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R U OK? Day more important than ever

The Morrison Government is encouraging Australians to reach out to the people we care about for an important conversation about mental health this R U OK? Day.

R U OK? Day has been happening since 2009, but this year it is more important than ever before.

We all continue to face unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, and these challenges can have significant impacts on our mental health.

This year's R U OK? Day theme is 'Are they really OK? Ask them today'.

Research has shown that around 22% of Australians don't reach out to check on the people around them because there hasn't been an occasion where they felt someone needed their help. However, a regular check in, or just starting the conversation – even when someone is not visibly distressed or in crisis – can make a real difference.

The conversation about mental health need not be difficult, it is as simple as asking if someone is okay, listening to them, encouraging action and checking back in.

As much of the country faces restrictions to lower the risk of COVID-19, there are numerous other issues that are testing our resilience as individuals and collectively. Whether it is fear for our physical health, uncertainty around businesses, employment or school, sadness over missed things like a holiday, a birthday or a wedding, or grief over lost loved ones, we are all carrying a significant emotional load.

In 2021, we know that an honest answer to 'are you okay?' is likely to be 'no, I'm not' and that is okay, it's understandable in these circumstances. But it is not something that has to be carried alone.

Help is available. Anyone experiencing distress can seek immediate advice and support through Lifeline (13 11 14), Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800), or the Government's digital mental health gateway, Head to Health (www.headtohealth.gov.au).

The Australian Government is proud to support R U OK? Day and has committed \$2.1 million to the work of R U OK? between April 2017 and 30 June 2022.

Mental health and suicide prevention are a national priority. Our Government has invested a record \$2.3 billion in the 2021–22 Budget for the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. A record \$6.5 billion will be spent in mental health and suicide prevention services and supports in 2021–22, doubling since 2012–13.

More information and resources to help support the conversation around mental health are available at www.ruok.org.au

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