-hour telephone crisis line 13 11 14 is pronounced 'thirteen eleven fourteen'

*really do encourage people to invite someone you know to take a walk at sunrise and remember the many Australians we have lost to suicide and those they have left behind. Together, we can remove the stigma around mental health, we can make people feel connected and supported and we can work towards an Australia free of suicide.”* Said Mr Brogden.

Mr Brogden also encouraged any person in Australia who is struggling to make a connection with someone they trust, or reach out to Lifeline:

*“These are challenging times, it is ok not to be feeling ok. Connecting with others is key. If you, or someone you know are feeling overwhelmed, we encourage you to connect with Lifeline in the way you feel most comfortable. Either phone us to speak to a Crisis Supporter on 13 11 14 (24 hours/7 days), or chat to us online at [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) (7pm – midnight, 7 nights).”*

Lifeline is Australia’s leading suicide prevention service, operating the 13 11 14 telephone line within 40 centres around the nation. The service expects to respond to over one million requests for support this year, creating an average of 120 safety plans to keep a person experiencing suicidal ideation safe every day.

To visit the Out of the Shadows virtual garden, go to: [www.outoftheshadows.org.au](http://www.outoftheshadows.org.au)

To donate to Lifeline, visit [www.lifeline.org.au/donate](http://www.lifeline.org.au/donate) To arrange an interview, please contact: [media@lifeline.org.au](mailto:media@lifeline.org.au) or phone: 0408 407 376