

*Request From:*  
*Dr David Horgan Consultant Psychiatrist*

MB BCH BAO(DUB) MPHIL DPM MRCPSYCH FRANZCP MD(MELB)

**SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICES AUSTRALIA-WIDE REQUEST \$5 PER WEEK FROM ONE INDIVIDUAL OR BUSINESS IN EACH LOCAL COUNCIL AREA. THIS WILL CONTINUE (AND EXPAND) SUICIDE PREVENTION AND DEPRESSION PREVENTION SERVICES. YOUR DONATION WILL ALSO FUND THE CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION OF THIS SERVICE.**

**PEOPLE WILLING TO TELL THEIR OWN STORY OF DEPRESSION ARE ALSO REQUESTED TO DO THIS, TO ENCOURAGE OTHER AUSTRALIANS STILL SUFFERING, AND TO TELL THEM THEY ARE NOT ALONE, AND WILL RECOVER.**

**PROTECTING THE MAIN VICTIMS:**

**About 2,500 Australians die from suicide each year**, 2,000 being young men in the prime of their lives. As many people, **especially males, find it difficult to talk about distressing emotional issues**, the services described here were deliberately set up to **allow anonymous easy access to information** about depression and suicidal thoughts. Young men are also the highest users of the Internet.

**About 75,000 Australians deliberately harm themselves each year, mainly young women.** Elderly men have very high rates of suicide.

Research has repeatedly shown that the vast majority of those who die by suicide have treatable depression. **Alcohol and drug abuse** also increase significantly the risk of suicide.

**TELEPHONE SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICE:**

Until recently, there were no entries in the telephone book under Suicide.

Since 1997, Dr David Horgan has been providing a **free Australia-wide** telephone suicide prevention service. The service receives **6000 to 7000 calls per year**, a very high number of calls in a population the size of Australia. The only publicity the service can afford is a large entry in all 55 Australian telephone directories, under the heading Suicide Prevention Medical Specialist Information. Callers ring 1300 360 980, and can listen to a recorded information service emphasising the fact that nearly all suicidal ideas are due to stress and depression, describing the symptoms of depression, encouraging the caller to seek treatment, offering advice for immediate intervention, and insisting the illness can be cured.

**The average caller listens to the recording for almost 5 full minutes, indicating the seriousness of their interest.** In general, **calls from non-capital city areas are more frequent** per head of population than are calls from capital city areas. The rate of calls varies from one per 1600 of population in Tasmania to one per 3300 in Victoria.

**INTERNET SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICE:**

[www.SuicidePrevention.com.au](http://www.SuicidePrevention.com.au) is also a free service, giving similar information and advice, and receives **3000 to 4000 hits per year**.

**POSTAL SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICE:**

People who ring the telephone service are informed they can send a stamped addressed envelope to receive further information. The package includes a transcript of the telephone message, a self-administered questionnaire on depressive symptoms (which people can bring to their doctor), a summary of depressive illness, and information on multiple antidepressants. **Hundreds of requests are processed each year.**

## **PREVENTING DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE:**

Depression is a **stress-induced** illness. **20% of Australian women and 10% of Australian men** will suffer at least one attack of depression, sometimes severe. Helping people under stress to find local practical support services, and to obtain advice for their problems, will lessen the risk of developing depression or suicidal thoughts. This is particularly important given the **drastic shortage of doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists, especially in regional areas.**

1) [www.Depression.com.au](http://www.Depression.com.au), a website run by Dr Horgan, intends to become a reference centre informing Australians of the multiple and often poorly-known services in their local area, which can help them to cope with stress in their lives. Knowing where to find public, private, voluntary and Council services in their own area, such as emergency childcare, drop-in centres, neighbourhood houses, help with elderly relatives, alcohol problems, drug problems, gambling, relationship problems, financial difficulties etc will often **prevent stressful situations from progressing to cause emotional distress and illness.** Many services exist but are poorly known. The aim of this campaign is to provide immediate information about local services to people under stress.

[www.Depression.com.au](http://www.Depression.com.au) already provides lists of **psychologists and other therapists in local areas** available to help people living there. It is an indication of how overworked general practitioners and psychiatrists are in Australia that none of these professionals answered ads inviting them to register as therapists on this site.

2) [www.SuicidePrevention.com.au](http://www.SuicidePrevention.com.au) will be expanded to list the public, private and voluntary services in each local government area, designed to help in the area of suicide prevention. **Many such groups exist, but with no easily accessible way of finding them.**

## **ASSISTING BEREAVED FAMILIES AND FRIENDS:**

[www.AfterSuicide.com.au](http://www.AfterSuicide.com.au) has been established very recently to help those affected by the tragedy of suicide, ranging from family members to friends and neighbours. This site will list support services in the local area that are available to help such people. The site also contains a general message of **emotional support and explanation**, written by Dr Horgan.

## **BECOMING A SPONSOR OF YOUR LOCAL AREA:**

**Only \$5 per week per Council area** will allow the above services to be continued, and allow the listing of local supports and practical services to proceed. **The sponsor can be an individual or a local business, and can be acknowledged on each website, or can remain anonymous.**

Please indicate the local area you wish to sponsor, and send a cheque for \$260 for 1 year (\$500 for 2 years) or send your credit card details by mail or by fax (do not email these details) to:-

Dr David Horgan  
Suite 609  
89 High St  
Kew  
Vic 3101  
Tel: 03 9853 5211  
Fax: 03 9853 0744  
Email: [davidhorgan@email.com](mailto:davidhorgan@email.com)

Dr Horgan will use any information you supply, and contact local services, to enter appropriate details on [www.Depression.com.au](http://www.Depression.com.au)  
[www.SuicidePrevention.com.au](http://www.SuicidePrevention.com.au)  
[www.AfterSuicide.com.au](http://www.AfterSuicide.com.au)

**Thank you !**

## **IS THE AREA I WISH TO SPONSOR ALREADY SPONSORED?**

On [www.Depression.com.au](http://www.Depression.com.au), click on "Support services in your Local Area". If your council area is already sponsored (e.g. Oberon in NSW), you may wish to sponsor another part of Australia.

Or contact Dr Horgan through the above contact details.

The generosity of the current sponsors Mr Mayer Page and Mr Philip Chubb is very gratefully acknowledged, but we now need some broad community support if these services are to continue.

#### **PERSONAL STORIES TO HELP OTHERS:**

Depression is a poorly understood but very prevalent illness. **Many people feel totally alone** and extremely embarrassed when they are affected. The more people who tell their own story, (and especially if they are willing to be identified), the easier it will be for other Australians to get help and feel less stigmatized. **Australians who have had depression, and are willing to come forward to help others, are asked to send their story to Dr Horgan.** Even if you wish to remain anonymous, a brief summary of your age, occupation and story may help many others.

#### **LETTERS OF THANKS:**

1) "Please find enclosed my cheque for \$20 to help with your suicide prevention line. **I can't put it more clearly than this – the Suicide Prevention Line literally saved my life.** Please accept my deepest thanks. I would gladly donate more, but I am on a pension and can't afford more. Again many thanks and good luck with your continuing work in this area."

2) "**Having lost a son 14 months ago and now have met others who are contemplating suicide,** I would like to be able to help, even if only to give them information so they can understand where they are at, and to know there is hope."

3) "**I want to thank you for saving my life following the phone call to your recorded message line 1300 360 980.** It was such a relief to me to hear your voice and your words, I cried and cried to hear that what I have is a depressive illness, whereby my brain because of chemical changes was sending me wrong messages i.e. nothing to live for in the present or the future. The words it is as real to me as broken arm is to someone else, helped me want to live **after having attempted suicide.** I have now sought the correct treatment through my local hospital, something I did after listening to your advice. I am being treated through the mental health unit and with medication. This is Day 2 of my recovery to a better way of life.  
Thankyou, thankyou, thankyou " (etc)

4) "To the suicide prevention team: just a small note to commend you on your helpful recording found via your 1300 number. **My husband has been suffering bouts of depression over the past 3 years since the death of his father, but would not admit his depression or seek any help for his condition.** Last week he confided in his mother that he was considering suicide while.....After I heard that, my mother-in-law and I have been trying to encourage him to seek some treatment. He displays almost all the symptoms described in your tape recording. Thankyou for this opportunity to gain benefit from this service, and keep up the good work! I look forward to receiving the written information and going through all the options with my husband."

#### **TO READERS OF AFTERSUICIDE.COM.AU:**

Thankyou for reading this. I hope between you and I that we can establish a service aimed at preventing depression and preventing suicide, so that a site such as this will rarely be visited.

If you or others wish to sponsor a local council area, to aid in the above aims, please see the section on "Becoming a Sponsor of your Local Area".

David Horgan