



Suicide Prevention
Collaborative
ILLAWARRA SHOALHAVEN

REPORT CARD 2022

Welcome



Members of the Collaborative, 2022

Welcome to the 2022 report card for the Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative (the Collaborative). This report will cover the period between 2020 and end of June 2022. We, like many, have experienced such turbulent change over this period – staffing and funding changes; the lasting impacts of bushfires and floods; the complexity of the pandemic, lock-downs and shifting to online environments; and overall, the significant impact that all of this has had on us as people, and as workers in the mental health and suicide prevention sector.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative holds central the value of the relationships we develop in working together. And throughout these challenging years, we have maintained our connection to each other and our work.

We are grateful to all members for their contributions, and especially highlight the commitment of those involved in our stream lead teams throughout the stream strategic planning process undertaken in 2022. There is much work still to be done but together we have laid the foundation for us all to work together to achieve success.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed their time, energy, and resources to the collective work of the Collaborative. Together, we are part of something truly special, and we can all feel very proud of our contributions.

“The Collaborative truly highlights the power of joint action – knowing your contribution isn’t the only one that is being made to reduce suicide deaths across the region, having people to talk to about the real challenges and hearing ideas/energy for positive change”.

- Linda, Collaborative member

Supports are available

If at any point you feel you need some support, please check out the back cover of this report for information on what’s available locally, online and via phone.

About suicide

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative would like to acknowledge that each of the statistics presented in this report represent a person – with a family, friends, and community grieving for their loss.

The truth about suicide

In 2021, Australia lost 3,144 people to suicide. That's more than double the number of people who died on our roads.

Three out of every four of these deaths were men. Rates of suicide are twice as high among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities, and also disproportionately high for people who identify as LGBTIQ+ and our active and returned Australian Defence Force community.

Suicide in our community

In the Illawarra Shoalhaven, we lose on average around 55 people per year to suicide. These rates are consistently higher than NSW and national averages.

It is estimated that for each death by suicide, there are an average 37 suicide attempts, 212 people who seriously consider an attempt and 135 people who are seriously impacted by grief and loss.

Suicide affects every part of the community and touches many lives, so we all play a role in supporting a suicide safe community.

What can we do?

To achieve the type of large-scale social change required to reduce suicide rates, we need to work differently. The Collaborative aims to do so by working together as a community, involving individuals and organisations alongside people with lived experience of suicide, and developing partnerships and strategies grounded in local knowledge and trust.

By working together in this way, we can be guided by our collective wisdom and expertise, along with research and evidence, to provide effective place-based interventions that will have a long-term impact.

A crucial part of our work involves people with lived experience of suicide. Incorporating lived experience helps to ensure that our work is relevant and appropriate, and led by the people who have needed it most.

Everyone plays a part

We know that simply providing more mental health services hasn't reduced suicide rates. This is perhaps because about one third of people who die by suicide are not in contact with a mental health service.

The causes of suicide are complex and there are many factors that can contribute to someone's level of risk. Our work takes a community-wide approach to suicide prevention and identifies that we all have a role to play in creating an Illawarra Shoalhaven community where everyone has a life worth living.

There are many ways you, and your organisation or community group, can contribute to this mission. By completing training and familiarising yourself with local services and pathways for help, you can become a trusted source of information and a pillar of support for those in need, while contributing to large-scale change.

Together, we can reduce suicides in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region.

Suicide affects everyone and we all have a role to play in prevention.

3 OUT OF EVERY **4** SUICIDE DEATHS ARE MALE



Suicide affects people from all sexual orientations, gender identities, and cultural, religious and language backgrounds

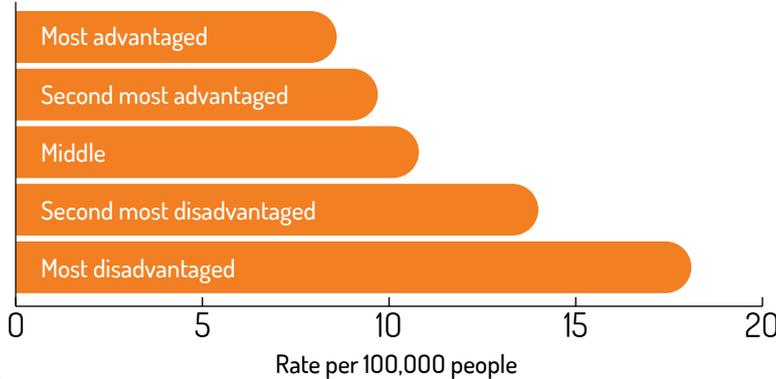
SUICIDE DOES **NOT** EQUAL MENTAL ILLNESS

More than a third

37%

of people who die by suicide did not have a mental health condition²

SUICIDE AFFECTS EVERY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROUP¹



IN AUSTRALIA, SUICIDE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN 15 AND 44 YEARS OLD.

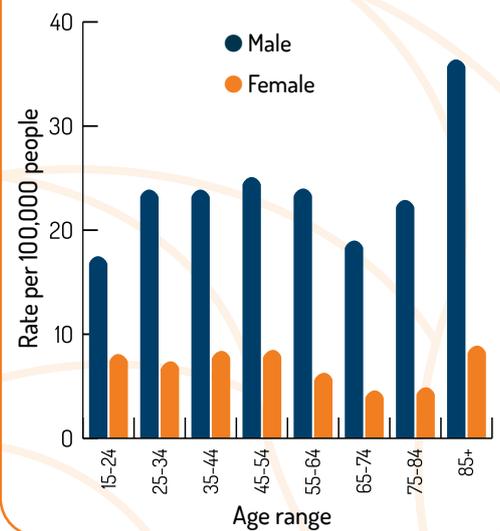


There are groups of people within our communities that are at higher risk of suicide. They include men, First Nations people, young people, Sexually and gender diverse (LGBTIQ+) people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people, older people and veterans.

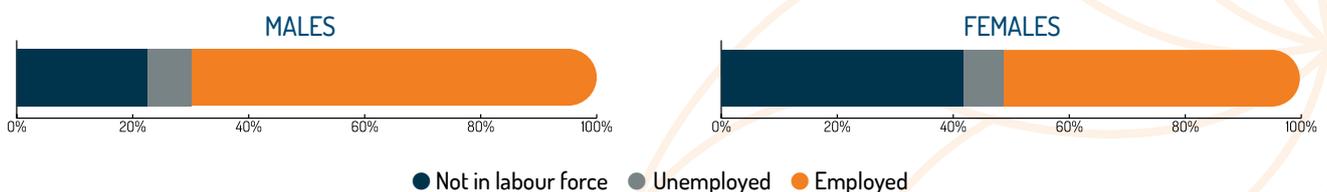
MORE THAN **2.5x** AS MANY AUSTRALIANS DIE BY SUICIDE THAN DIE IN CAR ACCIDENTS³



SUICIDE AFFECTS EVERY AGE GROUP⁴



SUICIDE AFFECTS EVERYONE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT STATUS¹



¹Source: AIHW website, National 2020 deaths.

²Source: ABS National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, July 2022

³Source: ABS Causes of Death report 2021.

⁴Source: Ghosh A, 2022. Suicide Snapshot - October 2022, COORDINARE - South Eastern NSW PHN

About the Collaborative

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative was formed in 2015 in response to a growing awareness that, in order to reduce the high rates of suicide attempts and deaths in our region, we needed to work differently. We identified the need to use our expertise collaboratively across the community, rather than in silos.

The Collaborative represents around 30 organisations from the community, education, health, Aboriginal organisations, local government, and research sectors. Crucially, the effectiveness of our collective approach relies on the fundamental contribution of local people with lived experience of suicide, using their expertise to drive real system change in suicide prevention.

Over the years we've witnessed our lived experience members develop their skills, confidence and ability to advocate for change alongside clinicians and other front-line workers. We're extremely proud to see many of them make the move into peer work, which is an expanding field of vital expertise.

Between 2016 and 2019 our work focused on implementing the *LifeSpan* framework as part of a research trial. Since 2019, we have undergone an essential strategic planning process and updated our ways of working framework. We're confident our refreshed approach lays a strong foundation for the next leg of our Collaborative journey.

Our region has faced significant challenges in recent years, including the Black Summer bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. These personal and collective experiences only reinforced the commitment of our members to work collaboratively using a systems approach to reduce suicides in our region. We believe the consistent effort of our members is creating the cultural readiness and systemic changes that will lead to positive long-term impact on suicide in our region.

None of this work would be possible without the enthusiastic support of our executive team and backbone staff, each of whom are crucial to the success of the Collaborative.

In this 2022 report card, we're excited to celebrate our achievements and share the groundwork we've laid to enable our long-term success and ensure the continuation of this important work.



Output from our consultation session with the NSW Mental Health Commission in 2022. Scribed by Zahra Zainal.

Highlights of the Collaborative journey so far...

Sept 2015

The Collaborative was formed recognising the need to work differently

Apr 2016

First backbone staff member employed
Alex Hains

Aug 2016

Illawarra Shoalhaven announced as *LifeSpan* trial site

Feb 2017

LifeSpan started - 6 monthly establishment phase begins

Aug 2017

Mindframe Plus training for local media and spokespeople

Sept 2017

Official launch of *LifeSpan* in Kiama incorporating RuOK? Day event



Sept 2018

LifeSpan 1 year celebration and RuOK? Day event in Kiama

Aug 2018

Members attend Lived Experience Summit

July 2018

Illawarra Mercury's #care2qpr campaign

2017

Next Steps Aftercare Service is established

2017

Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) launches



2019

Aboriginal suicide prevention engagement
Battle of the Countries Sorry Day walk

2019

Where to go for support card launches

July 2019

Presented at National Suicide Prevention Conference

July 2019

LifeSpan trial concluded

Sept 2019

Celebration and community event. First report card released

Oct 2019

Psychological treatments workshop for local mental health clinicians - SafeSide



May 2020

Postvention resource web page launched

Mar 2020

Pandemic started

Dec 2019

First strategy session for Postvention Working Group

Late 2019

School's communication protocol established

Late 2019

Recovery Camp held



Nov 2020

Lived experience bereavement videos launched

2020

Camp Magic postvention supports introduced

Apr 2021

First rapid response group formed

Apr 2021

Members participated in NSW Post Suicide Support program codesign

Apr 2021

StandBy established in the region



Jan 2022

Where to go for support cards refreshed

Jan 2022

New ways of working implemented

Oct 2021

headspace Lifeline community collaboratives NSW program

Jun 2021

Collaborative strategy workshop



Mar 2022

Start of stream strategic planning process

Apr 2022

1st stream lead team meetings

May 2022

2nd stream lead team meetings

Jun 2022

LifeSpan trial primary outcomes briefing

Jun 2022

3rd stream lead team meetings

Jul 2022

Whole of Collaborative workshop

Core principles

Using an evidence-based approach to suicide prevention, the Collaborative aims to build a culture where, rather than working in silos, people and organisations are dedicated to playing their role as part of a community. Together, we have a shared mission to reduce suicides in the Illawarra Shoalhaven.

We aim to achieve this by building our work around three core principles:

- genuine collaboration
- evidence-based and evidence-generating approach
- valuing lived experience

Genuine collaboration

Anyone is welcome to join the Collaborative, and the growing diversity of our membership echoes the need for a whole-of-community approach to suicide prevention. Rather than working in silos, members of the Collaborative are focused on genuine collaboration. We focus our efforts on opportunities that can only be fulfilled or are best achieved by working together.

All members have an equal say, and all contributions are respected and welcome. Collaborative members contribute their time, wisdom, expertise and resources to the work and are supported by a backbone team for structure and consistency.



Evidence-based and evidence-generating

Before undertaking any work, the Collaborative looks at the evidence around suicide prevention – evidence for what’s needed, as well as what will successfully address those needs.

We combine literature and research around suicide prevention with the wisdom of our local communities and the expertise of people with lived experience of suicide.

We also work toward building on existing evidence. We embed feedback loops into all our activities to monitor progress, and we share our learnings for the benefit of all.

Lived experience

The genuine and meaningful inclusion of people with a lived experience of suicide underpins all that we do. People with lived experience have a practical wisdom about which supports work, and what people really need. There is a genuine appreciation for lived experience participation across all aspects of our work, and we’ve been heartened to see Collaborative members from diverse sectors champion this approach.

Lived experience



How are people with lived experience involved?

Since its inception, the Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative has centred the insight and experiential wisdom of people with a lived experience of suicide in the development and implementation of collective suicide prevention activities across the region. The lived experience voice is very much woven into the fabric of how we work and who we, the Collaborative, are.

The Collaborative invests in building the capacity and confidence of our lived experience members to use their voices boldly, and with purpose. As an example, and with thanks to grant funding provided under the headspace Lifeline community collaborative's program, in 2022 we hosted *Roses in the Ocean* to deliver *Our Voice in Action* and *Voices of Insight* training for people with a lived experience of suicide across our region.

The Collaborative is proud to support the growing number of lived experience advocates and peer workers driving real systemic change in suicide prevention across our region.

What do we mean by 'lived experience'?

The Collaborative defines lived experience as people who have experienced suicidal thoughts, survived a suicide attempt, cared for someone through suicidal crisis, or been bereaved by suicide.

As this definition suggests, not all lived experiences are the same. We value having a diverse range of lived experience perspectives to inform our work.

"The Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative has embedded the experience of its lived experience members in all that it does. This is evident from the involvement of lived experience members from the project level, through streams to occupying a position on the executive. For me this shows that the Collaborative truly understands the value and utilises the skills of those lived experience members who are so often marginalised by other organisations."

- Mark, Collaborative member

LifeSpan results

Between 2016 and 2019, we focused on implementing the *LifeSpan* framework as part of a research trial. *LifeSpan* is an evidence-based, integrated regional systems approach to suicide prevention, developed by the Black Dog Institute.

As one of four trial sites, we aimed to implement the nine strategies of *LifeSpan* across health, education and community, underpinned by local ownership, lived experience inclusion, and data-driven decision-making.

Implementing the *LifeSpan* framework gave us a clear focus and the opportunity to develop strong collaborative relationships across health and education, alongside local community groups and people with lived experience of suicide.

This process had its challenges. Implementing the *LifeSpan* model required cultural readiness and significant changes in policy – shifts which extended beyond the two-year trial period.

Additionally, we discovered that implementing *LifeSpan* required state-wide reform to enable changes to occur within the health system. The framework helped to create the conditions for those changes to occur – a shift which is now being realised through the *NSW Towards Zero Suicides* initiatives, including adopting a new *Zero Suicides in Care* framework, and using *SafeSide* for workforce development.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) is now a leader across the state of NSW in the implementation of these initiatives – a huge milestone made possible by the cultural readiness developed through ISLHD's involvement with the Collaborative.

A primary aim of this trial was to examine whether the *LifeSpan* approach led to a reduction in rates of self-harm, which is considered a proxy measure for suicide attempts, and suicide deaths.

Our region observed no significant change in self-harm rates, however other regions with initially higher rates, less mature collaborative relationships, and who started the trial later, showed a significant decrease.

Key program outcomes

During the *LifeSpan* trial we established a number of successful programs that continue to play a positive role in suicide prevention in our region. The highlights below represent progress through to June 2022.

12,000+

Year 9 students have taken part in YAM – Youth Aware of Mental Health program. This led to a reduction in suicidal ideation and depression, increased help seeking intentions, which was sustained over six months.



652

people have accessed Next Steps, which provides community-based support following a suicide attempt.



100% of clients said 'the program was helpful in their recovery' and 'they would recommend this service to others'.

15,000+

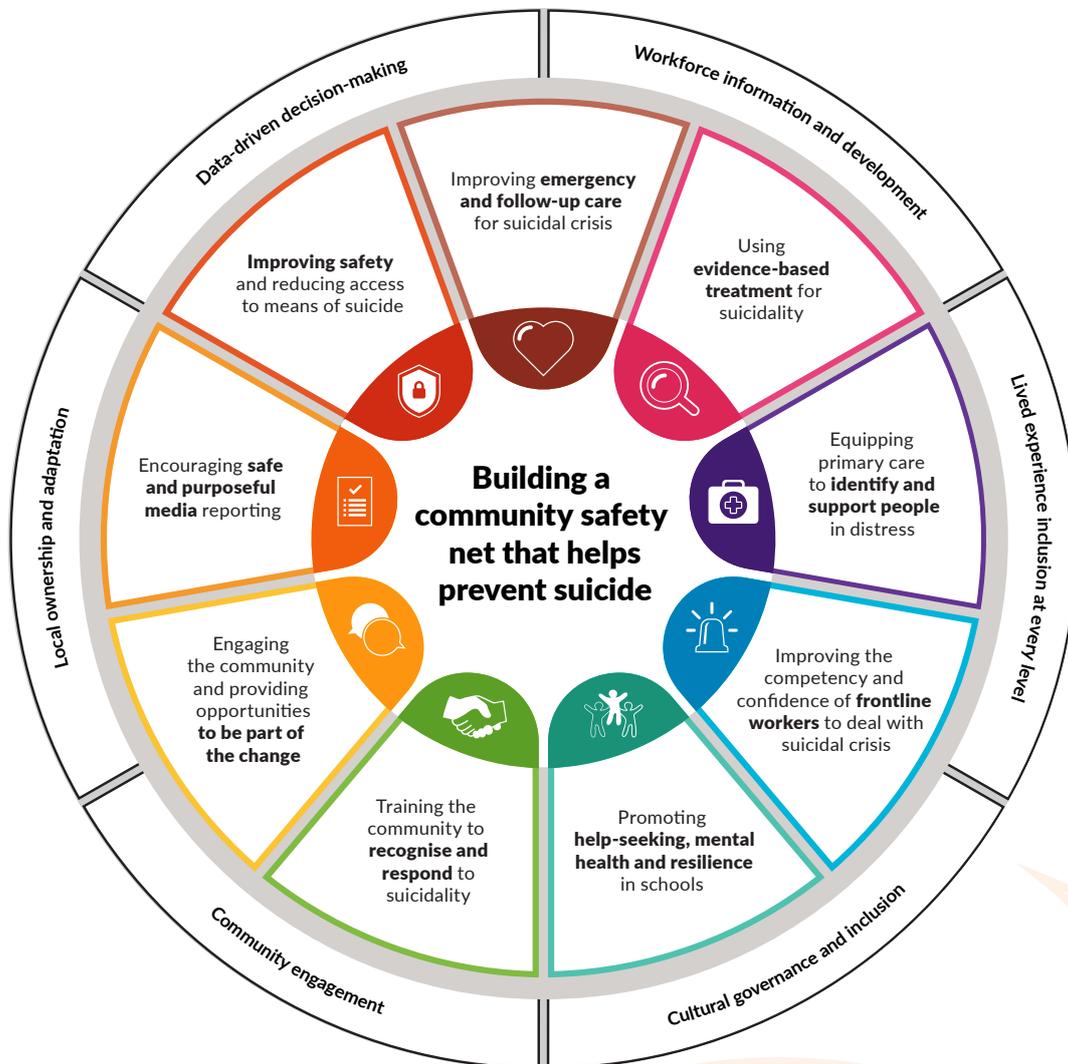
QPR online licences for suicide awareness and skills training distributed.



85,000+

Where to go for support cards created and distributed.





During the *LifeSpan* trial, none of the trial sites observed a significant change in the number of suicide deaths.

Although the two-year trial didn't lead to a significant reduction in rates of self-harm or suicide in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region, the trial showed us that strong leadership and collaboration are key to having an impact long term. Thanks to the trial and the considered effort of our members, we are in a stronger position to continue to lead suicide prevention work in our region.

LifeSpan was a catalyst for a significant shift in suicide prevention policy and funding across Australia. Commonwealth and NSW state policies now include initiatives that are coordinated at the regional level, as well as making decisions based on data and evidence, incorporating lived experience expertise, and focusing on compassionate care.

Our work is recognised at a state and national level, and we continue to work collaboratively to develop and implement new suicide prevention programs.

Time of flux and change

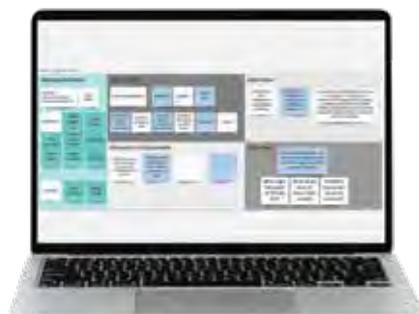
It's difficult to underestimate the impact that bushfires, floods and the pandemic have had on our region. There has been incredible uncertainty alongside major changes to how we live, work, and connect.

For the Collaborative, the ending of the *LifeSpan* trial led into a period of evolution. *LifeSpan* supported our members to step-up by providing a roadmap and clearly defined the areas we needed to focus on. This enabled us to accomplish great things together and establish enduring relationships. Following the trial, we had the autonomy to recreate our strategic plan and ways of working framework, which eventually led to our four streams.



Collaborative members at the strategic planning day 2021

The COVID-19 global pandemic led our region in its first lockdown in March 2020 and we all had to adjust to working predominantly online. Where possible, Collaborative members still met face-to-face, and given the maturity of relationships already established, collaboration continued. The introduction of Miro (an online collaboration tool) into the work of the Collaborative enabled the work to be visualised and planned out in a responsive way. Meetings continue to occur online and preparations are underway to implement Microsoft SharePoint and Teams for members to continue to stay connected and up-to-date.



Not only was our region going through significant change, but so was state and national policy in suicide prevention. Previously, suicide prevention was included as a subset of mental health, but the National Suicide Prevention Adviser's report *Compassion First* helped clarify that it is a unique field with challenges that need to be addressed by all government portfolios. NSW Health launched the *Towards Zero Suicides* Premier's Priority and the *Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention*, which emphasised the need for locally owned and evidence-based initiatives that were informed by lived experience.

At both the National and NSW levels, lived experience is now seen as pivotal to suicide prevention policy and practice. Raising the importance of lived experience alongside clinical expertise has provided new opportunities for peer workers. Many of our lived experience members have gone onto frontline peer work, as well as policy development, contributing to a fundamental shift in the systems we're working to change.

Strong focus is on diversifying supports available, and centering care around compassion and connection. Our lived experience members helped codesign alternative models of care as part of *Toward Zero Suicides*, resulting in the Wollongong Safe Haven, operated by Stride Mental Health, and the ISLHD Suicide Prevention Outreach Team (SPOT). Both models include suicide prevention peer workers and offer an alternative to emergency department for people in suicidal crisis.

Postvention, a field that looks at supporting people and communities who have been bereaved by suicide, has been now been recognised in policy as a vital part of suicide prevention. The Collaborative had started to work on aspects of postvention in 2019, led by lived experience members concerned about a lack of information and support available to bereaved families locally. Over the past two years we've built on this foundation and postvention is now established as a Collaborative stream of work.

Despite the many challenges we faced in the last two years, the Collaborative and its members continue to strive toward the common goal of reducing suicides in the Illawarra Shoalhaven.

"I'm not sure you can find a clearer example of creating hope through action in suicide prevention than the Collaborative. My experience of this group, from prior to my joining and up to today, is of generosity, humility, togetherness, and action. What has been collectively achieved in the past six years is impressive but the thing that has impressed me above all, is the strength of connection. The past year or so has been extremely trying and it's a credit to our members that they have continued to turn up and put in the work. That is hope in action."

- Jo Riley, Program Manager at Collaborative event 2021



Collaborative highlights

We presented at the:

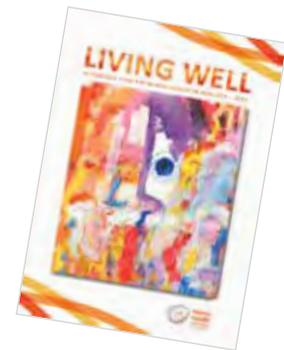
- > 2021 International Association for Suicide Prevention World Congress
- > 2021 Suicide Prevention Australia Symposium
- > 2021 Roses in the Ocean Lived Experience Summit



Winner of the 2021 Suicide Prevention Australia LIFE Award in NSW, Communities in Action, recognising excellence in suicide prevention



Our lived experience members SafeSpaces initiative was showcased as part of the NSW Mental Health Commission's mid-term review of *Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014-2024*



Our inclusive culture resulted in the successful codesign of Wollongong Safe Haven. Since opening in May 2021, **83** individual guests have received **505** separate occasions of support



We continue to review and produce the Where to go for Support cards. These remain a valuable local resource for services, education providers, businesses and individuals

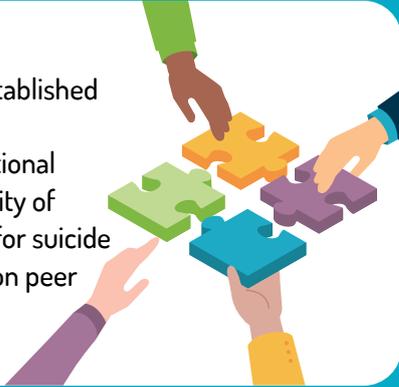


Box of QPR cards

Collaborative-designed community awareness campaign continues to drive the uptake of QPR online suicide awareness training



We've established a cross-organisational community of practice for suicide prevention peer workers



Together, we are building a shared approach across member organisations to deliver compassionate, practical, and tailored treatment plans via SafeSide Prevention



Youth Aware Mental Health (YAM) is continuing to be rolled out across year 9 students within our region.

More than 99 YAM Helpers have been trained in the Illawarra Shoalhaven, including successfully via Zoom during 2021-2022



YAM training

We have developed a post-suicide communication protocol supported by centralised response coordination to contain and reduce suicide risk



Our lived experience members developed a suite of bereavement support resources available via the Collaborative's website



Successfully delivered a suicide prevention education event to 40 local GPs including discussion around mental health and suicide myths, showcase of the SafeSide prevention framework and a panel of available services and what they do in our region

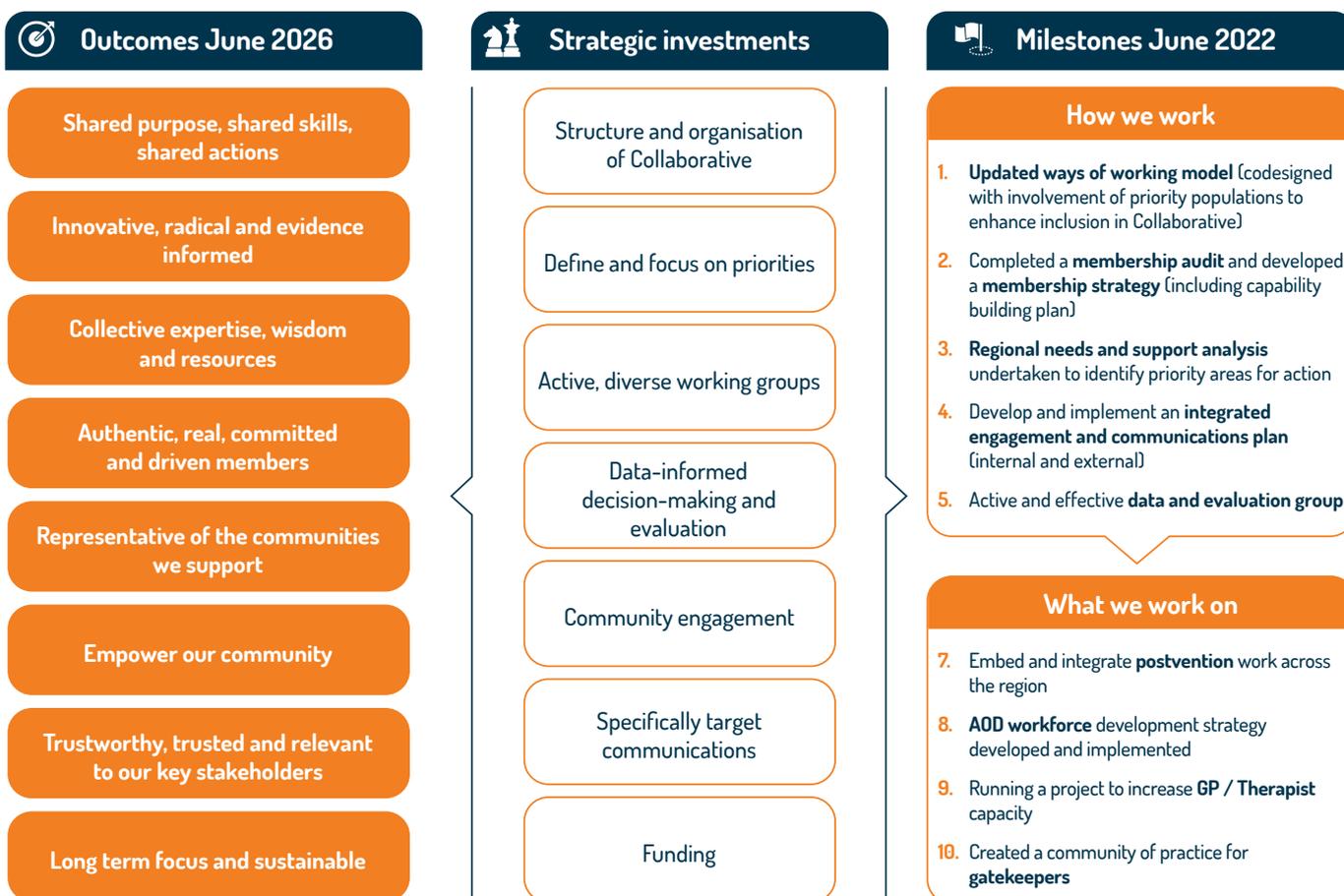


Strategy map

Following on from the *LifeSpan* trial and after a period of flux, it was time for the Collaborative to regroup, reflect on the last five years and set our sight on the next five years.

In 2020, the Collaborative embarked on a journey culminating in the development of a new strategic map. This process allowed us to consider both how we came together and what we work on. This led to fruitful discussions about what we needed to invest in to deliver the outcomes we set out to achieve in the next five years. We discovered that a strong foundation was essential for our work's success and the Collaborative's longevity. It was important to all members that there was transparency on how we make decisions about what we work on. The frameworks and processes we've created will be a launching pad for next five years of activity.

Strategy map for 2021 - 2026



Developed by Strategy Connect by Waterfield.

The Collaborative is made up of the following member organisations and community groups, as well as a number of community members with lived experience of suicide and recovery. Our members include:

				
			Jesuit Social Services	
		Mission Australia - Triple Care Farm	Northfields Psychology Clinic	
			Shoalhaven Health and Arts Inc. (SHAA)	
South Coast Private Hospital	St Vincents			
	TAFE NSW			Thirrili - Indigenous Suicide Postvention Service
		University of Wollongong - MIND the GaP	Waves of Wellness Foundation	Wesley Mission

Ways of working

Following the development of a new strategic map, our members came together in true Collaborative style to review our journey to date and discuss our strategic direction for the future.

Through this process, we considered the needs of the Illawarra Shoalhaven community as well as the shifting external environment. Our new ways of working framework was developed to better reflect our community's experience of suicide – from prevention to postvention – with built-in mechanisms to support shared objectives and decision-making.

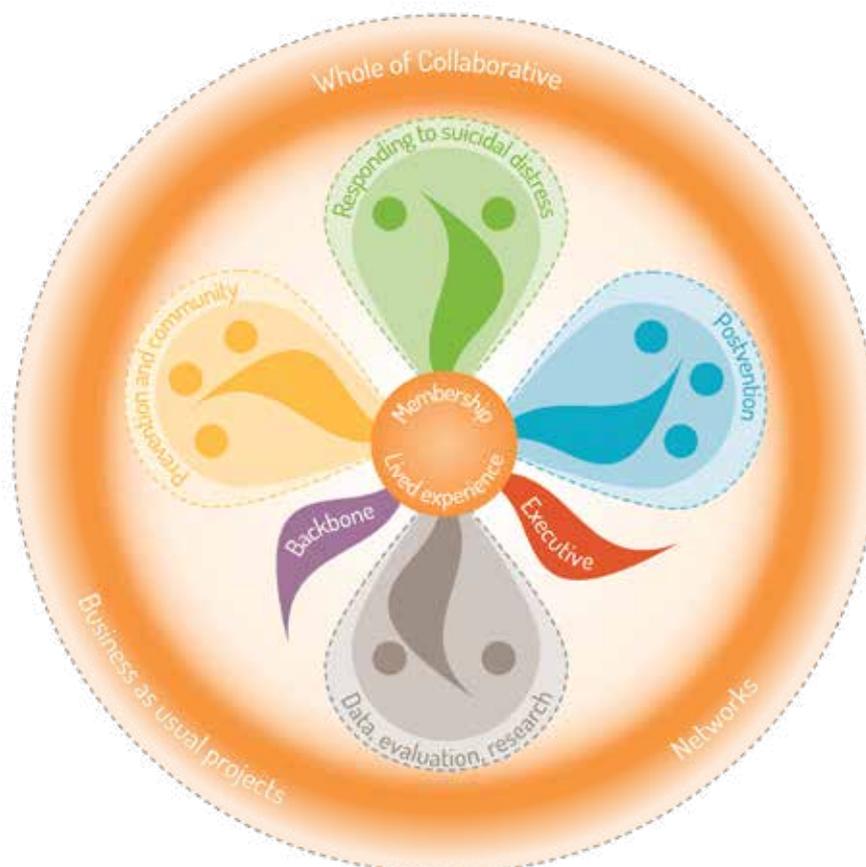
The new ways of working framework continues to centre the expertise of people with lived experience, as well as the broader knowledge and commitment of our members.

Our work is shared across four streams supported by the backbone and executive teams. Each stream includes a lead team tasked with overseeing stream activity, supporting membership engagement, and ensuring the success of our work. Project teams plan and deliver focused activity, bringing together the right mix of perspectives and skills for the work at hand. This approach helps each project within the stream to focus on a shared mission, while making a meaningful contribution and utilising the active involvement of all members.

Broader Collaborative members can get involved at either the stream or project level, with an opportunity to contribute to the Collaborative's wider knowledge-sharing and events.

Redefining our strategy gave us an opportunity to hold steadfast to our primary goal of reducing the impact of suicide in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region, while building on the strong foundational values central to the success of the Collaborative.

Our new ways of working framework maintains the key qualities of inclusiveness, transparency and shared decision-making that underpin all of our work.



What we work on together

During 2022, Collaborative stream lead teams embarked on a journey to produce four stream strategies including mission statements and objectives that when combined, contribute to the overall goal of reducing suicides in the Illawarra Shoalhaven.

Working together to reduce suicides in the Illawarra Shoalhaven

Genuine collaboration

Lived experience

Evidence based and generating

Stream mission statements

Stream 1

Supporting engaged, connected and empowered individuals and communities to give and receive help, reduce stigma, and build thriving, inclusive communities.

Stream 2

Ensuring the person in suicidal distress and those supporting them can access person-centred recovery orientated support.
Building a compassionate, resilient system that is grounded in best practice, embedded in community and supportive of its workforce.

Stream 3

Ensuring all bereaved individuals, families and communities are empowered to access quality specialised support when, where and how they need it.

Stream 4

Enabling the Collaborative to continuously learn and demonstrate the impact of how we work and what we work on.

Objectives

1.1 / Build attitudes, knowledge, skills and connections across community so people can recognise and respond to signs of suicide

2.1 / Improve choice and access to support for individuals experiencing suicidal distress

3.1 / Reduce stigma and improve access, choice and evidence for suicide bereavement support

4.1 / Build Collaborative capacity to ensure the purposeful, ethical, and proactive use of data and evidence

1.2 / Drive safe, respectful and purposeful communication about suicide

2.2 / Equip and support those who provide help - natural support and workforce - to provide compassionate, skilful and sustainable care

3.2 / Deliver planned, coordinated responses to reduce further risk across community

4.2 / Design and support evaluations to demonstrate impact of the Collaborative, it's approach and activities

1.3 / Champion prevention actions to create a suicide safe Illawarra Shoalhaven

2.3 / Map and enhance an integrated, sustainable, evidence-generating system of support in the Illawarra Shoalhaven

3.3 / Champion proactive postvention planning and capacity building in organisations and key workforces

4.3 / Drive innovative, collaborative research to build the evidence base in suicide prevention

Executive

Active involvement - Supporting connections - Advocacy - Oversight - Sustainability - Guiding backbone

Backbone

Guide vision and strategy - Support aligned activities - Establish shared measurements - Build public will - Mobilise funding

Role of the backbone team

What do we do

The backbone team provide a critical component of the infrastructure that supports to Collaborative to achieve it's goals. Rather than setting the agenda, the backbone team maintains the Collaborative's focus on the common goal, then creates the space and processes for members to come together and do the work. Importantly, the team focuses on continuous communication to keep members abreast of developments in the local suicide prevention landscape, connecting with stakeholders to champion the work of the Collaborative and build relationships, and improvement of processes, tools and reports to support sustainability of Collaborative work.

The backbone team support the four streams to develop their mission statements and objectives, and ensure projects align with the collective vision. The backbone role is to empower our members to take charge and drive the change we all want to see.

How do we do it

To guide the Collaborative's vision and strategy, the backbone team works together with the stream leads to prioritise aligned activities, provide input from other perspectives and ensure equity in the Collaborative's efforts. This process allows us to maximise opportunities and adapt to changing landscapes as the suicide prevention sector evolves.

Working as the coordination point between multiple streams, we support the right people to be in the room; collect data; evaluate progress; and monitor the internal environment to ensure we can deliver on agreed activities.

By developing key relationships and connecting members with organisations and resources, the backbone team is vital in the effort to create collective impact, and lasting systems change. The backbone team fosters an inclusive environment that authentically engages and supports ownership of members over the long term.

Evolving our team

Over the last two years, the backbone team has gone through a significant evolution, including a break in continuity in 2020 due to the global pandemic, and a shift from working face-to-face to predominantly online. We were fortunate to have the experience of some very talented people in the backbone team, some of whom have gone on to continue their work in other areas.

Former Regional Manager Alex Hains left the Collaborative in 2020 to join the National Mental Health Commission, while former Project Officer Emma Paterson left the Collaborative to work with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District. Both went above and beyond to support the working groups through implementing the *LifeSpan* model.

Since then

- Marie-Claude Lallier Beaudoin worked as Project Officer/Project Manager between August 2020 and June 2021
- Jo Riley joined as Program Manager in January 2021
- Clare Leslie joined the backbone team as Project Manager in September 2021
- Mark Ellis held the new Lived Experience Coordinator role between December 2021 and July 2022
- Skye Thompson joined the team as Project Officer in June 2022

Now settled in their roles, the backbone team is supporting members to undertake essential strategic planning to future-proof the sustainability of the Collaborative.

The backbone team is proudly funded by COORDINARE - South Eastern NSW PHN and Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, until June 2023. The executive team is currently looking at future funding opportunities to maintain this core function and ensure the Collaborative's continued success.

Role of the executive

What do we do

The role of the Collaborative's executive team is to lead and have oversight of the Collaborative's work, championing culture and accountability. The team's work is guided by the needs of our members, and the ever-evolving suicide prevention needs of the Illawarra Shoalhaven community.

Since the Collaborative launched, its executive team has worked closely with the backbone staff to ensure our collective efforts align to the Collaborative's vision, as well as kept an eye on opportunities for funding, advocacy, partnerships and projects.



Executive team 2022

Aligned to the strategic plan developed in July 2021, the executive has focused on updating the Collaborative's new ways of working framework including the restructure into four key streams. We have delved into the drivers of the four streams to ensure work is aligned, is set up to demonstrate impact, and reflects members' needs for options in ways to contribute.

Evolving our team

Over the past year, the executive team has developed an updated description of our roles and responsibilities and developed a skills and perspectives matrix to guide executive team composition. This work positions us well to evolve with natural shifts in executive team membership and to provide opportunities for emerging leaders to develop.

We're incredibly excited by the calibre and skillset of the executive team, as well as our membership. We've seen incredible enthusiasm, passion, and commitment to the work of the Collaborative, and to creating meaningful change in our region.

Looking forward

We are constantly on the lookout for emerging needs and new opportunities, and reflecting on how best to position the Collaborative to ensure local needs are reflected in policy and practice, and the region is primed to attract or leverage new funding. One of the strengths of the Collaborative is its ability to reflect on its own existence, and to make the necessary changes to ensure its longevity and real-world impact. We are here to service the Illawarra Shoalhaven community.

Looking ahead, the executive team is focused on ensuring our membership is vital and engaged, attaining sustainable funding, and continuing our crucial advocacy work in suicide prevention.

We're excited by our team's commitment to the work of the Collaborative, and our mission to create meaningful change in our region.

"To do our best work, the executive must represent the range of perspectives, skills and knowledge of our members and our communities. We must seek input from many sources, and actively seek it out from those not currently engaged with the Collaborative. We seek to work across and around the continuum of suicide prevention to create meaningful impacts for individuals and communities."

- Renee Green, Collaborative executive member



Stream 1 – Prevention and community

In stream 1, work is focused on a variety of projects that work to reduce stigma, create connections, and empower communities to recognise and respond to suicide if the need arises. We want people to know what services are available, how to access them and what to do if someone they know is in distress. Our work empowers individuals and communities to give and receive help, while building thriving, inclusive communities.

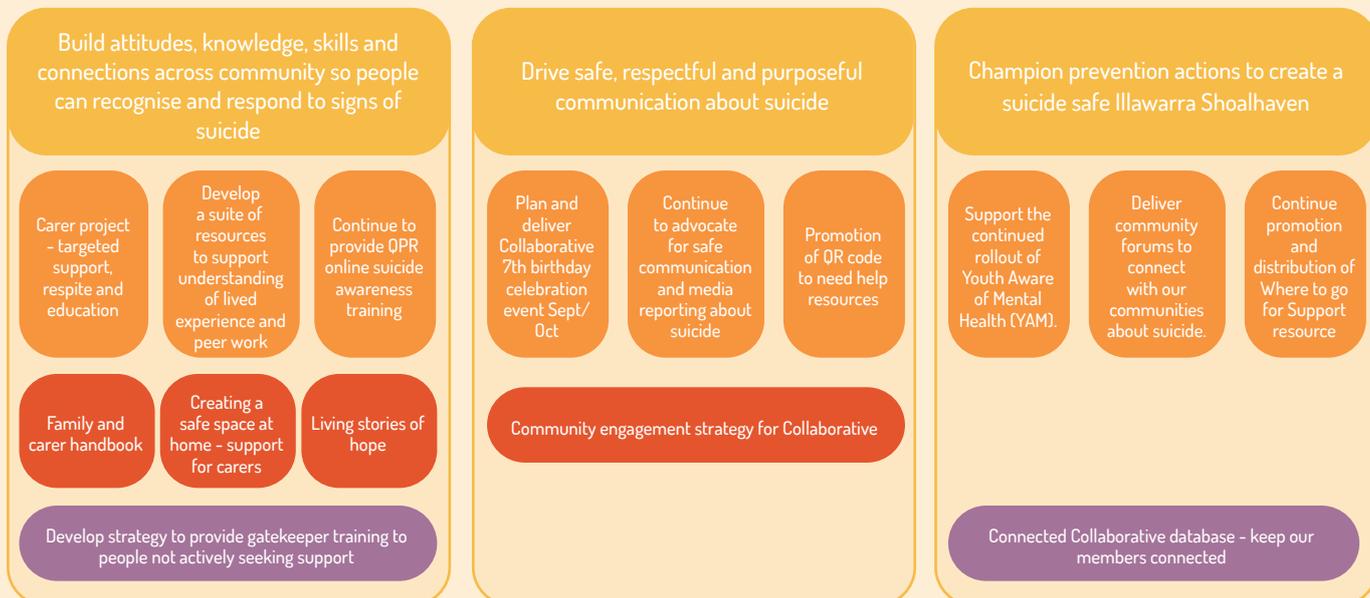
What we work on in stream 1

Much of the project activity that takes place under stream 1 has been active within the Collaborative for some years. Some milestones include:

- 15,000+ online QPR licences for suicide awareness and skills training distributed
- 85,000+ ‘where to go for support’ cards created and distributed
- 12,000+ year nine students have taken part in YAM – *Youth Aware of Mental Health* program. Research has shown that this program has led to a reduction in suicidal ideation and depression, and increased help seeking intentions, which was sustained over six months
- Two online community forums provided an opportunity to support and encourage safe community conversations around suicide within our local communities
- Four presentations to TAFE students to discuss the work of the Collaborative, current and local suicide prevention activities, and have a Q&A around suicide prevention and the value of lived experience expertise
- Proactive and reactive media work with the aim of keeping public conversation about suicide prevention current, safe and respectful. In 2021, we offered *Mindframe* training to members of the Collaborative’s Kiama working group and local media to further support safe public communication and reporting about suicide
- Noting social isolation impacts of lock downs, the *Let’s chill – social connection* sessions were established on Friday afternoons to offer a space for members to come together for a relaxed conversation via zoom

Stream 1 workplan

Supporting engaged, connected and empowered individuals and communities to give and receive help, reduce stigma, and build thriving, inclusive communities



Stream 1 in action - community forum

Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative community forums are an opportunity to support and encourage safe community conversations around suicide. They provide information about local services, share experiences from those with lived experience, and give a public face to Collaborative work.

In 2021, several Collaborative members noticed an increasing worry in their community following local loss to suicide. The Collaborative was uniquely positioned to respond by creating a safe opportunity which supported the needs of the community. The community forums were developed and delivered with Collaborative members StandBy – Support After Suicide, Stride Mental Health, Lifeline South Coast and lived experience representatives.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the first of our community forums were delivered online. During the session, lived experience members addressed myths about suicide, shared their stories and spoke to the importance of incidental conversations with neighbours and friends. The forums highlighted local services and provided help-seeking information and education.

While the success of these events is tricky to measure – a simple headcount doesn't speak to their impact – the existence of a community forum prompts individuals to seek local services, find information or start a conversation. The forum has undergone debrief and review and continues to be adapted, refined and delivered.

The process undertaken to develop the community forum really does speak to the very core of our work – members are sharing what they hear about local communities; we are considering needs and options for action; and together we are shaping local responses that have potential for far-reaching and long-lasting impact.

"I have been involved with the Collaborative for some years now and it's wonderful to see the way we have been able to reboot the work of the Collaborative and enable some incredible connections to grow. I see a lot of passion, compassion, and trust in the way we work together, and I think that very much reflects the society we are aiming to achieve. Passion, compassion, and trust are all so important in addressing this deep issue of suicide. I really appreciate the level of involvement and respect that I am shown as a carer. Unfortunately, we don't often receive that in other aspects of your life and can sometimes feel invisible and forgotten. In my work with the Collaborative, I am reminded that what I have to offer is very valuable and that is so powerful and refreshing."

- Jane, Collaborative member



Stream 2 – Responding to suicidal distress

In stream 2, work is focused on ensuring a person in suicidal distress and those supporting them have access to person-centred recovery-orientated support. We want people to have choice in finding a suitable and safe support that suits their needs. Our work aims to equip those who provide help – natural supports and the workforce – to provide compassionate, skilful, and sustainable care.

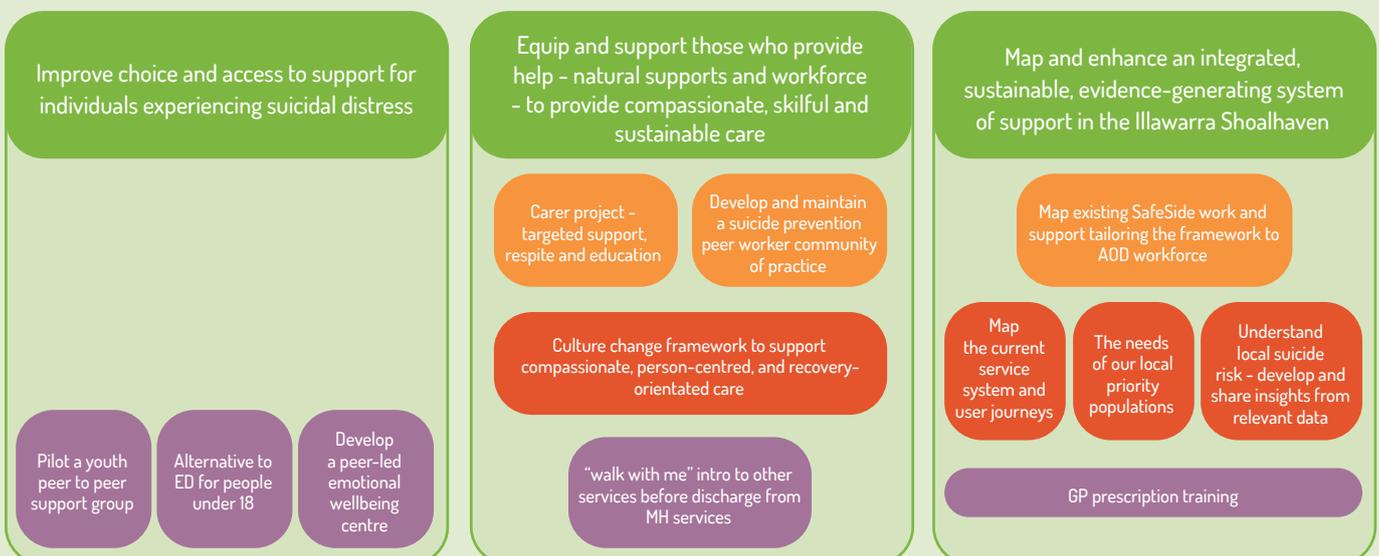
What we work on in stream 2

The Collaborative is proud to have long standing connections to local services providing care to people in suicidal crisis and has consistently worked to improve the experience of individuals seeking support. Examples of our focus and work include:

- Next Steps Aftercare service is delivered by Grand Pacific Health and supports people on their recovery journey following a suicide attempt or crisis
- Wollongong Safe Haven – a non-clinical safe space for people in suicidal distress – was opened in early 2021 and is funded by ISLHD and delivered by Stride Mental Health
- Hosting a learning event for local GPs about suicide and safety planning – 100% of attendees felt their needs were met around assessing and managing patients presenting with suicidal ideation
- Championing the adoption of SafeSide across the region including exploring the role it could play in managing suicide risk within alcohol and other drug services and peer-run services
- In March 2022, a SafeSide online roundtable was held with the US SafeSide team and suicide prevention peer workers from various organisations and contexts as an opportunity to reflect, share and explore ideas with the SafeSide team. Twenty six people attended the roundtable and many have continued participating in the community of practice which was established to support this important workforce

Stream 2 workplan

Ensuring the person in suicidal distress and those supporting them can access person-centred recovery-oriented support. Building a compassionate, resilient system that is grounded in best practice, embedded in community and supportive of its workforce



● ready to go ● needs development ● concept stage

Stream 2 in action – Towards Zero Suicides

In January 2020, the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) received funding for four *Toward Zero Suicides* (TZS) initiatives: 1. Alternatives to emergency departments (now known as 'Safe Havens'), 2. Suicide Prevention Outreach Teams, 3. Zero Suicides in Care and 4. Enhancement to Rural Counselling.

Building on the strong foundation of collaboration built over the previous five years, ISLHD committed to work on the initiatives in partnership with the Collaborative and local people with lived experience of suicidality and recovery. This approach helped ensure optimal engagement of key stakeholders and enhanced outcomes for our community. The *Towards Zero Suicides* Steering Group in the Illawarra Shoalhaven included representatives from ISLHD, lived experience, the Collaborative, and COORDINARE.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven was the first site in NSW to participate in the co-design of the *Towards Zero Suicides* Safe Haven initiative – a true reflection of the quality and maturity of lived experience expertise and collaboration in the region. Facilitated by Roses in the Ocean, the local co-design of Safe Haven was initiated in April 2020. In May 2021 ISLHD opened Wollongong's Safe Haven, contracted to Stride Mental Health, as a non-clinical and peer-based alternative to emergency departments for people in suicidal distress.

In August 2020, Inside Out & Associates facilitated the co-design process for the local Suicide Prevention Outreach Team (SPOT) which provides proactive and assertive support to people, where they are in the community, who are experiencing or recovering from a suicidal crisis. In early 2021 the team of clinicians and suicide prevention peer workers started delivering SPOT services to the Nowra community.

The Collaborative introduced SafeSide to the region during 2017-2019. Members embraced it as a shared approach, creating local system readiness for the rollout of SafeSide in ISLHD under ZSiC. We continue to explore how SafeSide can be utilised to provide shared language, consistency of care across services, and ultimately, improved experiences for those in suicidal distress.

Julie Carter, Director of Mental Health for Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and Collaborative executive member speaks of the value of the Collaborative in ISLHD's implementation of the *Toward Zero Suicide's* initiative.

*"ISLHD is proud to be so actively involved in the Collaborative since its inception in 2015. This strengthened our ability to adopt the *Toward Zero Suicides* initiatives across our District and work with other local mental health organisations as a valuable part of the process. We are very embedded within the Collaborative's work and this supported us to draw on the lived experience expertise within our communities during our co-design processes", Julie said. 'Suicide is a very complex community issue and the Collaborative well represents the community and is critical to helping reduce suicide, educate around suicidal crisis and support those impacted by suicide in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven.."*

- Julie Carter, Collaborative executive member



Stream 3 – Postvention

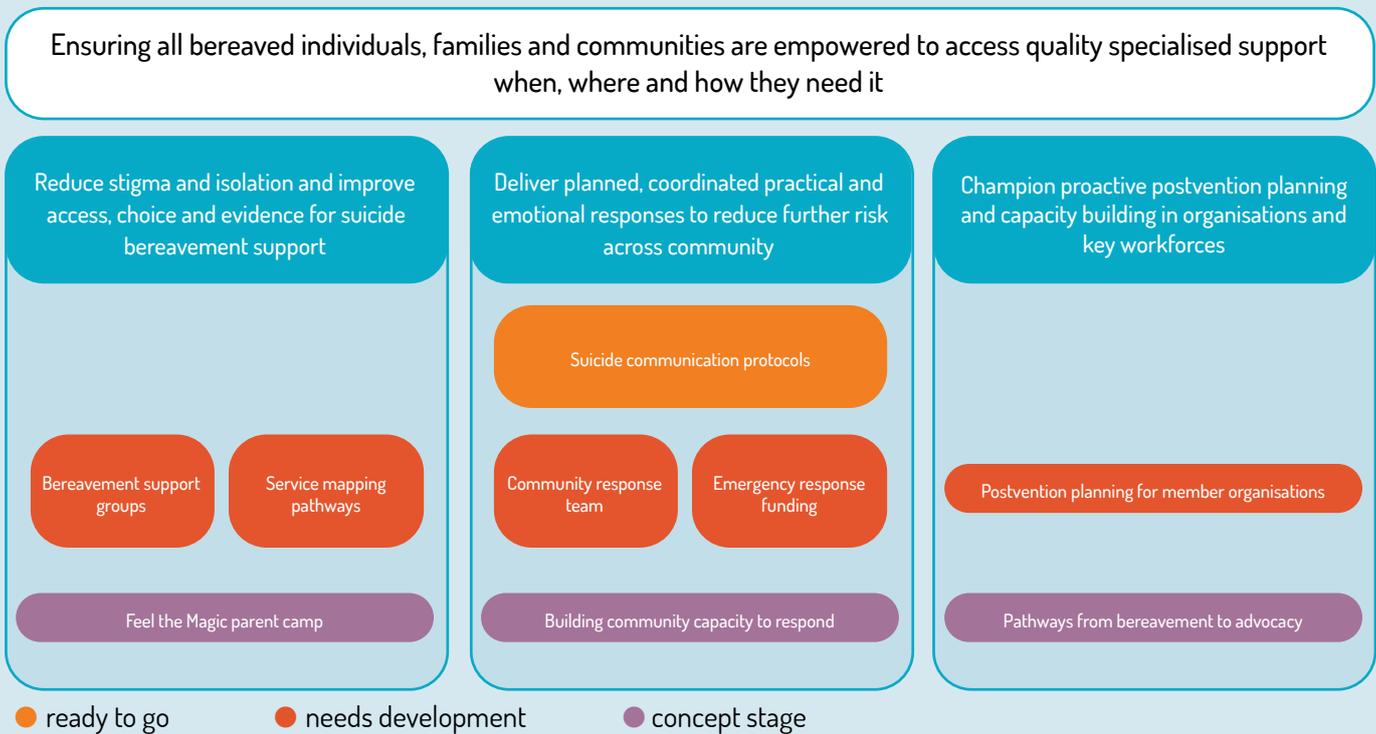
In stream 3, work is focused on ensuring all bereaved individuals, families and communities are empowered to access quality specialised support when, where and how they need it. Our lived experience members are central to this work and continue to advocate for better services, responses and outcomes for people bereaved by suicide in our region.

What we work on in stream 3

During 2019, the Collaborative identified the need to address postvention as an important part of prevention work. Much of this work was driven by lived experience members, and we are proud to have been part of the establishment of a strong local postvention landscape. Of note are:

- Identifying the need for a systematic, flexible after suicide response that helps connect those bereaved by suicide with support, ensure safe and responsible reporting in the media, and facilitate accurate and up-to-date local suicide data collection to inform suicide prevention planning
- A local suicide communication protocol was developed which supports timely notification about the suspected suicide of school-aged young people and enabling communication between key education stakeholders and support providers
- Lived experience members of the Collaborative developed and released a suite of 11 videos with the goal of raising awareness of the impact of suicide on individuals, families and communities. The videos featured local community members with a lived experience of suicide bereavement who shared deeply personal stories about grief, loss and recovery
- Collaborative lived experience members advocated strongly for improved supports following a death by suicide, particularly for families and children. They were central in the development of Camp Magic’s ‘Let’s Talk Suicide’ camp for children who have lost a family member to suicide. At the most recent camp in Stanwell Tops, the Collaborative participated in one of the panel activities
- Standby – Support After Suicide established in the region in 2021 and have integrated into the work of the Collaborative including the focus of lived experience representation

Stream 3 workplan



Stream 3 in action - Post suicide response work

Postvention is important not only to ensure that individuals impacted by a suicide loss are connected to supports but because we know the ripple effect of a death by suicide can spread across community, causing distress and anxiety, and ultimately increasing risk of further suicide.

During 2020-2021 the Kiama-Gerringong region experienced a number of local lives lost to suicide, and the need for a coordinated response was apparent. The Collaborative formed a Kiama working group to centralise the local response from services providers, maintain connection to on-the-ground community perspectives, and champion safe, respectful public conversation about suicide. Together, we supported over 25 local initiatives during this time including Mindframe media training, community events, QPR training sessions, and worked with various media outlets to promote hope and recovery.

This experience helped ground us in the importance of coordinating communication and response activity when our community is exposed to and impacted by suicide. We've since built on the Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Communication Protocol, designed to notify key stakeholders of the suspected suicide of a young person, and developed processes for response groups to rapidly form and implement evidence-informed actions.

Our postvention work is deeply collaborative, agile, and a great example of how our members work together to leverage the day-to-day remit of member organisations while delivering unique value to the Illawarra Shoalhaven community as they navigate the complexity of suicide grief and loss.

Sharing what we have learned through practice, we've played a role in assisting the development of similar protocol and practice for our regional neighbours in Southern NSW. This complementary work recognises that community isn't defined by geography but human relationships.

"One of the most isolating experiences I have gone through in life is experiencing the loss of my father and my brother to suicide within 7 years of each other. It has been the most difficult experiences I have never thought I would have to live through. For a long time, I experienced a sense of hopelessness and felt that life could never make sense again. I feel so fortunate that I have been able to connect with the Collaborative, as someone who has lived experience, I am able to finally provide some meaning to this indescribable series of tragedies. Not only that, but the insight and knowledge that I have gained is used to help form the DNA of the Collaboratives initiatives within their postvention working projects. I can't think of a better way to keep the memory of my father and brother alive."

- Hope, Collaborative member



Stream 4 – Data, evaluation and research

Stream 4 operates a little differently to the other streams in that their primary focus is on enabling the Collaborative to continuously learn and demonstrate the impact of how we work and what we work on.

Here, the stream lead team supports the Collaborative to use and understand the evidence base, consider suitable evaluations to demonstrate impact, and drive a research agenda that helps to build the suicide prevention evidence base.

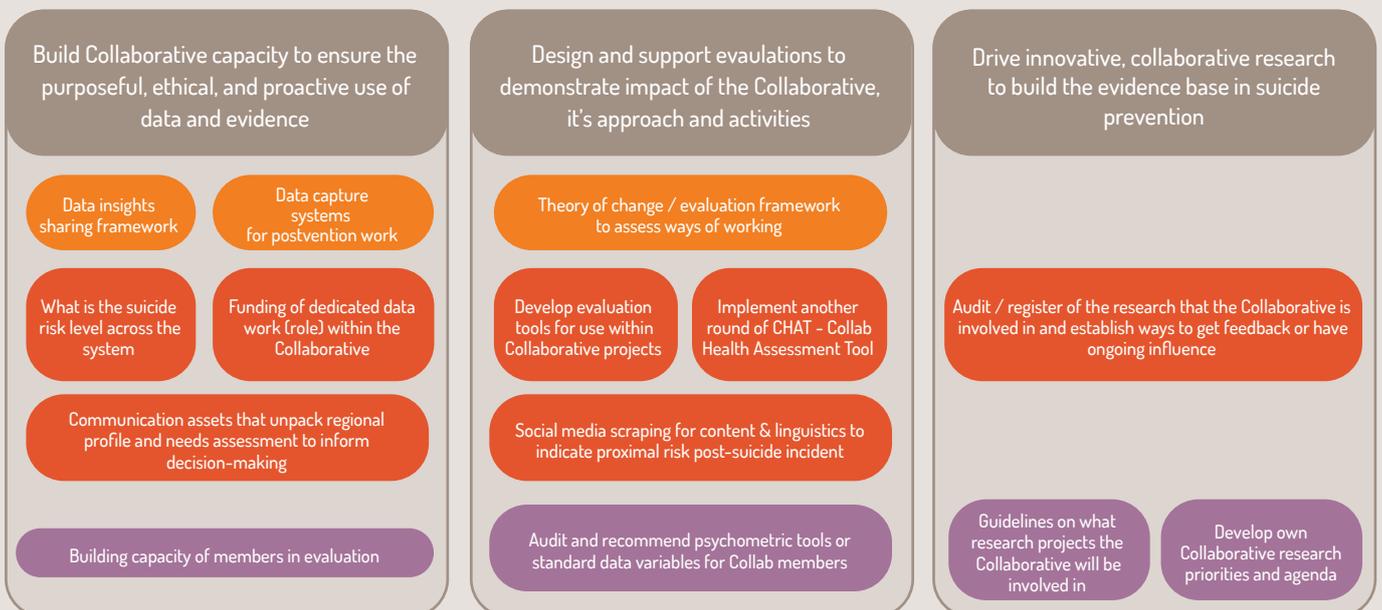
What we work on in stream 4

Utilising and generating traditional and non-traditional forms of evidence is built into the core principles of the Collaborative. Following on from the structured research of the LifeSpan trial, we have continued to keep a focus on data and evidence. Our work over this time has included:

- Considering the underlying theory of change behind specific activities, incorporating evidence from suicide prevention and implementation science
- Designing feedback surveys and reports for our workshops and events, for example, surveying GP’s who attended a learning session on the usefulness of content and future training needs.
- Capturing data about the reach of our work, for example, distribution and use of where to go for support resources and QPR
- Building reflective exercises into meetings and workshops to gather qualitative feedback on the health of our collaboration and identify improvements to our ways of working
- Helping bridge the evidence-to-practice-gap by delivering knowledge translation activities such as presentations by researchers, extracting insights from ABS causes of death data, and presenting our work at key conferences.
- Supporting research grant applications and participating in research studies that reflect the priorities of the Illawarra Shoalhaven community.

Stream 4 workplan

Enabling the Collaborative to continuously demonstrate the impact of how we work and what we work on



Stream 4 in action – Making data-informed decisions and building the evidence base

The Collaborative's experience of the *LifeSpan* trial highlighted how vital it is to have data available at the regional level to inform decision-making and feed continuous improvement. Access to quality, timely and localised data and insights is vital to ensure we are aligned to community need.

Access to such data can be challenging. To ensure data quality and privacy, suicide data (such as death data or health system usage data) is managed in national or state level data systems and can take many months or years to be publicly available. Data relating to service or program implementation can be caught up in various systems and lacks consistency.

Despite these challenges, the Collaborative is committed to making decisions about how we work and what we work on using data. As we developed stream strategies, we utilised available data to help us understand the scale and complexity of the issues at hand.

Looking ahead, we have prioritised developing an evaluation framework to ensure we measure and assess the impact of both how we work and what we work on. Identifying opportunities for continuous improvement is a vital part of our collective capacity building and helps us celebrate our successes.

We also value contributing to the broader evidence base for suicide prevention. Building on our participation in the *LifeSpan* research trial, the Collaborative has continued to play a role in research projects aligned to local priorities. Two key examples are:

- *Next Steps* aftercare research. This suite of research studies, led by Collaborative executive member Vida Bliokas, University of Wollongong, is assessing the effectiveness of the *Next Steps* aftercare service and investigating the role and impact of suicide prevention peer workers.
- *Co-creating safe spaces* research project. This large, multisite project is investigating the implementation, effectiveness and sustainability of safe space models, including the Wollongong Safe Haven. Led by a team at the Australian National University, the project has involved Collaborative members (University of Wollongong, ISLHD, Stride, and lived experience members) since the concept phase.

"Data is important to help inform our learning and understanding of the complexity of suicide prevention. It's common for people to ask 'why?' someone chose to die this way – it's possible we may never find a definitive answer but we need to keep asking questions so we can learn. The rates of suicide are too high, and have been difficult to shift, so we need to keep searching for answers."

- Linda, Collaborative member

Where to from here

As we reflect on the past few years, we are humbled and proud of the work that the Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative has achieved together. The LifeSpan trial has reminded us that high quality coordination and leadership is key for success, and the Collaborative is perfectly positioned to continue this work. Despite such challenging times, we have remained connected, collaborative and committed to our goal of reducing suicides in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region. The strength of our approach remains embedded in our relationships and resolve to hold true to our core principles – genuine collaboration; evidence based and evidence generating; and valuing lived experience. Together we are so much more impactful than on our own.

Yet, there is still much work to be done to reduce suicide deaths and attempts in our region. During 2022 and beyond we settle into our new ways of working under our new strategic plan. Our four streams will continue to evolve in their dedicated area and embark on projects that will make a difference to our local communities. In stream 1 we continue to have conversations across our community to reduce stigma and encourage helpseeking – via delivery of *YAM (Youth Aware of Mental Health)*, distribution of the ‘where to go for support’ resource; and in our community forums. Stream 2 will continue their system-wide focus on improving the supports available to someone in suicidal distress. In stream 3 we continue to work to reduce the stigma surrounding a death to suicide, improve access to services, and deliver a coordinated response to suicide loss via our communication protocol. Stream 4 will establish the necessary foundations for streams to be continually learning and demonstrating our impact.

There is opportunity to grow our membership to support a focus on priority populations or those groups disproportionately impacted by suicide. And to continue to learn from the brave voices of our lived experience members.

Preventing suicide is not the sole responsibility of any one person, service or sector. Every one of us has a role to play in suicide prevention. There are many ways you, and your organisation or community group, can contribute to this mission. By completing training and familiarising yourself with local services and pathways for help, you can become a trusted source of information and a pillar of support for those in need, while contributing to large-scale change. As a Collaborative, we have the ability to create lasting systemic and cultural change.

Together, we can reduce suicides in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region.

To learn more about our work and how to get involved, visit: <http://www.suicidepreventioncollaborative.org.au> or email us at suicideprevention@coordinare.org.au



2022 WOC workshop - stream 2



2022 WOC workshop - stream 3

Thank you

to everyone who has been involved with the Collaborative



WHERE TO GO FOR SUPPORT



If someone is injured or at immediate risk of hurting themselves or someone else call 000 immediately

Help with a crisis

(phone or online help available)

Lifeline 24 hours lifeline.org.au	13 11 14
Suicide Call Back Service 24 hours suicidecallbackservice.org.au	1300 659 467
MensLine 24 hours mensline.org.au	1300 78 99 78
13 YARN 24 hours 13yarn.org.au	13 92 76
Kids Helpline 24 hours kidshelpline.com.au	1800 55 1800
1800 RESPECT 24 hours 1800respect.org.au	1800 737 732
Open Arms Veterans and Families 24 hours openarms.gov.au	1800 011 046
QLife (LGBTIQ+) 7 days, 3pm to midnight qlife.org.au	1800 184 527

Suicide specific supports

Wollongong Safe Haven 55 Urunga Parade Wed-Sat 2pm-10pm Safe space for people in suicidal distress operated by peer workers	0401 561 164
Nowra SPOT (suicide prevention outreach team) 7 days, 8.30am-5pm Nowra region	1800 011 511
Beyond Now suicide safety planning beyondblue.org.au/get-support/beyondnow-suicide-safety-planning	
You are not alone - website for carers www.sane.org/you-are-not-alone	

Lost someone to suicide?

StandBy Support after suicide 24 hours standbysupport.com.au	1300 727 247
Thirrili National Indigenous Postvention Service 24 hours thirrili.com.au	1800 805 801

Help with alcohol & other drugs

ISLHD Drug & Alcohol Wollongong and Nowra	1300 652 226
Lives Lived Well liveslivedwell.org.au	1300 727 957
Kedesh Rehabilitation Services Kedesh.com.au	4260 7111
Alcohol & Drug Information 24 hours yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au	1800 422 599

Help with your Mental Health

Mental Health Line 24 hours	1800 011 511
Head to Health coordinare.org.au/headtohealthpopup/	1800 595 212
headspace Wollongong Nowra ehespace.org.au	4220 7660 4446 7300 1800 650 890
Beyond Blue 24 hours beyondblue.org.au	1300 22 4636
SANE sane.org	1800 187 263

Help with other stuff

Gambling Help 24 hours gamblinghelponline.org.au	1800 858 858
Financial Help National Debt Helpline ndh.org.au	1800 007 007
Illawarra Legal Centre illawarralegalcentre.org.au	4276 1939
Shoalhaven Legal Centre shoalcoast.org.au	1800 229 529
Link2Home Homelessness 24 hours facs.nsw.gov.au/housing	1800 152 152

Aboriginal Services

Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service illawarraams.com.au	4229 9495
South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation southcoastams.org.au	1800 215 099
Waminda waminda.org.au	4421 7400
Strong Yawa Weekdays after 5pm and weekends after 4pm After hours social and emotional wellbeing support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our region.	1800 953 736

Help for your family & relationships

Family Services Australia Illawarra familyservices.org.au	1800 372 000
Relationships Australia relationshipsaustralia.org.au	1300 364 277
NSW Family Referral Service familyreferralservice.com.au	1800 663 863
Family Connect and Support familyconnectsupport.dcj.nsw.gov.au	1800 267 327

Multicultural services

Illawarra Shoalhaven Multicultural Health Service	4221 6770
Translating & Interpreting Service	13 14 50



To find a full list of support services, scan the QR code

Or visit:
suicidepreventioncollaborative.org.au/need-help