

LIFELINE AUSTRALIA 60th ANNIVERSARY
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2023

Good evening everyone. I warmly welcome you all to this reception for Tasmanian Staff and Volunteers of Lifeline Australia to mark the significant 60th anniversary of your formation.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and waters. I acknowledge the impacts of colonisation upon our First People and commit to a future that listens to and respects Aboriginal stories, culture and history.

May I acknowledge:

- The Honourable Elise Archer MP, Attorney General
- The Honourable Nic Street MP, Minister for Community Services and Development
- Chair of Lifeline Australia, Jacinta Munro
- President of Lifeline Tasmania, Carolyn Pillans, and past President, James Pirie
- CEO Lifeline Tasmania, Debbie Evans
- Former Chair Lifeline International, Mary Parsissons
- and, of course, all the staff and volunteers of Lifeline Tasmania.

The celebration of 60 years of operation is a significant milestone for any organisation. For Lifeline, it would be a difficult task to quantify the benefits and services you have offered to the Australian community over that period.

Lifeline had its genesis in the unfortunate loss of a life to suicide. Founder, the Reverend Dr Sir Alan Walker, responded to the death of a man in distress who had reached out to him. His response was to address the issues of isolation and lack of support by launching a 24-hour telephone support service.

Lifeline Australia has grown since then and you now have some 10,000 volunteers and 1,000 staff. They receive a call on the crisis line every 30 seconds!

I was very pleased to learn that Lifeline launched the 12YARN line in 2022. This is the first national support line for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in crisis. It offers a confidential one-on-one opportunity over the phone to “yarn” and get support with a Lifeline trained Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter. It is aimed for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly over-represented in suicide numbers.¹

In Lifeline Tasmania, we have about 300 volunteers and 80 staff state-wide. Records show that, in 2022, Lifeline received just under 8,000 calls from people in Tasmania. I note that you have recently set up the ‘Tasmanian Lifeline’ service. That service complements the national crisis line service and provides for people who are experiencing psychological distress.

Our Mental Health Council of Tasmania stresses, however, that psychological distress is not a mental illness. In these difficult times, many Tasmanians are experiencing stress, anxiety, worry, fear and a sense of helplessness.

The new Lifeline Tasmania service provides information on the resources available to support those impacted by change, in the way Tasmanians go about their daily lives, including social isolation, loss of employment, homelessness, and financial challenges. These services are also aimed at health professionals, working for extended periods in a high-risk environment.²

Lifeline Tasmania maintains its vision of a Tasmania free of suicide, and these developments show that Lifeline continues to adapt to changing needs in our community as well as preferred methods of engagement by clients.

¹ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/populations-age-groups/suicide-indigenous-australians> accessed 1 Mar 23

² <https://www.lifelinetasmania.org.au/a-tasmanian-lifeline> accessed 27 Feb 23

I thank all the Lifeline Tasmania staff and volunteers for their dedication and commitment to support our community. I am very pleased that we celebrate your important milestone here and encourage you all to continue your vital work for our community.

Following a response from Lifeline Australia Chair, Jacinta Munro, I invite you all to enjoy the reception and hospitality of Government House.

David ...