



2014

Research Report

April 2015

Alan Woodward, Executive Director



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1. Background

The Lifeline Research Foundation is a separate structural unit within Lifeline Australia that generates and captures knowledge and research evidence to support the achievement of Lifeline's Vision of 'an Australia free of suicide'.

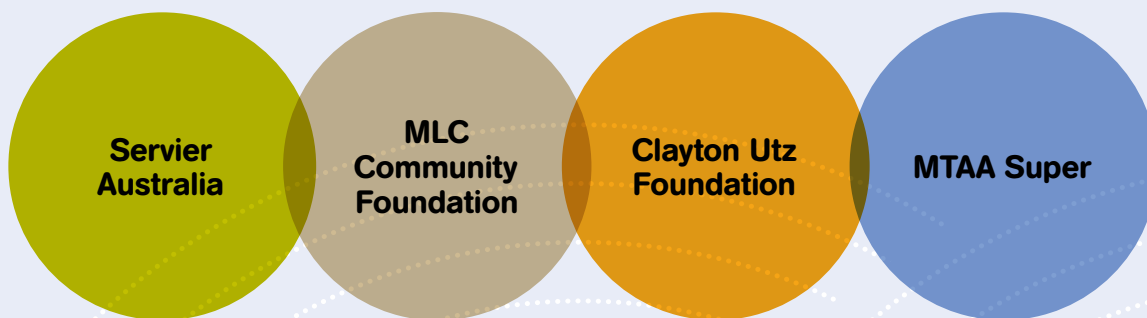
The Lifeline Research Foundation places priority on research, evaluation and policy development that relates to Lifeline's Purpose: to support Australians in times of crisis and equip individuals and communities to be resilient and suicide-safe.

The broad measure of success for the Foundation, therefore, is how much knowledge is generated and the ways in which this knowledge is utilised by Lifeline Australia and the network of Lifeline Centres towards improved crisis support services and community based approaches to suicide prevention.

2. Funding

The Lifeline Research Foundation receives funding from corporate and private donations, and from research grants which it seeks in partnership with academic institutions.

Major corporate donors in the past 12 months include:



In the past year, research grants have been obtained involving the Lifeline Research Foundation with the following academic institutions:

- University of Melbourne
- Australian National University
- University of Wollongong

No Government funding is provided to the Lifeline Research Foundation for its core operations; some Government funding is allocated for evaluation activities related to funded service programs.

3. Expert Advisory Group

The Lifeline Research Foundation receives generous assistance and advice from the members of the Expert Advisory Group:

- 1. Emeritus Professor Beverley Raphael AM (Chair)**
Professor of Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine, Australian National University
- 2. Julie Aganoff**
Executive Director, Change Futures
- 3. Eve Barratt**
Lifeline Manager – South East South Australia
- 4. Dr Michael Dudley**
Senior Staff Specialist Psychiatrist, Sydney Children's and Prince of Wales Hospitals Conjoint Senior Lecturer, University of New South Wales
- 5. Graham Gould**
Lifeline Manager – South Coast, NSW
Honorary Fellow University of Wollongong
- 6. Professor David Kavanagh**
Institute of Health & Biomedical Innovation
School of Psychology and Counselling Queensland University of Technology
- 7. Professor Britt Klein**
Director, Centre for Biopsychosocial and eHealth Research & Innovation
Professor in Psychology and eHealth, Federation University
- 8. Dr Kairi Kolves**
Principal Research Fellow
Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, Griffith University
- 9. Professor Emeritus Graham Martin OAM**
Centre for Suicide Prevention Studies at University of Queensland
- 10. Professor Jane Pirkis**
Director, Centre for Mental Health, University of Melbourne
- 11. Professor Alan Rosen AO**
Professorial Fellow, School of Public Health, University of Wollongong
Clinical Associate Professor, Brain & Mind Research Institute, University of Sydney,
Senior Consultant Psychiatrist Far West NSW LHD Mental Health Service
Former Deputy Commissioner NSW Mental Health Commission 2013-2015.
- 12. Dr Coralie Wilson**
Graduate School of Medicine and School of Psychology, University of Wollongong,
and Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute

The Expert Advisory Group provides input to the research priorities for the Lifeline Research Foundation and support for academic partnerships.



Expert Advisory Group chair Beverley Raphael AM and Alan Woodward giving evidence at Human Rights Commission Inquiry on Youth Suicide



Expert Advisory Group member Dr Michael Dudley with Senate Moore and Alan Woodward at the Suicide Prevention Australia Conference

4. Summary of Achievements in 2014

New research evidence:

- Research findings on frequent callers to Lifeline 13 11 14 show the profile of these callers and identify that they are more likely to be suicidal at the time of a call than one-off or episodic callers. They are often accessing a range of services, reflecting complex health and support needs. These findings will inform a model of service to more appropriately address frequent callers to Lifeline and other crisis lines. This research has been conducted by a University of Melbourne research team.
- Research to inform and validate the Crisis Support Skills Scale on the proficiency of crisis supporters and any impacts on service performance associated with changes to the crisis supporters' wellbeing will be published for utilisation in further research. This research has been conducted by a University of Wollongong research team.

Knowledge to improve the effectiveness of Lifeline services:

- Evaluation of the implementation of a new training course for telephone crisis supporters, taking a longitudinal study of the impact of this training on the skills and overall capability of trainees to deliver the Lifeline 13 11 14 service. This evaluation was undertaken by Westwood Spice.
- Evaluation of the MTAA-funded Read the Signs program which provides awareness raising workshops and materials on suicide prevention and personal mental health and wellbeing for workers in the motor trades industry. This evaluation was undertaken by Roberts Evaluation.
- Evaluation of a NSW Health Grant to Lifeline 13 11 14 to measure the improvements in service capacity and performance achieved from this government funding to the Lifeline Centres in NSW. This evaluation was undertaken by KPMG.

Collaborations for research:

- Suicide in the ACT Research Project – Lifeline Research Foundation is participating on an Advisory Group for this research which will examine data and undertake survey research of clinicians and consumers to inform a more detailed understanding of the factors in deaths by suicide in the ACT. This research involves the Australian National University and ACT Health.
- Victorian Suicide Register Project – with the Victorian Coroner’s Court and the University of Melbourne, the Lifeline Research Foundation is contributing service data and regional insights to test a comprehensive data set on deaths by suicide in Victoria – and the use of this data for regional planning of suicide prevention.
- The Link Project – with the Young and Well Co-Operative Research Centre and the Inspire Foundation, providing input to the development of the Link prototype – an online automated self-help tool for young people to be trialled in 2015.
- Care After a Suicide Attempt – contributed to research conducted through the Centre for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention (UNSW) on the experiences of people who attempted suicide and those who care for them.

5. Consumer Oriented Research

Consumer-oriented research has been a challenge in the fields of suicide prevention and crisis support. Researchers have a duty of care to participants; surveys involving suicidal persons are often rejected by ethics committees; field trials are not often undertaken with these populations due to ethics issues.

For Lifeline the confidential nature of services such as Lifeline 13 11 14 and Lifeline Online Crisis Support Chat has meant only limited operational data is available on the consumers of these services. It has been challenging to contact or engage with consumers of these Lifeline services for research purposes.

It is important to have consumers involved in research on services and programs that they use. The Lifeline Research Foundation has given attention to finding appropriate ways to undertake research that involves the consumers. Some examples of how this is being achieved include:

Lifeline Caller Research Project

Established in 2014, this involves the recruitment of callers to Lifeline 13 11 14 for research to explore the reasons callers have for contacting Lifeline, the experiences of the service from the caller perspective and the impact of using the Lifeline service on caller's lives. The protocols for recruitment of callers via a short offer to participate in research at the end of a call session were developed with the involvement of service Supervisors and Telephone Crisis Supporters within Lifeline as well as academic experts in the fields of mental health and suicide prevention. These protocols have been approved through the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee and are being adopted in 2015 research activities.

safeTALK in Schools Research Project

Will evaluate the efficacy of an innovative schools program in Alice Springs that involves the delivery of LivingWorks safeTALK program in a school environment to secondary students in Years 11 and 12. The research will enable young people participating in the program with an opportunity to provide information on their experience of the safeTALK workshop and the impact afterwards on their outlooks surrounding self-care, help seeking and suicide prevention. The data from these young people will inform future program development. The ethics issues were carefully considered by experts in research with young people from Orygen National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health and approvals were obtained from schools authorities in the Northern Territory and the University of Melbourne.

Care After a Suicide Attempt

This research project included surveys of individuals who had attempted suicide and carers of people who had attempted suicide, with a mix of quantitative and qualitative research techniques being used to form a picture of the experiences these people had of the health system, other services and the supports they needed during this critical time. Lifeline was able to assist in the recruitment of participants in the research because of its contact with suicidal individuals and their carers through services and community based programs – Lifeline was able to provide a safe and sensitive environment through which the invitation to participate in research was made. This study was completed through the Centre for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention at the University of New South Wales.



6. Policy and Advocacy

Lifeline is keen to support evidenced based policy on suicide prevention and the creation of more resilient and mentally healthy communities in Australia. The work of the Lifeline Research Foundation includes translation of the available research evidence, expertise and consumer knowledge into proposals for policy reform.

During 2014, the Lifeline Research Foundation has contributed to policy and practice development in the following ways:

- National Mental Health Commission Review: submissions made on the potential for improvements to the policy recognition, funding and coordination of Tele-Web services in Australia, including helplines. In particular, the various helplines could achieve greater collaboration around their distinct roles and capabilities, with Lifeline 13 11 14 operating as the national primary help line.
- Mental Health Australia: contributed to the development of a “Blueprint for Mental Health Reform” which highlighted the importance of Tele-Web services and eMental Health, of improved linkages between helplines and other mental health services and for greater attention to achieving measurable improvements in suicide prevention by regarding it as a priority public health issue.
- NSW Mental Health Commission: supported the principles underpinning the NSW Commission’s report Living Well: Putting people at the centre of mental health reform in NSW. This includes a reorientation to early intervention and the promotion of mental health for individuals, families and communities. Lifeline is well aware of the importance of earlier attention to emerging mental health issues to avert the onset of a crisis situation.
- Northern Territory Action Plan on Suicide Prevention: lodged a submission on behalf of Lifeline Central Australia and Lifeline Top End recommending greater attention to crisis support services such as Lifeline 13 11 14 and Lifeline online Crisis Support Chat, and for promotion of these services to vulnerable groups.
- Human Rights Commission: National Children’s Commissioner Inquiry into Intentional Self-harm and Suicidal Behaviour in Children: presented to an Expert Forum on the importance of providing immediate, trusted supports for young people in distress, such as the Online Crisis Support Chat Service. Also raised the need for linkages between suicide prevention and the juvenile justice, child protection and family support service systems.
- World Health Organisation Report on Suicide: provided input to the Australian response to this report through the National Coalition for Suicide Prevention, hosted by Suicide Prevention Australia. Lifeline supported ‘crisis intervention’ as an area in Australia that could be improved through greater promotion of crisis support services, including at suicide hot spots, and better coordination of these services with hospital and health services.
- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22: submission made highlighting the benefits of workforce and community capacity building programs such as DV-alert which Lifeline Australia delivers, equipping front line health and community service workers to respond effectively to clients who experience domestic violence issues in their lives.
- Online Best Practice Forum: hosted by the Young and Well Co-operative Research Centre: contributed to sector discussions about online service standards in the suicide prevention and mental health fields.
- Department of Health: provided relevant senior officers with briefing on current and emerging research in helplines and crisis intervention for suicide prevention.

The Lifeline Research Foundation participates on the following Boards and Groups and contributes to various Committees:

- Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) – Executive Director is a Board Director
- Trauma Informed Care Advisory Group (Mental Health Coordinating Council)
- Stakeholders Group – Gap Park (Woollahra Council)
- RUOK? Day Scientific Advisory Group



Alan Woodward from Lifeline joins other Mental Health Australia members in Advocacy at Parliament House

7. International Liaison

Helplines are found worldwide. There is value in the exchange of experience and research knowledge across helplines and related Tele-Web services.

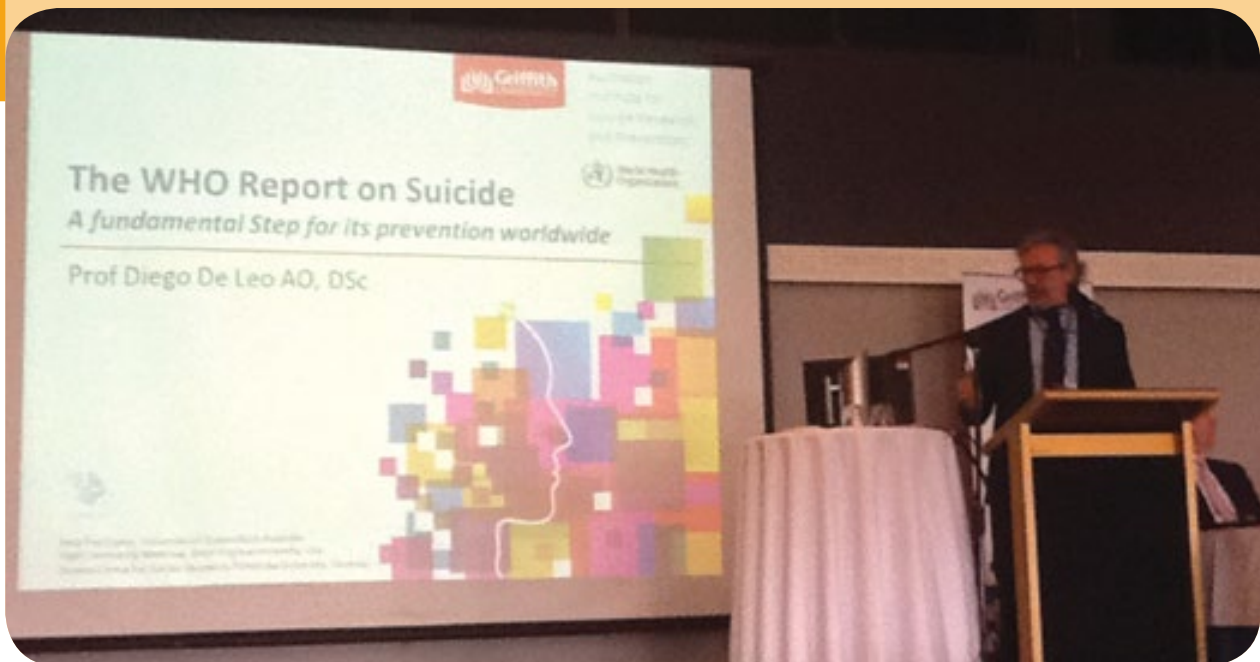
The Lifeline Research Foundation contributes to international exchange in the following ways:

- The Executive Director of the Lifeline Research Foundation is Convenor of the Helplines Special Interest Group, under the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP). Members of this group will contribute to two Symposiums on Helpline topics at the upcoming IASP Congress in Montreal Canada in 2015. An online forum also exists for this Group to discuss issues affecting helplines worldwide:
- The World Alliance of Crisis Helplines has been formed by the major helplines networks with Lifeline Australia included as a founding member along with Befrienders Worldwide, LifeLine International, International Federation of Telephone Emergency Services (Europe), and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (USA). This Alliance will be able to represent helplines before the World Health Organisation. A publication on helplines and their role in suicide prevention has been submitted to the WHO. The Lifeline Research Foundation participates in meetings of the World Alliance of Crisis Helplines.
- The UK Samaritans which operates the national helpline for England, Scotland and Wales is embarking on major research on the benefits and impacts of the helpline service for consumers. The Executive Director has been invited to participate in an advisory group for this research program, thereby facilitating exchange between the UK and Australia on helplines research and implications for service improvement.

8. Conferences and Presentations in 2014

Lifeline Research Foundation has presented at:

- Suicide Prevention Australia Conference – on the Social Return on Investment study of Lifeline Online Crisis Support Chat service
- Hunter New England Health – GP Education – on suicide prevention and the place of crisis support services such as Lifeline
- Riverina NSW Suicide Prevention Groups Forum – on community action for suicide prevention
- South East Sydney Medicare Local Mental Health Forum – on suicide prevention and the place of crisis support services such as Lifeline
- World Suicide Day 2014 Forum hosted by Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention – on helplines and suicide prevention
- Central Coast Suicide Prevention Network – on suicide hot spots and the effectiveness of the Lifeline Hot Spot Emergency Phone service
- Federation University (University of Ballarat) Psychology Forum - on theory and practice of crisis support and its place in health and human services systems
- LGBTI Mind Out Conference – on helplines and crisis support services
- National Coalition for Suicide Prevention – on what makes an effective suicide prevention strategy, and systemic improvements in suicide prevention



Professor Diego de Leo, from the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, opens the 2014 World Suicide Prevention Day Forum

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More information about research projects and copies of Reports and Papers may be obtained from the Lifeline Research Foundation.

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