

Honouring with care

A Guide to safe memorial planning after suicide

Perth Metro Suicide Prevention Coordination
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Acknowledgments

This resource was prepared by Perth Metropolitan Suicide Prevention Coordinators with members of the Metropolitan Suicide Postvention Development Group and the Metropolitan Suicide Reference Group.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed.

Disclaimer

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Reader advisory

This document includes information about suicide and related topics, which may be distressing to some readers. If you find the content overwhelming or upsetting, consider reaching out to a trusted friend, support person, Lifeline on 13 11 14 or one of the helplines listed on [page 10](#).

In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000).

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We acknowledge Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander communities as the Strait traditional custodians of the land we work on and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded.



Neami is committed to cultivating inclusive environments for staff, consumers and carers. We celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.



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Purpose of this guide

A thoughtfully planned memorial or funeral for a person who has died by suicide can support those affected in their grief and contribute to healing. It may also positively influence community understanding of suicide by promoting awareness, reducing stigma and encouraging help-seeking.

An informed community is better equipped to recognise signs of distress, and support individuals in accessing pathways to recovery.

A safe memorial is one that:

- is respectful and inclusive
- supports healthy grieving through safe language and practices, and
- shares appropriate activities and information about available support services.

While memorials can be deeply healing, they may also increase distress for those recently bereaved or vulnerable to thoughts of suicide. This document aims to guide individuals and communities in organising memorial presentations, events, or activities touched by suicide in ways that promote healing and minimise the risk of further harm.

Things to consider when planning a memorial

Memorial activities following a suicide can be deeply meaningful and healing, but they must be planned with care to ensure they are safe, inclusive, and respectful for all involved. The following considerations are designed to support organisers in creating memorials that honour the person who has died, while minimising distress and promoting wellbeing.





Safe language around suicide

Using appropriate language when talking about suicide helps reduce stigma and avoid further distress. Language should be non-sensational, respectful and aligned with lived experience-informed guidelines.

Refer to the table below for examples of safe and unsafe language, based on [Mindframe](#) guidelines.

Preferred	Problematic
Died by suicide Took their own life	Successful suicide Completed suicide Committed suicide
Suicide attempt Attempted to end their life	Unsuccessful suicide Failed suicide bid
Increased rates of suicide Higher rates of suicide	Skyrocketing rates of suicide Suicide epidemic
A person who attempted or died by suicide He died by suicide	Labelling terms associated with suicide methods
Tragic death A tragedy	Set free Finally at peace Can rest at last
Refraining from using suicide out of content	Political suicide Suicide mission
Content advice: the content includes discussion of suicide	Trigger warning Triggered

For further guidance, visit:

- MindFrame: mindframe.org.au
- Talking about suicide: rosesintheocean.com.au/talking-about-suicide

Safe presentation of a suicide loss

The timing, format and content of a memorial activity should be carefully considered to ensure safety for attendees and presenters. Below are important considerations to help make your memorial safe and supportive for everyone involved:

- Select messages and tributes thoughtfully, using safe language
- Collaborate with family and friends to agree on roles, readings or gestures that reflect cultural and personal relevance
- Avoid open, unscripted speaking platforms. Instead, invite attendees to submit written tributes in advance, with selected messages read by a designated speaker.
- Promote self-care throughout the planning and delivery of the event. Let attendees know it's okay not to attend or to leave if they feel overwhelmed.
- Provide information about support services, including helplines and brochures, ensuring accessibility for diverse communities.
- Avoid any reference to, or speculation about, the method, location or specific reasons for the death. This can increase distress and risk for vulnerable individuals.
- For large or public memorials, arrange for trained peer supporters or counsellors to be present to assist anyone experiencing distress.

Suggestions for safety when planning a memorial

To support safe and inclusive planning, the following table outlines practical suggestions and things to avoid when planning a memorial to prioritise wellbeing and minimise risk.

Things to try	Things to avoid
Discuss with family and friends what to share and how best to represent the person and their relationships. Focus on the whole life of the person, sharing positive accomplishments and qualities.	Disclosing details of the suicide, such as the location or means of death. These can increase distress and may inadvertently lead others to experience suicidal thoughts.
Acknowledge that the reasons for suicide are complex and highly personal. If appropriate, mention that support was sought or offered and reinforce that support is available to those present.	Language that glamourises or romanticises the suicide or describes it as a desirable outcome (e.g. calling the suicide a 'noble' or 'brave' act).
Use person-first, non-judgemental language that recognises the complexity of mental health and life circumstances.	Language that stigmatises the causes of suicide or reduces the person to their experience (e.g. 'he died by suicide' without person-first framing).



Focus on messages of hope and recovery. Consider including stories, music, poetry or reflections that promote resilience and connection.	Suggesting the person who has died is 'at peace' or 'no longer in pain', which may imply suicide is a relief or desirable outcome.
Encourage attendees to support one another and consider volunteering or contributing to services that help others. Promote community connection and healing.	Catastrophising the pain felt by loved ones of the deceased.
Moderate any online or digital memorial spaces to ensure content is safe, respectful, and free from distressing or triggering details.	Unmoderated digital tributes or comment sections that may include unsafe language or speculation.
Avoid speculation about the reasons for the death unless confirmed and consented to by the family.	Attributing the suicide to a single cause, such as bullying or relationship breakdown, without context or consent.

Safe Memorial Activities

Memorial activities can offer meaningful ways to honour the life of someone who has died by suicide. When planned with care, they can support healing, reduce stigma, and promote help-seeking. Below are examples of safe and respectful memorial activities:

- **personal expressions:** letters, poems, video messages, commemorative scrapbooks, artworks or photographs shared privately with family and friends.
- **community contributions:** making donations or volunteering time with local charities, peer support services or mental health organisations.
- **support for the bereaved:** collecting funds to assist the family with funeral or related costs.
- **promoting wellbeing: sharing** information about programs or events that support mental health, resilience and suicide prevention.
- **resource donations:** purchasing books for local libraries that address grief, loss, depression or hopeful messaging about mental health experiences.

Permanent memorials

Permanent tributes should be approached with caution. While they may offer comfort to some, they can unintentionally become sites of distress or risk for individuals experiencing thoughts of suicide.

If a permanent memorial is being considered, consult with mental health professionals, people with lived experience, and the bereaved to ensure safety, cultural appropriateness and community readiness.

Environmental consideration

Avoid environmentally harmful practices such as balloon releases, which can pose risks to wildlife and ecosystems. Consider sustainable alternatives like planting trees, creating memory gardens or using biodegradable materials.

Public memorials

If planning a community memorial, consider the diverse people who may attend, including children and young people. Ensure the memorial includes:

- clear, hopeful messages about help seeking
- information about support services
- language that is non-stigmatising and respectful
- trauma-informed design, such as quiet spaces and emotional safety measures

Consent and cultural sensitivity

Always seek consent from the bereaved before planning the memorial or sharing any materials. Ensure the memorial reflects the cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs of the person who died and their loved ones. This should include First Nations and multicultural and multifaith perspectives and practices, ensuring cultural safety and inclusion.

Support for young people

If children or young people are attending, use age-appropriate language and provide youth-specific support resources such as [headspace](#). Consider having trained youth workers or counsellors available during the event.

Lived experience

Where appropriate, involve people with lived experience of suicide bereavement in the planning process. Their insights can help shape a memorial that is meaningful, safe and inclusive. We suggest contacting [Roses in the Ocean](#) for lived experience support.





Community inclusion and accessibility

Ensure the memorial is accessible to all community members. This includes:

- physical accessibility, including wheelchair access
- sensory and cognitive accessibility, such as visual aids and plain language materials
- inclusive representation of diverse identities and experiences.



Privacy and boundaries

Set clear boundaries around photography, social media sharing and personal storytelling to protect attendees' privacy and emotional wellbeing.

Post-event follow-up

Consider sending follow-up messages to attendees with thanks, reminders about support services and opportunities for ongoing connection or reflection.

Alcohol use

The presence and use of alcohol at memorial events should be approached with care. While alcohol may be a common part of social gatherings, it can increase emotional vulnerability and risk, particularly for those experiencing grief or thoughts of suicide. Promote and encourage safe levels of alcohol consumption. Consider how to reduce any risk of alcohol related harm, including planning and supporting the safe return home of people attending.

Social media memorials

Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and X (formerly Twitter) are increasingly used to memorialise loved ones. These platforms can provide accessible spaces for remembrance, connection and awareness-raising.

Online memorial pages and tributes can be helpful for those grieving, allowing people to engage with their loss in their own time and way. However, care must be taken to ensure that language and imagery used are safe, respectful and do not cause distress to others.

Recommendations for safe online memorials

- **Safe content sharing:** avoid posting details of the death or distressing imagery. Use respectful language and imagery that does not romanticise or sensationalise suicide. We suggest you review the Mindframe guidelines.
- **Promote help-seeking:** share information about support services and encourage those affected to seek help.
- **Hope and recovery messaging:** include uplifting content such as poetry, videos, or stories that promote resilience and healing.
- **Moderation is essential:** assign a moderator to manage social media memorials to ensure content remains safe, respectful and supportive.
- **Respect privacy and consent:** ensure any shared content has the consent of the bereaved and avoids speculation about the circumstances of the death.

Where to find help

If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed by planning a memorial or dealing with suicide bereavement, it's important to know that support is available. Below are some services you can reach out to for help and guidance.

Suicide bereavement, grief counselling and other support services

StandBy

Suicide postvention program dedicated to assisting people and communities bereaved or impacted by suicide.

1300 727 247

Roses In the Ocean

Peer CARE Companion Warmline call-back service provides a safe place for people with a lived experience of suicide to connect with others with a similar lived experience.

Call back within 24 hours.

1800 77 7337

Active Response Bereavement Outreach (ARBOR)

Suicide bereavement support for adults.

1300 11 44 46

Children & Young People Responsive Suicide Support (CYPRESS)

Suicide bereavement support for children and young people.

1300 11 44 46

Griefline

Free, confidential counselling for individuals and families experiencing loss and grief.

1300 845 745

Compassionate Friends

Supporting parents and families who have had a child die.

1300 064 068

Solace Grief Support Group WA

Grief support group for those grieving the death of their spouse, partner or fiancé.

0488 991 084

Thirilli Indigenous Postvention Service

Provides emotional and practical support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples impacted by a loss from suicide or other fatal traumatic incidents.

1800 805 801

Suicide Call Back Service

Online and telephone counselling for anyone who is feeling suicidal, worried about someone else or who has lost someone to suicide.

1300 659 467



Mental health and wellbeing services and information

Lifeline

Support for anyone experiencing a personal crisis. Available by phone, text or online chat via their website

13 11 14

Beyond Blue

Online and telephone support for anyone feeling anxious or depressed.

1300 22 4636

QLife

Provides Australia-wide anonymous, LGBTQIA+ peer support from 3pm – midnight.

1800 184 527

13 YARN

Run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Free and confidential service available 24/7.

13 92 76

Youth Focus

Counselling on the phone or face-to-face for young people aged 16-25.

08 6266 4333

Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL)

MHERL is a 24-hour telephone service for people in the Perth metropolitan area experiencing a mental health crisis.

1300 555 788 (Metro), 1800 676 822 (Peel) or 1800 552 002 (Country/Rurallink)

RightByYou

An online platform designed by and for young people (12-25) who want to help a friend expressing suicidal concerns online.

rightbyyou.org.au

Here For You

A statewide confidential, non-judgemental, telephone service for anyone in Western Australia concerned about their own or another person's mental health issue.

Available 7am – 10pm, 7 days a week.

1800 437 348

Alcohol and Drug Support Line

The Alcohol and Drug Support Line is a confidential, non-judgemental telephone counselling, information and referral service for anyone seeking help for their own or another person's alcohol or drug use.

08 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024

Kids Helpline

Free 24/7, confidential and private counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years.

1800 55 1800

PANDA

Counselling service delivered by professional counsellors and dedicated peer support volunteers with a lived experience of perinatal mental health issues.

Monday to Friday 9am – 7.30pm (AEST).

1300 726 306

Think Mental Health

The Think Mental Health education campaign is part of a comprehensive approach in Western Australia that aims to build mental health and wellbeing and reduce mental health issues with a view to reducing Western Australia's suicide rate.

thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au

Strong Spirit Strong Mind

Strong Spirit Strong Mind Aboriginal Programs provides culturally secure information and resources that aim to increase awareness of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs related harm and improve social and emotional wellbeing among Aboriginal people.

strongspiritstrongmind.com.au/mental-health





Final reflections

Planning safe and supportive memorials

The following tips are designed to summarise and support safe, respectful memorial practices that prioritise wellbeing, honour cultural sensitivity and respond to the diverse needs of those affected as outlined in this guide.

- Encourage self-care for those planning and attending the memorial by promoting regular check-ins in the lead-up to and following the event. Encourage individuals to access support services if needed.
- Seek consent from the bereaved before organising the memorial, and confirm that any spoken, written or visual materials are appropriate to share.
- Engage with the broader community or venue hosts to ensure the activity is safe and respectful, and that any potential risks to people or property are managed.
- Respect cultural and religious contexts by ensuring the memorial reflects the beliefs and practices of the bereaved and the person who has died.
- Use safe, non-stigmatising language throughout the activity. Avoid sharing details about the method or location of death.
- Prepare participants who wish to take a formal role in the memorial with safety information and emotional support resources.
- Provide attendees with information about relevant support services, ensuring accessibility for diverse communities.
- Celebrate the life of the person by focusing on their positive qualities and experiences, while acknowledging the challenges they may have faced.
- Recognise the varied experiences of grief and the different ways people may be impacted, depending on their relationship to the person and their own circumstances.

We hope this guide supports you in thoughtfully planning a memorial or funeral for someone who has died by suicide, while also helping those affected in their grief and contributing to healing.

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