



MEDIA RELEASE

New suicide prevention campaign features inspirational stories

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Stories Are Strong is a Gippsland suicide prevention campaign featuring inspirational stories of hope and recovery, expert advice and resources.

Initiated by Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN), the campaign has been developed and informed by interviews with a diverse group of people who have lived experience of suicide and experts in the field.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive, Amanda Proposch, said the *Stories Are Strong* campaign aimed to help everyone become more compassionate, wise and resourced to be able to understand suicide and have the courage to start a conversation that may just save a life.

“The *Stories Are Strong* articles provide inspiring and positive messages of hope and recovery that showcase the strength, resilience and connectedness of our diverse community,” Ms Proposch said.

“It is for community, employers, mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. Each story and interview overwhelmingly reinforces themes that you are never alone, there is always someone you can talk to and there is a path to recovery with resources and support.”

The *Stories Are Strong* campaign links 10 stories of lived experience; four interviews with experts in the field and four resource sheets with days of significance throughout the year such as National Close The Gap Day in March and The Push-Up Challenge in May. All stories have been approved for publication by the interviewee in line with Mindframe Media guidelines.

One of the 10 stories is from proud Barkindji man, Sam Weston, who spent time doing 169 push-ups every day for two weeks in preparation for the Push-Up Challenge. One for every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who lost their life to suicide in 2018.

Sam carried his People, Country and world’s longest living culture in his heart with every move. “I’ve got anxiety and depression,” Sam said. “Everyone has issues to deal with, but for me, it’s been a big part of my life. So, I took on the push-up challenge to raise funds for mental health. It’s pretty meaningful to be able to do something for others.”

Finding her tribe the day the LGBTIQ Equality Roadshow came to town, set a new pivotal course for Helen. Since becoming involved with the South Coast Inclusion Network, she has found her happy place, despite her journey of coming out initially being a lonely one.

“I was just feeling so excluded from the community and separated from what was happening in Melbourne,” Helen said. “Just to have them visit and acknowledge us was a big boost.”



On that day, she also met other members of the local lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTIQ) community and allies. “We talked and found that we were all interested in doing something about the invisibility of the local LGBTIQ community. We exchanged numbers, got together and just clicked, there was a really amazing dynamic from day one.”

Lifeline’s vision for an Australia free of suicide fuels their commitment to ensure that help is at the end of the line 24/7.

Lifeline Gippsland Chief Executive Officer, Michelle Possingham, has also contributed to the campaign with an insight into her organisation.

“Just as we all have physical health, we all have mental health, and there are times when we need to reach out to someone to get physical or mental health back on track,” Ms Possingham said.

“It’s a natural part of the human experience to have times when we feel down, anxious or overwhelmed. If we can come together as a community to support each other, we will have a safer community and ultimately communities that are suicide-free.”

To read more Stories Are Strong or access resources, go to <https://gphn.org.au/about-us/stories-are-strong/>

#storiesstrong

If you or someone you know needs help contact:

- **Lifeline – 13 11 14**
- **beyondblue Support Service – 1300 224 365**
- **Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467**
- **MensLine – 1300 789 987**
- **Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800**
- **Qlife – 1800 184 527**
- **Yarning SafeNStrong – 1800 959 563**

To access professional mental health support in Gippsland, speak to your local doctor.

You can also call HeadtoHelp on 1800 595 212 or visit www.headtohelp.org.au or www.gippslandmentalhealth.org.au

*Stories Are Strong is an initiative of the **Place-Based Suicide Prevention Trials project** which is jointly funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Gippsland PHN. For more information visit <https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/programs/suicide-prevention-program/>*

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