

Special Interest Group on Postvention and Bereavement Newsletter

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POSTVENTION AUSTRALIA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE BEREAVED BY SUICIDE

Postvention Australia is a newly formed not-for-profit organisation designed to prevent suicide through supporting and helping people who are ‘left behind’ after a suicide takes place. It originated from accumulating evidence that this is a neglected area of suicide prevention: people bereaved through suicide are up to six times more likely to take their life than the general population. The Board consists of some of Australia’s leading experts in suicide prevention and postvention as well as bereaved representatives. Professor Ian Webster AO launched the Association in June last year at the NSW Parliament House.

AIMS

Postvention Australia aims to reduce the impact of suicide by establishing a network that provides best practice postvention information and services, holistic, physical, emotional and spiritual support, comfort and understanding for the health and well-being of all Australians affected by a suicide.

OBJECTIVES

- to prevent suicide and self-harm by supporting the bereaved through an integrated and cohesive approach at a local, state, national and international level
- to enhance communication *via* an interactive website between those who have been bereaved by suicide and those assisting them
- to represent the issues, rights and interests of Australians who have been bereaved by suicide
- to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with suicide by increasing access to evidence-based information and resources

- to advocate for, assist with and support the development of policy positions on issues affecting Australians bereaved by suicide
- to facilitate networking and collaboration between postvention researchers, policymakers, service providers and other related organizations
- to participate in research projects that develop useful materials and knowledge to support those who have been bereaved by suicide

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD FOR POSTVENTION AUSTRALIA ARE:

- Professor Diego De Leo (Chair)
- Richard Sands –Treasurer)
- Dr Sheila Clark
- Dr Dagmar Ceramidas
- Cindy Mills
- Dr Diana Sands (Deputy Chair)
- Envoy Alan Staines (National Secretary)
- Dr Noritta Morseu-Diop
- Karl Andriessen
- Estelle Dragun

Cindy Mills and Estelle Dragun lost their daughters to suicide.

The Board members of Postvention Australia, as listed above, have a wealth of experience in postvention.

Three of the Board members have received the IASP International Farberow Award for their services in postvention: Dr Sheila Clark in 2001, Karl Andriessen in 2005 and Alan Staines in 2013.

THE PROBLEM OF SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT

It is estimated that over 2,200 people take their lives each year in Australia representing approximately 2.2% of the total burden of disease in Australia. For reasons including lack of uniformity in collecting, reporting and data recording, suicides in Australia have been under-reported. Definitional idiosyncrasies and desire to reduce suicide-related stigma among various ethnic and religious communities across Australia further compound the difficulty of accurate reporting of Australian deaths by suicide.

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The social, emotional, health and economic consequences of suicide are immense. For each suicide at least six people close to the person who died are left severely grieving. This means at least 13,000 people are newly bereaved by the suicide of someone close to them each year, and 50,000 are struggling with grief at any one time in Australia, considering the longevity of suicide grief.

The Senate Inquiry into Suicides in Australia heard that those left behind are at greater risk of mental and physical ill health, social isolation, drug and alcohol addiction and prolonged employment difficulties and job loss. One report from the Dr Edward Koch Foundation Ltd. stated that a single suicide incurred 43 counselling interventions. Extrapolating these personal costs reveals a substantial economic burden on the Australian community. Although the actual incidence of suicide in the Australian population has been inaccurately reported and recorded, the financial costs of suicide have been estimated at around \$17.5 billion annually

To lose someone close by suicide commonly results in intense emotional trauma, shock, grief, guilt, physical and mental ill health and adverse social consequences. Information and support have been demonstrated to be important in helping the bereaved survive through the pain of grief. As a widow said recently to one of the Postvention Australia Board members, "I went to the group for many years, being very selfish, only to keep myself alive." Well-structured, evidence-based postvention is paramount in preventing further suicides. Postvention is prevention.

Recent research has demonstrated that although Commonwealth and other initiatives have developed some valuable postvention interventions and resources, getting help and information is still a haphazard process as there no clear pathway to help.





FARBEROW AWARD

Alan Staines OAM OF (Envoy), was the Founder and Director of Hope for Life, the Salvation Army's Suicide Prevention Bereavement Support Services from 2006 up to June 2013. He was a driving force behind the establishment of the Salvation Army's suicide bereavement services. For over 30 years, Alan has played a pivotal role in the recognition and development of Postvention Services in Australia.

Alan was responsible for convening the Inaugural Australian Postvention Conference in 2007 and subsequent Australian Postvention Conferences in 2009 and 2012 for the bereaved by suicide. He was also responsible for developing the Australian Lifekeeper Memory Quilt initiative which provides families with a tangible and therapeutic way of remembering their loved ones.

In 2012, this initiative was researched and evaluated by Dr Kath Peters (University of Western Sydney) in collaboration with Alan. The Quilt Project has now expanded to include almost every State in Australia. In 2013, Alan was responsible for the formation and establishment of Postvention Australia – A National Association for the Bereaved by Suicide. The need for this body was highlighted at the Postvention Conferences Alan convened. He is a Board member of Postvention Australia and serves as National Secretary of the Association.

Alan has been actively involved in suicide prevention / Bereavement Support programs for more than three decades. He played a key role in establishing the Salvo Care Line (1983) and the Salvation Army OASIS Youth Care Centre in Surry Hills (1992). In 1991 Alan founded and helped establish Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) and for 18 years he served on the SPA Board as National Secretary. He undertook a range of additional responsibilities including organising SPA's National Conferences.

Alan's ongoing vision is to establish and build a strong network that provides holistic, physical, emotional and spiritual support, comfort and understanding to enhance the health and well-being of every person bereaved by suicide. He continues to serve as a Board Member of The Salvation Army's Hope for Life national programs.

In 2003, in recognition of Alan's perseverance and tireless efforts in suicide prevention, he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to young people through Suicide Prevention Australia and the Salvation Army. In 2004, he was honoured with Life Membership of Suicide Prevention Australia. In 2007, Alan received the Order of the Founder (OF), the highest Salvation Army honour for distinguished service.

Alan was responsible for convening the 3 day 4th Australian Conference Postvention Conference held June 5th–7th 2014 hosted by Postvention Australia - National Association for the Bereaved by Suicide at the University of NSW Sydney.

DE LEO FUND OF ITALY

Katarzyna Ratkowska & Diego De Leo

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The Association De Leo Fund is non-profit organization that operates mainly in Padua (Veneto Region, Italy), offering free help to people who have lost a loved one due to sudden and violent types of death, such as suicide, homicide, road and work-related accidents and natural disasters. Its staff is composed of health professionals (Medical Doctors and Clinical Psychologists) and volunteers specifically trained on helping bereaved persons and provide support and crisis management.

For clients, the initial contact with the association occurs through a toll-free number (800-168678), Monday to Friday, from 9.00am to 1.00pm and from 3.00pm to 7.00pm.

Through the call, volunteers offer the caller various types of support: tele-help, online interaction, face-to-face and group intervention. Telephone support is provided to people calling from all over Italy (nationally) and is based on an active and empathetic approach in which persons are carefully listened, assessed and helped to deal with the difficult situation that has motivated the contact. The volunteer can also provide the caller with some information and indication they may eventually need in order to seek other forms of support at the national level. To residents in the surrounding areas of Padua, it is proposed a meeting with one of the professionals of the association. In this case, at least two telephone calls are arranged, during which most relevant information is gathered and structured in pre-prepared format. If requested help can effectively be provided, an appointment with a De Leo Fund professional is scheduled.

Together with the caller, the professional decides then if to commence on a path of individual support or group intervention. The individual support is provided to support the persons in their bereavement process and not with a view of providing psychotherapy or treatment of any psychopathology. In other words, we consider the caller just a human being needing help, and not a psychiatric patient. It is possible for callers to undertake both an individual path and group participation.

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There is no pre-defined number of meetings; the length of the take-over depends on the specific needs of the person. The group work is instead based on the principle of the mutual aid: the professional facilitates the interactions and exchanges of experiences among participants, who – at the end – are the real source of support to each other.

The association offers two different types of group participation: one dedicated to people bereaved by suicide, the other to individuals affected by all other types of traumatic loss. Both groups are structured in an 'open' format. Another popular service of the association is an online forum reserved to survivors of suicide, where participants can anonymously share their experiences, and both give and receive support in an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance.

De Leo Fund has also a section dedicated to research projects (presently on online and telephone interactions) and provides training and education upon request.

NEWSLETTER FEATURE

We hope to feature a biography of each of the IASP Postvention Taskforce Members over future issues of this newsletter. If you would like to have your biography featured in this newsletter, please forward a short piece of 500 words or less and a photo of yourself to;

sean.mccarthy@hse.ie

ANNOUNCEMENT / INVITATION

At the 15th ESSSB, there will be a lunch meeting for all attendees working the postvention field, survivors, clinicians, and researchers alike.

The lunch meeting would be scheduled at lunch time, 28th August 2014, facilitated by the IASP SiG on Suicide Bereavement and Postvention.

This lunch meeting would be a great opportunity to meet with Postvention workers from all over the world, to meet new and old friends, to discuss the Postvention work at this conference as well as the plans for the upcoming 2015 World Congress

Please contact Karl Andriessen for more information.

Karl.andriessen@gmail.com

8TH ANNUAL 5K WALK/RUN TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE— A MEMORABLE DAY FOR SURVIVORS



On Saturday, February 8th, EMPACT-Suicide Prevention Centre held its 8th Annual Jeremiah Memorial 5K Walk/Run to Support Survivors of Suicide in Tempe, Arizona (USA).

The 1st Annual Jeremiah Memorial Walk was initiated in 2007 by a father, Chris, who lost his 19 year old son to suicide. The day before Father's Day in 2005, Chris's son Jeremiah took his life. As Chris shares it, 'the fallout of that bomb called suicide was just trying to make it through another day.' Eventually his grief would take him away from his home and family in Michigan to Arizona to escape the pain.

It was in Arizona that he found EMPACT-SPC's Survivors of Suicide program and attended his first SOS meeting. Chris has shared that because of the love and support that he received from the group, he was able to begin his healing journey. After 2 years of being in the group, Chris decided to become a volunteer, expressing a desire to 'give back' to EMPACT-SPC in some way, while also offering fellow survivors a chance to come together and remember their loved ones.

He developed the idea for the Survivor Walk, and in 2007 the 1st Annual Jeremiah Memorial 5K Walk was held. That first year, over 150 attended. At this year's annual event, close to 600 survivors/community members attended, tripling the numbers from previous years.

This annual event has been one way that survivors can honour their loved ones who have died by suicide, as well as a way EMPACT-SPC can raise community awareness about suicide prevention and postvention.

For more information about EMPACT-Suicide Prevention Center's Suicide Prevention / Postvention programs, please contact;

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UPCOMING EVENTS



27-30 August, 2014

15th European Symposium on Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour

Suicide prevention is mental health promotion

Tallinn, Estonia

The ESSSB is a bi-annual event, where people acting in the field of suicide research and prevention - researchers, clinicians, volunteers - can meet, share experiences and present recent achievements in order to save lives all over the world. The ESSSB offers not only a high-level scientific programme with plenary lectures, parallel sessions, workshops and posters, but also social events that connect conference participants in an informal way. The slogan of the ESSSB15 - "Suicide prevention is mental health promotion" - emphasizes an integrated and hopeful approach to suicide prevention. The ESSSB15 will be held in the vibrant Nordic city of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. Conference organizers are the Estonian-Swedish Mental Health and Suicidology Institute (ERSI, www.suicidology.ee).

16-20 June, 2015

XXVIII IASP World Congress

New Technologies and New Discoveries in Suicide Prevention

Montréal, Québec, Canada

The 28th World Congress of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, in collaboration with the **Quebec Suicide Prevention Association**, the **Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention** and Suicide Action Montreal, will be held from June 16-20, 2015 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The congress theme is: New Technologies and New Discoveries in Suicide Prevention. For further information, please contact Professor Brian Mishara; mishara.brian@uqam.ca

CONTACT DETAILS

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