

# StandBy National Client Outcomes Project

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## Summary of project results

### Project aims

Research suggests that around 135 people may be impacted for every death by suicide.<sup>1</sup> Based on these findings, it is likely that over 330,000 Australians are potentially impacted by suicide each year. This has significant impacts on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Individuals bereaved by suicide may be at an increased risk of experiencing suicide ideation, depression, anxiety, stigma, shame, and complicated grief.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

Effective services that provide support to individuals impacted by suicide are critical to help prevent long-term health issues and further suicides.

StandBy Support After Suicide is a national community-based suicide bereavement service that provides support, assistance and a coordinated response for people bereaved by suicide.

StandBy is committed to enhancing its service and providing the best possible outcomes for clients. As part of this commitment, independent researchers, The Science of Knowing Pty Ltd, were contracted to evaluate the impact of StandBy on people bereaved by suicide.

### How the evaluation was done

The evaluation incorporated the use of a Participatory Action Research framework, which involved consultations with StandBy coordinators who deliver the service, as well as interviews with people who were previously supported by StandBy.

The information gained from the consultations was combined with research findings to help inform the development of the project survey, and the overall study design.

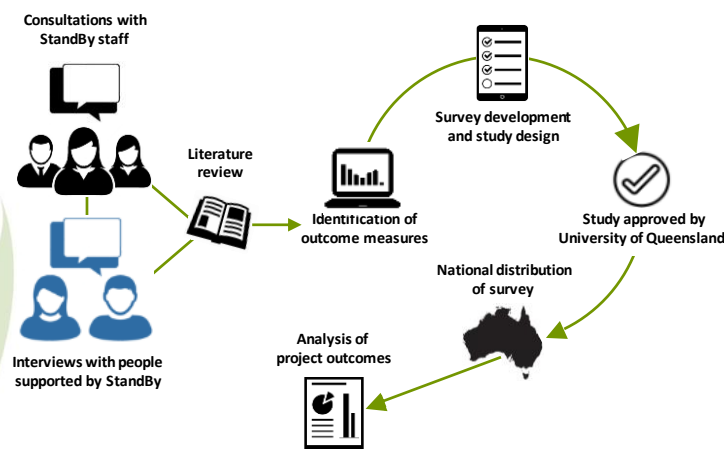
An online survey was selected as an appropriate data collection method to compare outcomes between people supported by StandBy and people bereaved by suicide who did not access StandBy.

The final research design and project survey were reviewed by the University of Queensland's Human Research Ethics Committee, and ethics approval for the project was granted on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017 (Ethics approval number: 2017001441).

Data was collected from 5<sup>th</sup> February and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018. StandBy staff from seven sites across the country invited clients to participate in the study. Clients wishing to participate were sent a survey link via text message.

The participant recruitment strategy for people bereaved by suicide who had not accessed StandBy involved national online advertising on social media.

### Participatory Action Research Framework



The project findings are being used to enhance the StandBy Support After Suicide service, to help improve the outcomes of people bereaved by suicide



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## Results

A total of 545 people completed the survey, 121 StandBy clients and 424 people bereaved by suicide who did not access StandBy. We compared results for clients with people who did not access StandBy in two groups – those whose most recent loss was within the last 12 months and those whose loss was more than 12 months ago.

There were several key findings among people whose loss was within the last 12 months.



### Risk of suicide

**The risk of suicidality was significantly lower for people supported by StandBy than those not supported by StandBy.** Overall, 38% of people supported by StandBy were at risk of suicidality, compared to 63% of people bereaved by suicide who did not access StandBy.



### Social support and connectedness

**People supported by StandBy were significantly less likely to experience a loss of social support, a loss of social connections, and social loneliness as well as loneliness overall** when compared to people who had not accessed StandBy.



### Mental health concerns

**Significantly fewer people supported by StandBy reported experiencing mental health concerns,** compared with people bereaved by suicide who did not access StandBy (38% compared to 74%).



### Support provided by StandBy

**Over two-thirds of people who accessed StandBy reported that the program staff helped them make some sense of their loss.** Four out of five of people reported that they **did not have to wait long to access support services referred to them by StandBy,** and nine out of ten people supported by StandBy reported that they **believe StandBy is an important form of support for people bereaved by suicide.**

## Summary

Overall, the results from the evaluation suggest that support provided by StandBy within the first year of an individual's loss to suicide helps in a number of ways:

- **Reducing the risk of suicidality**
- **Building people's social support network and providing timely connections to other support services**
- **Reducing the risk of mental health issues.**

Results among people whose loss was more than 12 months ago were less conclusive, with no substantial differences between people accessing StandBy and those who did not access StandBy. This demonstrates the long-term impact of suicide bereavement and suggests that people bereaved by suicide may benefit from StandBy's support beyond the current 12 month model.

StandBy is committed to understanding the support needs of people bereaved by suicide and the impact of the service, to ensure people are well-supported by their communities after a loss and to contribute to the evidence base on postvention as an effective method for suicide prevention. The findings of the study will be published in the academic literature later this year. In addition, a full report of the findings will also be made available by StandBy later this year.

### Research team

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### References

1. Cerel, J. (2016). Connecting to the continuum of survivorship. Paper presented at the National Suicide Prevention Conference: Connecting culture, context and capabilities. Canberra.
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3. de Groot, M., & Kollen, B. J. (2013). Course of bereavement over 8-10 years in first degree relatives and spouses of people who have committed suicide: A longitudinal community-based cohort study. *BMJ*, 347, f5519.
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