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New suicide data reaffirms Beyond Blue's call for urgent mental health system reform

The continuing impact of unacceptably high suicide rates across Australia demonstrates a need for urgent reform to the mental health system, **Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** said.

New data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), released today, shows that 3,249 people in Australia died by suicide last year.

On average, 9 people take their life each day and three quarters of those are men.

Ms Harman said today is a difficult day for many people due to the ripple effects of suicide.

"Firstly, let's remember that every suicide represents the pain felt by a person and an entire community, and my thoughts go out to everyone affected. The rise in suicides in Australia compared to ten years ago is deeply concerning," Ms Harman said.

"While COVID -19 has been recognised as a contributing factor for more than 80 deaths last year, it was not in isolation and those deaths also included multiple other factors such as job losses, relationship breakdowns, and mental health issues.

"We are seeing rising distress in the community due to cost-of-living pressures, as well as relationship issues, divorce and family separation, and unemployment. These stressors are placing extraordinary pressure on people and they're not going to recede quickly.

"It's also important to note that First Nations Peoples continue to be disproportionately impacted by suicide."

The ABS identified mood disorders including depression (36.9%), suicidal thoughts (25.7%), spousal relationship problems (25.1%), a personal history of self-harm (21.5%), and anxiety and stress related disorders (17.5%) as the top risk factors for suicide, noting that in 86% of deaths there were multiple risk factors present.

"Australia's approach to mental health and suicide prevention needs to change and change soon. There needs to be appropriate levels of support for people in crisis, just as there needs to be appropriate support for people before they reach crisis point," Ms Harman said.

"We need to ensure that people don't end up trapped in feelings of distress and that they can get support early when they need it. This is how a mental health system that invests in earlier intervention can make a real difference.

"Suicide is complex – and both our mental health and the pressures we face day-to-day can influence suicidal thoughts, intentions and plans.

"That means we need to look beyond the mental health system for solutions, while ensuring the system is set up not only to support people during and after suicidal crisis, but in a way that prevents them from getting there in the first place."

ENDS

Beyond Blue Support Service: 1300 22 4636 or [beyondblue.org.au/getsupport](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport)

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