



# Wesley LifeForce Networks

In 2005 Wesley Mission, as a stakeholder in the communities of the Central Coast and Sutherland New South Wales, witnessed the formation of an organic and community led approach to preventing suicide. Community members and service providers along with the voice of lived experience came together and took action informed by local knowledge, local expertise and passion to make a difference in their communities. Through the work of Wesley Mission and its Wesley LifeForce Networks program, this organic and community led approach was evolved into a framework and received funding in 2007 from the Commonwealth Government's Department of Health.

More than 11 years later, Wesley LifeForce has now established and continues to provide support to more than 90 community led suicide prevention networks across Australia in all states and a number of territories. Wesley LifeForce Networks continues to receive funding from the Department of Health. Wesley LifeForce would like to honour the valuable contribution of Lived Experience in the Community Networks to which it supports.

## Key Facts

- More than 90 community led suicide prevention Networks established nationally
- Wesley LifeForce has supported the establishment of 19 Aboriginal community led suicide prevention Networks
- Key activities of Networks include raising awareness, increasing access to services, coordination of education and training initiatives, advocacy and support to those bereaved by suicide
- Wesley LifeForce Networks support the coordination and collaboration of more than 1320 service providers and community organisations across Australia
- Wesley LifeForce Network memberships and affiliate memberships make up more than 2600 people, having a broad reach and impacting many more lives across the communities to which they represent



Ruth Polley  
Gympie Regional

**“Numbers of people within the Network have a close understanding of the impact of suicide in their personal and working life. I myself have supported friends in my personal life and people within my professional role.”**

### Innovative initiatives developed through your Network

**Revolution of Care** Go to people in the community and giving them food, The idea is that they emulate this the next year for someone else such as another workplace. This is part of applying RU OK DAY into our community.

**Lunchbox Forums** Professional development while you eat! An hour long session with a variety of guest speakers. A way of getting issues and topics of suicide discussed without a financial burden to community organisations.

**Tradie Breakfast** an information giving and relationship building breakfast for builders and tradies. Done in association with Master Builders Qld, Mates in Construction, Mitre 10 and the Network.

**Love Tatts** Workshops run encouraging your young people to design a tattoo of the word “love”. Following on from the “write love on your arm” initiative. Young people put together a design and picked two to be produced.

**Remembrance Ceremony** Every year we use a theme and have a creative response within a ceremony in order to recognise and remember those who are bereaved or touched by suicide.



Han Von Ohle  
Port Adelaide  
Suicide Prevention  
Network

**“The passion, awareness and lived experience that Hans shares with the Port Adelaide Suicide Prevention Network is highly valued, respected and continues to motivate us all.”**

### Lived experience

Hans Von Ohle (Ceduna Suicide Prevention Network Member and Affiliate member of the Port Adelaide Suicide Prevention Network) was first introduced to the Suicide Prevention Networks through an acquaintance who worked as an Ambulance Officer. Hans was previously linked with Black Dog Ride and later commenced counselling, which he refers to as “the beginning of my journey into wellbeing”. It was during this time that Hans’ passion to educate the community into being “ready friends” began to bloom. The neighbour who had provided Hans with support when at his lowest point highlighted the importance of human connection and the power of informal support. Hans is passionate about breaking down the fear and stigma that surrounds suicide and is a strong advocate for Wesley LifeForce’s Suicide Prevention Training Program. Hans promotes the importance of checking in with friends (via text or phone call) who are

experiencing hardship and comments on how “rewarding” it feels to “reach a point where this connection and support are no longer needed”. Hans believes that he grows through the connections established with the Suicide Prevention Networks and that he is slowly helping to build trust in others to combat suicide in the community.

### Network Activities

- Successful launch and community art competition event to develop Network logo
- Development of marketing material, including wrist bands, info cards and banner
- Hosted World Suicide Prevention Day event at Semaphore Foreshore 2014
- Lived experience article written by Network Member and published online by “In Daily”
- Hosted several Suicide Prevention Workshops in collaboration with Wesley LifeForce
- Representation at the 2017 National Suicide Prevention Conference
- Member participation in the “Royal Adelaide Show - Ride Against Suicide 2018”

### Encouraging stories on the positive effect that a Network initiative has made in your community.

The evidence and drive to continue the Networks work is a result of the numerous number of organisations supporting the Network. Whether this be by donation of event and meeting venues, money donations, advertisement and promotion (local radio station), word-of-mouth (the local hospital encourages membership). Also the level of engagement with the group and encouragement by these local services and organisations including police and ambulance, shows a confidence and trust in the Network and the changes they are trying to encourage.

The network is critical of the work they do and always looking to improve and expand their reach. Phil believes one way in which they have evaluated the positivity and reach of the Network is the number of people engaging in the Network. Membership numbers are increasing, attendance to the training sessions are increasing. But also, the number of members and attendees going on to become accredited themselves is a reflection on the Network.



Phil Clancy  
Mitchell Shire  
Suicide Prevention  
Network

**“The Network aims to be the link between services and community and to do this they listen to the journey of those that have traveled the path themselves.”**