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The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

TRANSCRIPT
SPEECH, WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY BREAKFAST
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EO&E...

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks very much Nieves, and to all the colleagues that are here today, thank you for being here also.

But can I start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people, and their elders, past, present and emerging.

Can I acknowledge any veterans here today, any serving men and women in our Defence Forces.

I'll often start a set of remarks by making those acknowledgements but today it's particularly poignant because we know in both of those communities, in our Indigenous communities, in our veterans communities, that suicide has touched them in a way that is disproportionate really to the rest of the country. And so it is particularly poignant today to acknowledge them here at this important event.

Nieves, thank you for your welcome here today. Can I also thank Julian and Mike for their leadership of this group, we are all here, not from any stripes of politics today, we're all here in one cause as Nieves has said.

And I particularly acknowledge Greg Hunt, my colleague and friend over many years for whom we share a passion in this area. Can I acknowledge Chris Bowen as well and the work that he's doing.

I get a lot of letters. We all do. All parliamentarians do. I probably get a few more than I used do these days.

I got one that was very upsetting recently. Jenny and I went to a wedding of a friend in Western Sydney a few years back, and as is the case I was Treasurer at the time, there's lots of photos, there's lots of selfies. And I had a photo, Jenny and I with a beautiful young family and three kids, and recently I had a letter from the mother in that photo.

The beaming teenage boy in that photo, Luke, had taken his own life in the past year and she'd written to me to tell me about it. When you look at the photo, there's no tell tale sign, there's nothing. A beautiful young boy there with a beautiful family. He was 17.

More than half of all Australian adults personally know someone who has died by suicide and can tell a story like this. This is a curse as I've described it on our society. That reaches into families, it reaches in to communities and it's indiscriminate. And it causes carnage, hurt, pain, loss, for those left behind.

And today we gather together I think in a united purpose to break this curse of suicide on our country to take back the lives that would be touched by this in the future.

It's hard to know of any other more important project that we have than to protect the lives of our people. But it does involve coming together as we are this morning. It does involve doing everything in our power that we can think of to help Australians who are at risk to come out of the shadow of suicide and to be able to see brighter and better days. To have the care and support of family or friends of community of the person sitting next to you on the bus or the train or wherever it is, and to simply be able to extend that hand of support so people know that they are not alone.

R U OK day's coming up soon. R U OK was started many years ago by a friend of mine who we lost to cancer. We went to school together. And that is a very simple Australian act of just extending a hand, and you never know who you might extend that hand to and you never might know the difference that that will make. But what I love about R U OK day is it is just a simple expression of empathy and support for our fellow Australians.

Julian's right, as a government we have set ourselves a very bold goal, a towards zero goal when it comes to suicide prevention because what other goal could you have?

Zero is the only option that you must work towards as a government. Now that doesn't mean we're unrealistic about the challenges. We are not unrealistic about what the results may well be. But we are determined, and I believe all of the Parliament is determined. When I discuss these matters with the state and territory Premiers and Chief Ministers they are also determined, and it's a topic which can unite us all. So that's why over half a million dollars has been put into youth mental health and suicide prevention.

The largest suicide prevention strategy that a government has undertaken in this country, to strengthen the headspace network, and to focus on Indigenous suicide prevention in particular, and early childhood and parenting support to help build up the resilience and the awareness.

\$375 million to expand, improve that headspace network, \$34 [million] on the Indigenous programs, Indigenous youth suicide prevention, support for Indigenous Leadership that delivers culturally appropriate trauma informed care. \$12 million to support Australian parents and their children in a range of initiatives that help parents recognise when their children are struggling and improving their mental health skills and training in schools. \$15 million to create a new national information system to ensure communities and services can respond quickly to areas affected by a high incidence of suicide and self-harm.

And Greg the work that he did with Pat McGorry when there was that suicide cluster up in Northern New South Wales, it just goes to show that with good evidence and good information and people who

are prepared to step up and work together and make a difference, then it can, you can you can impact on this area and we must continue to.

20 new headspace sites for rural and regional Australia and new mental health telehealth services funded through the NBS is very important in regional communities, particularly those who are suffering, they're affected by drought presently and there is of course additional resources going into supporting the mental health of Australians living in drought affected communities. Mental health and wellbeing projects funded through our \$1.25 million community health and hospitals program, and \$22.5 million in youth and Indigenous health research projects as part of our \$125 million dollars, million mines mission into mental health research.

More than 3000 Australians took their own lives by their own hand in 2017. It's a leading cause of death of young people, and although we know that's too high, the high number of suicides are in fact amongst middle aged men over, and men aged over 85.

Our plan reflects the broad spectrum upon which this curse impacts on Australia and someone who's leading that charge within our government as a very well respected practitioner in this area is our national suicide prevention advisor Christine Morgan who I believe is here of course today.

She has a big job, and she needs all of our help because it's her job to get all of us to work together and to focus on this goal and working with Nieves and her team and all the commissions and all the community leaders, every sports coach, every school teacher, every one you can find, every parent, to be able to work together to address these terrible, these terrible things that are happening.

Experts at Lifeline, headspace, beyond blue the many professional services all working together to take on this important national goal.

So it is a big job. But it's a job that we can't look the other way from. It's a job that we can't acknowledge needs to be done.

It's a very difficult issue to talk about. It stirs up all sorts of terrible emotions amongst us because the reality of what we're facing.

So I want to thank everybody who's joined here in this room today and well beyond this room, and to any of those Australians out today who are feeling isolated.

Any Australians who are out there feeling under the pump. Any Australians out there who are struggling with mental health issues.

There is an Australian who will reach out their hand to you.

You are not alone.

And we can be there for you.

And we want to be there for you.

Thank you very for your attention.

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