



Media Release

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New study will try to save lives by better understanding suicide

A ground-breaking study will examine every Victorian suicide over a two-year period to try to save the lives of people who may be at risk of suicide in the future.

beyondblue has joined forces with the Coroners Court of Victoria and The University of Melbourne to fund a study investigating over 1000 confirmed suicides and other suspected suicide deaths that occurred between 2009 and 2010.

The \$277,390 study will identify the frequency and nature of any contact these people had with health, housing and other services such as police, ambulance and health professionals before they died.

beyondblue CEO Kate Carnell AO said the findings would be used to enhance Victoria's suicide register, managed by the Coroners Court, to create a comprehensive map of the service pathways people used before their death.

"Any suicide is a tragic event and we know that in the lead up to their deaths, many people who take their lives often have contact with services or other agencies that act as pathways to health services," she said.

"This study will reveal the sort of contact people had with these organisations in the 12 months before their deaths and why they made this contact.

"For the first time, we'll be able to get vital information on the pathways that people were on before they died.

"Understanding these pathways means agencies can help improve outcomes for at-risk people, who often experience depression or anxiety.

"For example, if the data shows that at-risk people are having a lot of contact with a particular organisation before they die, we can ensure people at that organisation are able to identify people in crisis.

"If the data reveals a pattern among at-risk people of accessing certain services, we can help ensure staff at those agencies intervene if they notice other people on similar pathways.

"This project has the potential to offer significant new insights into how we as a community can be more aware and help to prevent suicides."

Victorian State Coroner Judge Ian Gray said the study would also provide crucial information for coroners investigating suicide deaths.

"The role of coroners is to reduce preventable deaths and suicides are the second leading cause of deaths resulting from external injuries in Victoria and indeed Australia.

"This information will be of immense assistance to coroners investigating these types of deaths and in particular, when they consider making prevention-focused recommendations in this area."

It is hoped the findings will be expanded nationally to try to save lives across the country.

On average, 550 Victorians die from suicide each year, almost double the Victorian road toll in 2012.

The study will take two years to complete with each death examined by a team of Coroners Court and University of Melbourne researchers.

The researchers will review each death and code 161 different types of data including service contacts, along with numerous socio-demographic and risk-factor variables.

One of the first tasks of the study will be to establish a working party made up of suicide prevention advocates and representatives from the health sector and other organisations.

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