



HealthPlay



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

It's time to talk about suicide

A new and engaging production that combines a play about suicide with a panel of mental health experts aims to help build resilience in the Geelong community.

Suicide: It's Time We Talked is a 35-minute play that addresses youth suicide in the online era and how young people can reach breaking point without their parents realising.

Its developers argue that suicide has been taboo for too long and families should discuss it in a way that educates and potentially prevents self-harm.

The play will be performed at Sacred Heart College in Newtown on Friday, 29 March, after winning a Victorian Government [Pick My Project](#) online community grant. Admission is free.

The story follows a young girl, Jessica, whose parents find suicidal comments on her computer when she climbs out her bedroom window. After giving her parents a scare, Jess discusses her concerns with them, including bullying and her friend Lindy's suicide. The message is one of understanding and hope.

Written by theatre veteran [Alan Hoppgood](#) AM, the play is followed by a 30-minute Q&A with an expert panel including the likes of [PoPsy](#) director and positive psychology advocate [Marie McLeod](#) and [headspace](#) manager and mental health social worker [Kirsten Cleland](#). Participants then enjoy refreshments.

The idea is for teenagers, young adults and parents to attend together or alone and guide the conversation. Marie says some people fear that talking about suicide might have a "copycat" effect, but appropriate discussion can help to prevent it.

"As we raise awareness, it becomes less of a taboo topic and people feel more comfortable talking about it," she says. "The play is incredibly helpful in a visual way. That's really the catalyst for the conversation."

Suicide was the leading cause of death among Australians aged 15-44 in 2016 (source: [ABS](#)). A 2016 Orygen [report](#) also found small but gradual suicide rate increases over the past 10 years. Twice as many girls aged 15-19 suicided in 2015 than in 2005, and rates rose for children aged under 14.

Marie says the sessions offer realistic strategies to build resilience. "We can't stop adversities in life," she says. "But we need to think about how we equip young people with skills and strategies, and one of those strategies is talking."

Kirsten says headspace supports ongoing discussion around youth suicide and believes that this project is a great opportunity to keep the conversation going. She says the play encourages young people contemplating suicide to stop, think and talk to someone. (PTO)

“It’s really helpful because I think that it can enable conversation and make sure that the message gets out clearly,” she says. “There’s a real opportunity there.”

Alan, who writes health-themed plays based on true stories for [HealthPlay](#), says the format provides a comfortable setting to discuss sensitive but important topics. The theme initially encountered some resistance, but people back the concept once he explains its importance. “There’s no reason why we can’t discuss it more openly,” he says.

Suicide: It’s Time We Talked is a collaboration between not-for-profit [Parent Guides Pty Ltd](#), HealthPlay and PoPsy. Run by Melbourne media identity [Eileen Berry](#), Parent Guides help parents educate themselves about youth issues such as drugs, sex, social media and mental health.

Play attendees receive resources, contacts and a copy of Parent Guides’ [Mental Health 101](#). Eileen hopes to raise awareness, create well-being and build resilience in an engaging way.

“We want to deliver an end-to-end evening geared towards safety,” she says. “Our mission is to encourage people to seek help, maintain connections and raise awareness while providing practical tools, such as our comprehensive parent resource, *Mental Health 101*.”

The free play will be held on Friday, 29 March from 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm at Sacred Heart College, Retreat Road, Newtown. Register via Eventbrite. Link below.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/suicide-its-time-we-talked-tickets-55317826107>

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What people are saying about *Suicide: It’s Time We Talked*

“Absolutely wonderful initiative and crucial to face this growing issue.”

“Great project with meaning and impact.”

“This is a topic we need to talk about.”

“An important and timely project!”

*For more details about the play, please see attached PDF