

VIRTUAL EVENT
31ST WORLD CONGRESS
21ST - 24TH SEPTEMBER 2021 - GOLD COAST, QLD, AUSTRALIA

Press Release September 2021

Australian Prime Minister and Key Global Officials Join The IASP 31st World Congress Opening Proceedings

The 31st International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) World Congress opened proceedings officially from Australia this afternoon with key officials calling for reform, investment, renewed commitments and action to prevent suicides worldwide.

Suicide prevention is a global priority. The reduction of suicide rates by 2030 is a target within the UN sustainable development goals and this is echoed within the recently renewed World Health Organisation's Mental Health Action Plan.

IASP President Professor Rory O'Connor was joined by Australian Prime Minister Hon Scott Morrison MP, Dévora Kestel, Director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the World Health Organisation, Christine Morgan, CEO of Australia's National Mental Health Commission, Hon. David Coleman MP, Australia's Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and the Hon. Julia Gillard AC, 27th Australian Prime Minister and Chair of Beyond Blue and Wellcome, as part of the opening proceedings of the IASP 31st World Congress.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison highlighted the record investments in mental health and suicide prevention that are being made in Australia, setting a precedent worldwide but acknowledged that there is still more to be done.

"Prioritising suicide prevention gives us permission to imagine a world without suicide" stated Scott Morrison MP

The COVID-19 Pandemic has also exacerbated risk factors to suicide making the timeliness of this congress more pertinent. However, the Hon Julia Gillard AC states;

"In the wake of the pandemic, we have a unique opportunity to fix a broken system"

IASP President Professor Rory O'Connor echoed this sentiment within his presentation on what we know so far on the impact of COVID-19 on suicide risk.

"My concern is that a whole generation, the youth generation, has taken the full brunt of the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health and so more really needs to be done."

The increasing importance of the perspectives of those with a living experience of suicide was also evident in all opening remarks. A lived experience perspective strengthens the understanding and compassion that goes into preventing suicides.

"It is through your voices and your courage that we learn and can ensure that we bring into effect targeted and effective ways to prevent suicide" stated Christine Morgan, National Mental Health Commission, Australia.

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As Dévora Kestel, Director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the World Health Organisation, concluded;

“The years ahead of us will show whether the accountability set by these targets will be translated into corresponding action and resources to save lives worldwide.”

The IASP World Congress is the primary global collaborative opportunity for expert thinking related to suicide and suicide prevention. We welcome three full virtual days including keynote sessions covering topics such as: Suicide in Boys & Men, Lived Experience, Female Suicide & Self-Harm, Workplace, Loneliness & Disconnectedness, Covid-19, Children & Adolescents, Community and Implementation.

The congress is taking place virtually, hosted from Australia from 21st – 24th September 2021.

For the full detailed programme: <https://www.iasp.info/goldcoast2021/programme/>

Media Passes are available on request. Email communications@iasp.info

**Congress assets developed with the support of Tourism & Events Queensland.
<https://www.queensland.com/>**

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Media talent: Professor Rory O'Connor: President of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, Rory O'Connor has a long-standing interest in suicide research and prevention; he has been working in the field since 1994. He is Professor of Health Psychology at the University of Glasgow in Scotland and Past President of the International Academy of Suicide Research. Rory leads the Suicidal Behaviour Research Laboratory (www.suicideresearch.info) at the University of Glasgow, one of the leading suicide and self-harm research groups in the UK. He can be found on Twitter [@suicideresearch](https://twitter.com/suicideresearch).

Notes for editors:

The International Association for Suicide Prevention

The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) leads the global effort in suicide prevention having developed an effective forum that is proactive in creating strong collaborative partnerships and promoting evidence-based action in order to reduce the incidence of suicide and suicidal behaviour (www.iasp.info). Established in 1960, IASP is the largest international association dedicated to suicide prevention and to the alleviation of the effects of suicide and collaborates closely with relevant international organisations.



In partnership with



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Important note: Journalists reporting on this event are advised to include information on relevant help lines and websites. The following website provides details of Crisis Centres around the globe:
https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres/

Journalists reporting on this event are also advised to adhere to the following guidelines;
Guidelines related to reporting on suicide during the COVID-19 pandemic:
https://www.iasp.info/pdf/2020_Briefing_Statement_Reporting_on_Suicide_During_COVID19.pdf

General guidance for communicating about suicide:
<https://mindframe.org.au/suicide/communicating-about-suicide>