

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – NOVEMBER 28, 2019

## **Interim Royal Commission report highlights need for support for those left behind after suicide: Jesuit Social Services**

The interim report of the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, published today, lays bare the failings and fragmented nature of the mental health system and shows how reform can reduce the number of people that take their own lives, says Jesuit Social Services.

“We commend the Victorian Government on its strong leadership in establishing this Australian-first Royal Commission. Effective mental health services are critical to safe and cohesive communities, and allow people and communities to address the complex and entrenched disadvantage they may face,” says Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services.

“Today’s report highlights that transformational change is needed to redesign the mental health system to meet the needs and expectations of people living with mental illness and those around them. The Victorian Government has already committed to implement all recommendations in the final report – this will save lives,” says Ms Edwards.

Dr Louise Flynn, Manager of Jesuit Social Services’ Support After Suicide program, which has operated since 2004, gave evidence to the Royal Commission in September. Dr Flynn described the complex grief and trauma experienced by people after the suicide of a loved one, and how services providing support also serve as suicide prevention services given people bereaved by suicide are at heightened risk of taking their own lives.

“A person bereaved by suicide often has a relentless experience of trying to understand why it happened, how it was that this much loved person ended their own life. In some situations, families can feel additional distress if they feel let down by the mental health system; that not enough was done. It is a deeply distressing and difficult experience,” says Dr Flynn.

Support After Suicide provides support including counselling, group support and online resources for people bereaved by the suicide of a loved one. In 2018/19 the program directly assisted over 1,000 children, young people and adults bereaved by suicide. Support After Suicide receives no state Government funding and there is a lack of certainty regarding ongoing funding provided by the Federal Government.

Today, the Royal Commission has told Victorians there is a need for more post-suicide support services so people affected by the loss and grief of a loved one’s suicide are properly supported. Next year, the Royal Commission will consider the range of interventions for people bereaved by suicide.

“So much work has been done – there is so much more work to do,” says Dr Flynn. [Click here for Jesuit Social Services’ submission to the Royal Commission.](#)

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