

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

SuicideLine (VIC) Launches Online Resource Centre: A Vital New Tool for Those at Risk of Suicide

On World Suicide Prevention Day, **SuicideLine (VIC)** - formerly known as *The Victorian Suicide Helpline*, will launch a vital new online resource centre for people at risk of suicide, concerned family and friends, as well as those bereaved by suicide.

As of today, the service that has been supporting Victorians for more than eight years will be known as **SuicideLine (VIC)**. The name change will make the service easier to locate online and in community directories, cementing the service's commitment to provide accessible support to those at-risk of suicide (79 per cent of calls), as well as those concerned about a family member or friend (12 per cent of calls).

SuicideLine (VIC) is the only professional service of its kind in Australia, providing free 24/7 counselling and information, receiving more than 28,000 calls a year.

Sadly, due to limited funding and the consistently high demands on the service, more than 45 calls go unanswered each day.

Laura Kennan, General Manager of Clinical Services, Crisis Support Services -operators of **SuicideLine (VIC)** - explained the chilling impact this can have on Victoria's most at-risk individuals.

"With so many caller's at absolute crisis point, being unable to answer their calls due to a lack of funding is difficult to swallow", said Ms Keenan.

However, beyond the Victorian border, the lack of support is even greater, with no access to specialist services like **SuicideLine (VIC)**. Sadly the devastating impact of suicide is felt by all Australians, while the need for specialist support services is just as great (if not greater) in other states¹.

"We urge Australia's Governments to invest in providing a national, professional support service for people at risk and their families right across the country. Australians need access to a specialist suicide prevention service which has no geographical boundaries, is low cost, easily accessible and able to support those at greatest risk", explained Ms Kennan.

Thanks to generous community and in-kind support, **SuicideLine (VIC)** has been able to extend the breadth of its service to all Australians through the launch of its new website – including fact sheets, tip sheets, e-learning tools, as well as links to other resources. To access the site go to:
www.suicideline.org.au

SuicideLine (VIC) receives more than 28,000 calls each year, with a staggering 70 per cent of callers experiencing thoughts of suicide or self harm at the time of the call. **SuicideLine (VIC)** is a professional and anonymous telephone counselling service for those at risk of suicide or self harm, concerned family and friends, and the bereaved. SuicideLine (VIC) is available throughout Victoria, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the cost of a local call.

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SuicideLine (VIC) 1300 651 251

www.suicideline.org.au

For media enquiries please contact:

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¹Victoria experiences one of the lowest rates of suicide across Australia (behind New South Wales) – ABS 2005