

I didn't know about community health. I certainly didn't know about Lifeline, and I've called Lifeline three times, and they've certainly potentially saved my life. I had to learn all these things. Tradies need to know them. We provided bags, bags of information, and I had quite a few tradies say to me in the first year, "Aw, this is a load of you-know-what," but those tradies I know still have those bags in their Ute or in their shed.

On November 10, 2013, we had our event, and interestingly enough, when I talk about a whole of community approach, that was our first event in Castlemaine at Tonks Brothers, and there's a whole of community there. There's counselors, there's people who have gone through mental health. That first event set the scene.

Since then, we've had more events. Interestingly enough, it's not only tradies that are affected by mental health or anxiety or depression or suicide. We started working with TAFEs. We started working in the farming industry, at councils, at secondary colleges. We did events for the partners of tradies, because often the tradies would not go home to their partners and say, "Guess what, we talked about mental health, and we're going to do this, this and this now." So we're doing events for the partners, who themselves may need help.

TAFEs are very popular. For me, it's really crucial to get to these young, vulnerable men and women. We've done events for men's sheds, so the high rate of suicide is really high for older men. We've done events for council depot workers and tradies. Interestingly enough, nearly every single event — and we've actually done now, with very little funding, 150 events over four states. So — oh please, thank you.

And invariably at every single HALT event at a hardware store, I have one tradie come up to me, at least one come up and tell me about his suicide attempt. They're not suicidal there and then, they've worked through it,

but these men have never felt they could share their vulnerabilities. They've never felt they can talk about their suicide attempt, but the HALT events, where there's no expectations for them to talk, makes them feel comfortable to start talking. And it's not just they talk to me and tell me their story, they actually now say, "We feel comfortable enough to talk with other men." I've had men stand up and say, "I've never mentioned before that I've had depression, but I have, and if anyone else here wants to come and speak to me, I'm here to talk to you." It's very empowering and cathartic to do that.

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We need a whole-of-community approach. We give the tradies bags of information from local and national support services. It's one of thing to tell a tradie or someone at one of these events, "You should go here, here and here," but we need the whole of community to wrap around the idea of suicide prevention. We need those services, and suicide doesn't discriminate at all. It's not a 9-to-5 thing. We need to do events before 9 a.m., which most of our brekkies are, and after 5 p.m. That's what we need to do. It's a whole-of-community approach. We need to get into businesses. We need to get into sporting clubs, community clubs. We need to get in there and train people to understand about mental health.

Here's some sobering statistics just to give you an idea. In 2016, in Australia, 2,866 suicides, very close to twice the road toll. Globally, 800,000 a year suicides in the world, one every 40 seconds.

We need a whole-of-community approach. We need to feel comfortable in opening up the conversations. Men I know find it really difficult to open up conversations. They certainly do. If you're going to open up conversations, I tell the guys, you need to find a comfortable place to open up and have a conversation, whether it's at the pub, it's going for a walk, it's after

footy. Find that really comfortable place to have the conversation.

Part of the ability to have that conversation is to understand what to say. We've all heard about, "Are you OK?" And I've seen it. I've done this. "Are you OK?" "Yes." "Are you OK?" "Yes." "Are you OK?" "Yes." "Are you OK?" "No." What do I say now? What do I say? We need to equip every single person with the ability to come forth and be able to have that conversation. We need to be able to listen.

I don't know who out there is a good listener. I'm working on my listening abilities, but it's an art form to listen and not judge. Don't make fun. If someone's coming to talk to you about mental illness and anxiety and depression and thoughts of suicide, we need to respect that. They want to trust us that we're going to hold that in tight and not tell everyone. We need to do that.

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So we need to have conversations. We need to listen. And we need to start reducing the stigma associated with mental health. Companies are now starting to have mental health days. What a great idea! It's not just physical sick days, it's mental health days. Things are changing. We can add to that change.

I'm a life preserver. I think we can all be life preservers. The pain of regret is far greater than the pain of hard work. Thank you.

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