



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 will connect and bring people together in local communities.

The project's organisers **Taboo Talks** argue that suicide has been taboo for too long and families should discuss it in a way that educates and potentially prevents self-harm and ultimately build resilience.

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.

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.

Jessica's 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 Hopgood](#) 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."

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 the project is a great opportunity to continue them. She says the play encourages young people contemplating suicide to stop, think and talk to someone.

"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 that we can be there for each other."

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 backed 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 run the project through the Victorian Government’s [Pick My Project](#) online community grants, which distribute \$30 million to local projects chosen by public vote.

She hopes to raise awareness, create well-being and build resilience in an engaging way. The project also complements recent initiatives such as [#YouCanTalk](#), a joint national suicide prevention campaign that helps people respond to friends and family in need.

“We want to deliver an end to end evening geared towards safety and how we can be there for each other,” 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*.”

Voting opens Monday 13 August for those aged 16 and over who live in the project’s area. Successful applicants are selected in October.

For more details: Eileen Berry, Parent Guides Founder: Ph: 0407 542 655 Email: eileen@parentguides.com.au

From *Suicide; It’s Time We Talked*, by Alan Hopgood AM.

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| DAD | Jess! Where the hell have you been? |
| JESS | I went for a walk. |
| DAD | A walk! You don’t jump out your window to go for a walk! |
| MUM | We’ve rung the police! We didn’t know where you were! |
| JESS | Can we talk about it in the morning? |
| DAD | We’ll talk about it now.! |
| MUM | Jess, we didn’t know where you were. We thought.... |
| JESSICA | Mum, leave it! We’ll talk about it tomorrow; |
| DAD | No, we’ll talk about it now! |
| DAD | This! This was on your computer. |
| JESSICA | You looked at my computer! |
| DAD | It was open for the world to see! “I don’t want to be here anymore.” That could have been your last message! This and the open window. What were we supposed to think? |
| JESSICA | You wouldn’t understand. |
| DAD | Well, try us! |

Credits: HealthPlay by [Bay Street Productions](#).

Dad: [Lee Mason](#) / **Mum:** [Marcella Russo](#) / **Jessica:** [Jessica Martin](#) / **Narrator:** [Alan Hopgood](#).