

The #chatsafe project

Using social media to prevent youth suicide

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BACKGROUND

Social media presents an important social context to consider when it comes to youth suicide prevention. For some young people, social media is an acceptable and non-stigmatising environment to communicate about their suicide-related thoughts and behaviours and to seek help. For others, coming across suicide-related content can be distressing and lead to copy-cat behaviour. While there were guidelines for mainstream media to report on suicide safely, there was no guidance for young people or for the context of social media specifically.

AIMS

1. DEVELOP A SET OF EVIDENCE-INFORMED GUIDELINES SPECIFIC TO SUICIDE-RELATED COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

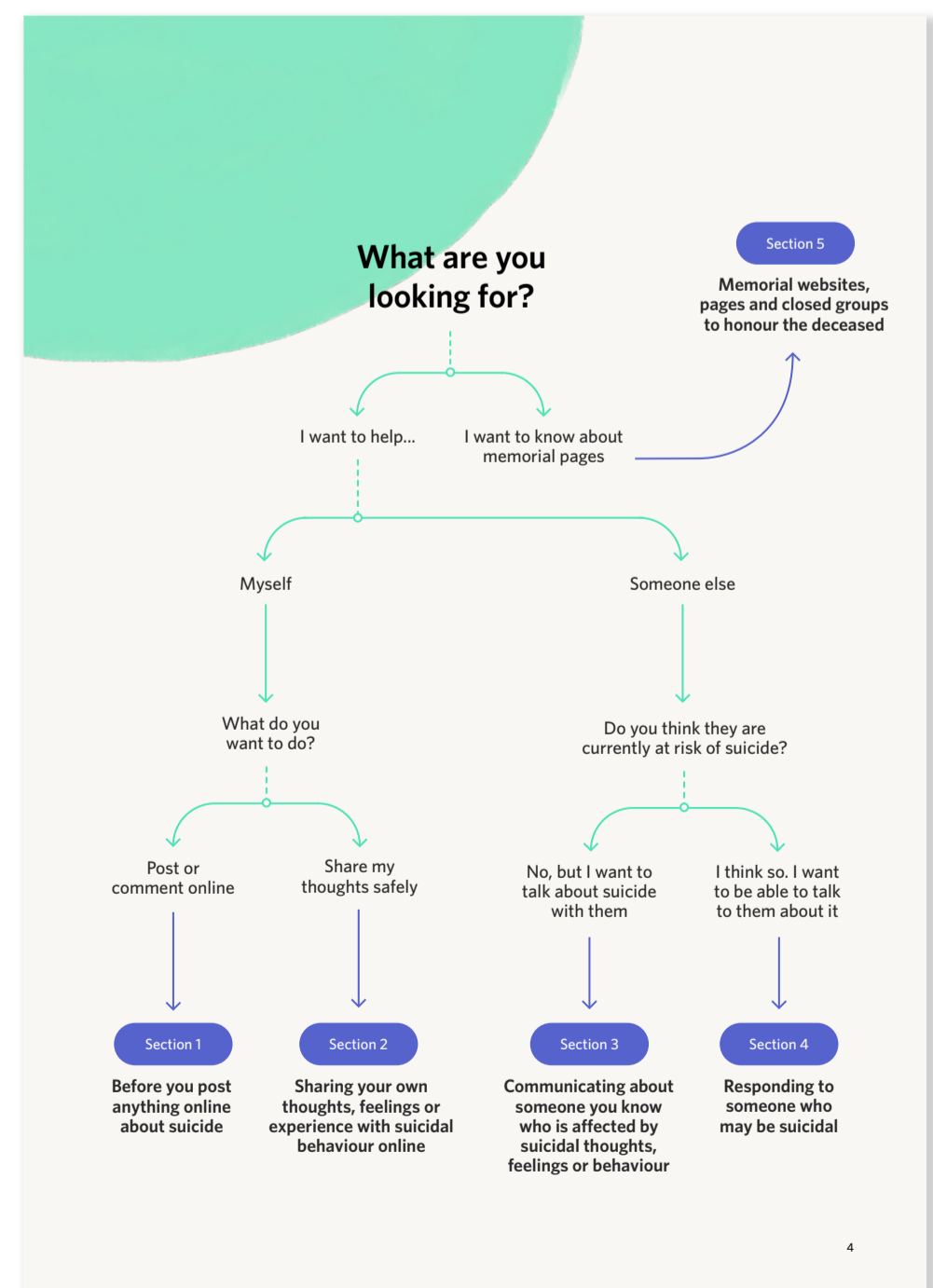
Method: The guidelines were developed using a Delphi expert consensus method with two expert panels: young people (N = 27) and professionals (N = 43).

Findings: The #chatsafe guidelines were developed and include information about sharing suicide-related experiences safely, supporting a friend, and communicating after a suicide death (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 1. THE #CHATSFAE GUIDELINES



FIGURE 2. TOPICS INCLUDED WITHIN THE #CHATSFAE GUIDELINES



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2. IMPLEMENT THE GUIDELINES VIA A CO-DESIGNED SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

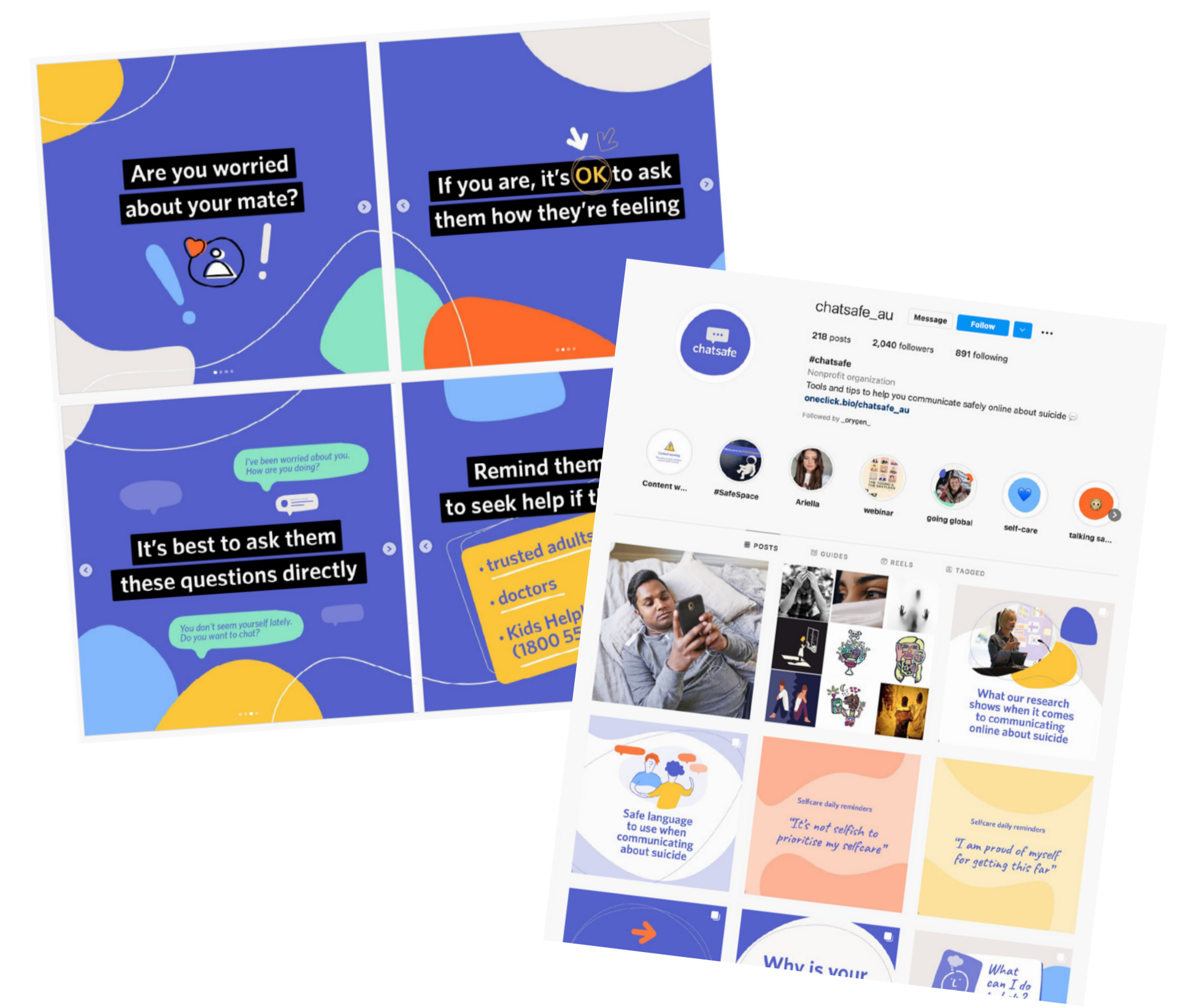
Method: Eleven co-design workshops were conducted with a diverse range of young people aged 17 to 25 years across Australia (N = 134). Participants took part in both define (brainstorming) and design (creation) activities.

Findings: The majority of young people reported that the workshops were both safe and enjoyable, and reported feeling better equipped to communicate safely online about suicide. Workshop outcomes informed the creation of a national social media campaign.

FIGURE 3. PHOTOS OF #CHATSFAE CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP (NOTE: PHOTOS ARE NOT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS)



FIGURE 4. EXAMPLES OF #CHATSFAE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT



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3. EVALUATE CAMPAIGN EFFECTIVENESS FOR INCREASING CONFIDENCE AND SAFETY WHEN COMMUNICATING ONLINE ABOUT SUICIDE

Method: The campaign was evaluated with a sample of 189 young people aged 16-25 years in a pre/post study examining the acceptability, safety, and feasibility of delivering suicide prevention information via social media, as well as its impact on perceived self-efficacy, confidence and safety when communicating online about suicide.

Findings: The evaluation showed the campaign to be safe and acceptable; it also increased participant ability, confidence and safety when communicating online about suicide. The #chatsafe campaign also appeared to improve aspects of online behaviour, with participants reporting being: less likely to share suicide-related content; more likely to monitor their posts for harmful content; and being more likely to contact someone directly if they believed they were at risk, following the intervention.

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CONCLUSION

This project has produced the world's first evidence-informed guidelines and social media campaign for safe online communication about suicide for young people. The findings paint a promising picture for the potential impact of a universal suicide prevention campaign and suggest that it can be safe to utilize social media for the purpose of suicide prevention. Future directions for the project include updating the #chatsafe guidelines, conducting a randomised-controlled trial of the #chatsafe intervention, and exploring how #chatsafe can be used as a real-time postvention response.



For more #chatsafe research and resources, visit the #chatsafe website <https://www.orygen.org.au/chatsafe>