

COVID-19 a Key Focus for World Suicide Prevention Experts in Australia This Year

Australia will be in the world spotlight this September as lead international experts gather to share ways to tackle the potential impact of COVID-19 on suicide

GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA, February 26, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) 31st World Congress will be held in Australia, with COVID highlighted as the key focus for delegates.



IASP President Professor Rory O'Connor has been part of a leading group of international researchers and practitioners, looking into COVID-19 and suicide prevention.

“Over the past 10 months, our experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for greater awareness, knowledge, research and action related to mental health and suicide prevention.” said Professor O'Connor.

“As a result, I am looking forward to the 31st World Congress, as it will shine a light on how mental health and suicide prevention can continue to play a vital role as we recover from COVID-19 and support the most vulnerable.”

There is no current evidence that during this pandemic there has been an increase suicide rates, other than data from Japan in early 2021 of an increase in suicides among young people.

However, there is no room for complacency. We know from the research from traumatic events, such as natural disasters, it's in the post-event period where we typically see the potential for an increase in suicidality, hence the move to increase prevention efforts now.

“At a time when there is considerable concern about the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and suicide rates, both in Australia and elsewhere, the 31st World Congress is a unique opportunity to learn, share and advocate for the need for greater awareness around suicide a

reduction in stigma associated with it and more action to prevent it," Professor O'Connor.

"For many years, the IASP World Congresses have been seminal events for learning about the latest developments in suicide prevention globally."

Suicide is a public health issue that affects individuals, families, workplaces and communities the world over. It remains a universal challenge with millions impacted by suicidal behaviour. Suicide is among the top 20 causes of death globally for people of all ages (approximately 800,000 per year, with over 3,000 in Australia). Indigenous peoples in Australia have among the highest global rates.

Limited data means the true extent of suicidal behaviour remains hidden (approximately 20 attempted suicides per suicide) and suicide is far-reaching, leaving many affected and/or suffering intense grief (approximately 135 people per suicide). The reduction of suicide mortality is of global importance and a vital public health consideration.

Pro-Vice Chancellor (Health) at Griffith University, Professor Sheena Reilly said the congress, which is being delivered in partnership with Griffith, could not come at a more crucial time. "The conference will bring together national and international experts on the Gold Coast to learn from each other and provide an opportunity to access the very best research," Professor Reilly said.

"Griffith University has a long history of research in suicide and suicide prevention through the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP), which was established in 1996. Griffith's AISRAP is proud to be a long term partner with the IASP, recognising the key role that both organisations play in advancing our understanding of and prevention of suicide."

IASP is particularly proud to be hosting this congress in Australia at this time as the country continues to make enormous strides in its efforts to prevent suicides.

With a clear, unequivocal commitment from the States and Federal governments and with the Australian Prime Minister taking a leading role in furthering suicide prevention efforts, Australia plays an exemplary role in how nations can integrate suicide prevention efforts through reform, policy and application.

"The Queensland Government, through Tourism and Events Queensland, is proud to support business events like this which are vital to Queensland's tourism industry - attracting visitors, supporting local jobs and promoting our destinations," Tourism & Events Queensland.

The IASP World Congress is the primary global collaborative opportunity for expert thinking related to suicide and suicide prevention, bringing together academics, researchers, practitioners, those with lived experience, diverse backgrounds, and innovators associated with suicide prevention efforts or working within suicide prevention related topics.

"The 31st World Congress comes at a time where it is so important that we listen to the voice of

lived experience, those from diverse backgrounds, and encourage emerging research leaders early in their careers” says Professor O’Connor.

The congress takes place on the Gold Coast, Queensland and virtually from 21st – 24th September 2021. Early bird registrations for attendance are open from 1st February 2021. The Congress will be fully hybrid with the full programme available in person and virtually online

[For more information and to register for the event](#), visit:

<https://www.iasp.info/goldcoast2021/registrations/>

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Media talent: Professor Rory O’Connor: has a long-standing interest in suicide research and prevention; he has been working in the field since 1994. He is Professor of Health Psychology at the University of Glasgow in Scotland and Past President of the International Academy of Suicide Research. Rory leads the Suicidal Behaviour Research Laboratory (www.suicideresearch.info) at the University of Glasgow, one of the leading suicide and self-harm research groups in the UK.

Notes for editors:□

The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) leads the global effort in suicide prevention having developed an effective forum that is proactive in creating strong collaborative partnerships and promoting evidence-based action in order to reduce the incidence of suicide and suicidal behaviour (www.iasp.info). Established in 1960, IASP is the largest international association dedicated to suicide prevention and to the alleviation of the effects of suicide and collaborates closely with relevant international organisations.

Griffiths University and the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP) is the official partner for the IASP 31st World Congress. <https://www.griffith.edu.au/griffith-health/australian-institute-suicide-research-prevention>

Important note: Journalists reporting on this event are advised to include information on relevant help lines and websites. The following website provides details of Crisis Centres around the globe: https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres/

Journalists reporting on this event are also advised to adhere to the following guidelines; [Guidelines related to reporting on suicide during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

[General guidance for communicating about suicide.](#)

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