

Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy discussion paper

– yourtown's advocacy submission



What is it about?

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health system recommended the Victorian Government implement a new suicide prevention and response strategy (the Strategy). The Mental Health and Wellbeing division in the Victorian Department of Health are looking for input to develop the Strategy. They have released a discussion paper as the starting point for collaboration and co-design of the Strategy. The Royal Commission identified a whole-of-government, community wide, evidence-informed, systems-based approach was needed to effectively prevent and respond to suicide in Victoria. The Strategy will cover a 10-year period.

Why is it important?

Suicide has a devastating and enduring impact. It has a ripple effect across families, friends, workplaces, schools, and local communities. Victoria needs a strategy that addresses the multiple contributing factors that can increase the risk of suicide, strengthens protective factors and ensures the community is working towards a shared vision.

Some of yourtown's key messages:

1. The Strategy needs to specifically consider children and young people who are at higher risk of suicide

Suicide is the leading cause of death in young people in Australia^[1]. Suicidal ideation can be exacerbated while the cognitive functioning of the brain is still developing during childhood and adolescence. However, cognitive functioning can also be highly malleable during these developmental stages. As a result, specific and tailored mental health and suicide prevention support can be highly effective with children and young people.

2. Different groups of children and young people have varying experiences of suicidality which need to be considered

Suicidality affects groups of children and young people in significantly different ways. Suicide prevention interventions under the Strategy need to be tailored to meet the specific needs and context of the young person. This can include whether they are Aboriginal, gender diverse, and living in a rural or remote location. As well as considering their developmental stage and age. It is important that young people from varied backgrounds and with different experiences are involved in the design, development, and implementation of the Strategy.

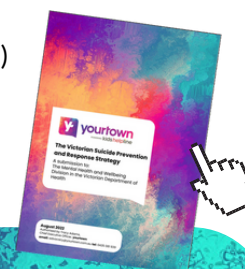
3. Approaches must meet the needs, experiences, and preferences of children and young people

The way young people seek help can be vastly different to that of adults. Young people want choices in the way they access help including options for both online and face to face delivery. Services and supports need to be affordable, available in-the-moment at any time, be non-stigmatised and have the option to be anonymous. Young people may need to access various supports and can benefit from help to navigate the complex service landscape.

4. There needs to be a focus on early intervention that provides holistic and coordinated support

Early intervention requires consideration of the multiple and varied drivers behind suicidal ideation and behaviour. Services and supports need to be designed for the eco-system that young people live in. Young people should only need to tell their story once. There needs to be prioritisation of integrated and coordinated support with other relevant systems (eg, mental health, substance use, child protection, juvenile justice, family and domestic violence, or trauma) to enable seamless care.

[1]Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Table 1.4 Underlying cause of death, Leading causes by age at death, numbers and rates, Australia, 2020. 3303.0 Causes of Death, Australia, 2020. Available: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/2020>



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