Be You Postvention: Response, recovery and support

This is a transcript for the Be You Postvention video available at: <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/suicide-prevention-and-response>

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#### Head of headspace Schools and Communities

Australian school communities continue to be faced with issues that impact on student learning and educator wellbeing, such as the stress and disruption associated with reduced staffing and resourcing.

We also understand that this stress is further compounded by the impact felt following a critical incident in your school community, such as the death of someone or a natural disaster.

We regularly hear from educators that schools are navigating an increase in challenging behaviours as well. These things are occurring in the context of more complex issues, such as bullying, self-harm, social media use, and mental health difficulties.

The Commonwealth Government has funded a national mental health initiative for your school called Be You. This is in partnership with Beyond Blue and Early Childhood Australia. It offers a range of resources and supports to your whole school community.

As a part of this initiative, headspace is leading a national suicide response and recovery service also available to your school.

I'm Kristen Douglas, Head of headspace Schools & Communities. Our national network of Be You consultants are committed to supporting all Australian schools with postvention planning during a response and ongoing recovery to suicide.

Of all the challenges and the most complex and devastating thing a school community may face is the suicide of someone in your school community. The suicide has enormous consequences, both in the short-term and the long-term.

It can have wide reaching impacts on students, teachers and families, not only across your school, but multiple school communities. This includes primary and secondary schools in government, catholic, and independent sectors.

Following a suicide, students, staff, parents and carers may feel shock, disbelief, confused, a sense of hopelessness, and even anger.

Evidence shows that a suicide in your school community may heighten the vulnerability of others. Simply put, exposure and knowledge of a suicide may increase the risk and vulnerability of others acting on their own suicidal ideas or thoughts.

The evidence shows that one of the key factors in suicide prevention is ensuring your school has a plan of how they would respond in the event of a suicide. In responding to a suicide, principals and school leaders will need to inform, support and manage the situation.

Pre-planning for this can enhance the quality of your school's response. School leaders play a pivotal role in preparation and response to suicide. Schools can also play an important role in preventing future suicide.

Preparation is critical. As a school leader, you want to be able to return to the normal business of education as quickly and responsibly as possible.

This is not something that schools need to do alone. Planning for and managing a response to a death by suicide requires a coordinated, informed and evidence-based approach.

This can also reduce the risk of further suicide in your school community.

If your school community has been impacted by death by suicide, or you're experiencing heightened risk or suicide risk in your school, please get in touch with our state and territory Be You teams and they can support you.