

Practical Guide to Running an Online Suicide Prevention Campaign

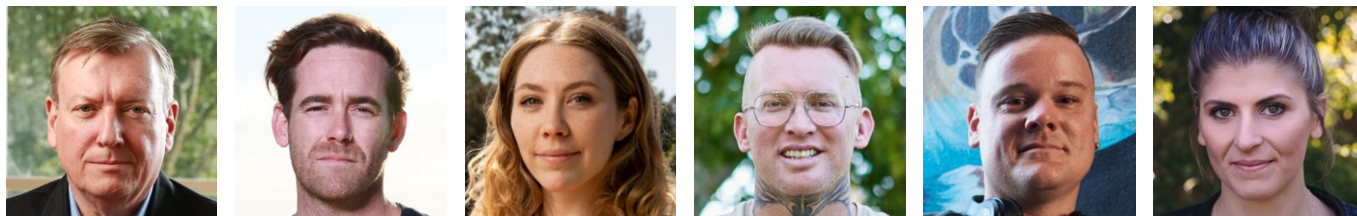
Lessons from the **Better Off With You**
Campaign Pilot and Research Project

**Better off
with you.**

A suicide prevention initiative

**SANE
AUSTRALIA**

Better Off With You is a pilot initiative delivered by SANE Australia, and is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.



Our deepest gratitude to John, Mark, Phoebe, Nic, Damon and Steph who shared their stories as part of the *Better Off With You* Campaign Pilot and inspired us all.

The *Better Off With You* initiative acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as traditional custodians of the lands on which this initiative takes place, and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge the pain and suffering of those impacted by suicide, and recognise that every experience is unique, personal and valuable.

The *Better Off With You* initiative values diversity. We're committed to providing a safe, culturally appropriate, and inclusive space for all people, regardless of their ethnicity, faith, ability, sexuality, or gender identity.

SANE AUSTRALIA

Contact Us

SANE Australia is a national mental health charity making a real difference in the lives of people affected by complex mental health issues through support, research and advocacy. SANE provides a range of services including:

- The **SANE Help Centre** which provides counselling, support, information and referrals from 10am -10pm Monday to Friday, by phone on **1800 187 263**, via web chat or email helpline@sane.org
- The **SANE Forums**, a national online peer-to peer support service which are anonymous and professionally moderated 24/7.

Enquiries regarding the *Better Off With You* initiative can be directed to: bowy@sane.org or info@sane.org

Support Information

Talking about suicide openly and in a safe way is so important – if this guide brings up tough emotions for you or someone you know, there are a **[number of local and national services](#)** available to help you.

If the situation is urgent, and you or someone else is at immediate risk, call **000** or go to your closest emergency department.

About this Guide

This guide is intended to be a practical reference document for community organisations and others considering running an online suicide prevention campaign and is based on key learnings from the *Better Off With You* campaign pilot.

This guide includes practical information about designing and delivering a targeted suicide prevention campaign within communities, including insights from the research and evaluation of the campaign and guidance on safety and support of people with lived experience of suicidality in research and storytelling.

Please note that the *Better Off With You* campaign messaging specifically focused on reducing feelings of being a burden on others, as an aspect of suicidal thinking. However, insights shared within this guide are intended to be generalisable to any online suicide prevention initiative which focuses on lived experience storytelling.

This guide is not intended to provide comprehensive instructions and anyone considering undertaking a similar campaign is encouraged to engage their own clinical, research and creative experts and to seek advice from local mental health and suicide prevention services and organisations in the design and delivery of their initiative. Anyone considering a suicide prevention campaign should familiarise themselves with the [Mindframe guidelines for communicating about suicide](#) to help ensure the safety of the campaign and to avoid any unintended consequences.

If you have a personal experience of suicide and have been inspired by *Better Off With You* campaign to consider sharing your story publicly, we recommend also looking at [Life in Mind's lived experience resource page](#) for some tips and links to organisations who can support you to start that journey safely.

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About the *Better Off With You* Campaign Pilot

“When you are struggling with suicidal thoughts, knowing that there are others who have been in a similar situation – but somehow managed to find a way through – can offer you a glimmer of hope at the time you need it most. The safe sharing of real and compelling stories can build a deep connection that can save lives.”

Jack Health, SANE Australia CEO

In May 2018, The Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health, announced a \$1.147 million grant to SANE Australia to deliver *Better Off With You* – an innovative, evidence-informed suicide prevention campaign pilot. Delivered in partnership with two Primary Health Networks (PHNs), **Northern Sydney PHN** and **Northern Queensland PHN**, in two targeted areas within their regions, the project commenced in October 2018 and concluded in May 2020, with a six-week public campaign in January and February 2020.

Better Off With You draws on the power of peer-to-peer storytelling – sharing the experiences of people who have had suicidal thoughts and survived suicide attempts, to reach people in the community who are currently contemplating suicide. The campaign comprises of six digital video stories, a campaign website **www.betteroffwithyou.org.au** and a significant research and evaluation component.

Real People in their Local Community

The *Better Off With You* suicide prevention pilot project has successfully delivered a safe, engaging and relatable campaign to those at risk of suicide in two communities in Australia. The project features real stories of people with experiences of suicidal thoughts and actions from these two communities.

Evidence-based Campaign

The project included a research component to ensure the campaign's safety, measure impact and inform future suicide prevention activities. The campaign concept draws on Thomas Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, which identifies 'perceived burdensomeness' as a key belief in individuals who are having suicidal thoughts. That is, thoughts such as 'I am a burden on my family and friends'.

Further information can be found on the campaign website – **[About the Initiative](#)**



Partnerships and Community Readiness

What We Did

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) were the key delivery partners for the *Better Off With You* campaign pilot project. Primary Health Networks play a key role in the implementation of community-focused approaches to suicide prevention in their regions.

One of the first decisions to be made for the project was where within the two Primary Health Network (PHN) regions to target the campaign and to which specific groups within those communities.

“Better Off With You has a distinct and unique point of difference. It’s been a good and valuable addition to our suicide prevention work.”

Sydney North PHN

Key questions to assess community readiness for a local suicide prevention campaign included:

- 1 Where is the area of greatest need (both geographic and demographic) when it comes to rates of suicide and community concern?
- 2 Do local networks already exist, who are undertaking suicide prevention action planning and community engagement activities? Are these groups collaborating with Local Health Districts (LHDs), service providers, emergency services and other community groups, including those outside the health sector?
- 3 Is there strong local coordination between services to support implementation of the campaign? Is there sufficient capacity within partner organisations to provide local coordination?
- 4 Are local services prepared and adequately resourced to respond to people seeking help and/or in crisis related to suicide? Are emergency department referral pathways and follow-up care after a suicide attempt in place?

According to these community readiness considerations, the PHN partners selected the Northern Beaches in Sydney, New South Wales; and the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac area in Northern Queensland as the targeted areas within their regions to undertake the *Better Off With You* campaign pilot.

Meetings were undertaken with local services and organisations to further assess regional suitability for the campaign.

Analysis of population health data and other local data relevant to self-harm and suicide attempts in the PHN regions was also undertaken, with the following target groups for the campaign pilot being agreed:

- **Northern Beaches Sydney:**
 - 20-25 year old males, ideally from a blue collar profession, and young females
 - Individuals of any gender in their middle years (45-65 years).
- **Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac area:**
 - 20-60 year old males, with a focus on those aged 20-25 years and in their middle years (45-65 years)
 - Women aged 30-40 years old.

“*Better Off With You* was a nice fit with PHN work. Most important are the conversations it started locally about suicide...people were talking to us about it constantly.”

Northern Queensland PHN, Mackay

Key Insights

- PHN partners, local suicide prevention taskforces and their stakeholders took proud ownership of *Better Off With You*, supporting the campaign in their regions and were overwhelmingly positive about the local response.
- Embedding the *Better Off With You* campaign within local suicide prevention action plans was important for alignment. These plans were built on the **Black Dog Institute’s LifeSpan framework** for community-based suicide prevention planning, contributing to strategy five of the framework – “Engaging the Community”.
- Involving local suicide prevention taskforces in all stages of the project was key to ensuring strong local engagement.
- Mapping of local services and help-seeking pathways ensured service readiness and coordination for the campaign response.
- The diversity of stories that could be featured in the pilot campaign from different cultural and religious backgrounds and sexual and gender identities was limited due to short project timeframes not enabling enough time for culturally appropriate consultations in collaboration with local stakeholders.

The importance of building and maintaining local relationships

A lot of time was spent engaging with local stakeholders in the two regions during the initial assessment, with these collaboration relationships being sustained throughout the project. Over an 18 month period, no less than 25 site visits were made by SANE Australia to the targeted communities to plan and consult with the PHN delivery partners and their stakeholders.



Campaign Launch in Mackay Queensland, January 2020

Setting up the Project and Team

“It’s been a true collaborative effort between SANE’s project team, the PHNs and their stakeholders, the sector and our creative experts. Working with local groups to develop *Better Off With You* particularly helped ensure the campaign made a real difference in the regions.”

Bonnie Vincent, Project Lead

What We Did

When the project kicked off in October 2018, internal project governance was established at SANE Australia through a Project Control Group (PCG) including SANE Australia’s Senior Executive and a dedicated Project Lead. A multi-disciplinary *Better Off With You* project team was then established, contributing and combining internal resources and external contractors including the below roles:

Project component	SANE Australia (internal)	External contractors
Project management	Project Sponsor/CEO Dedicated Project Lead Project Control Group	
Research and Evaluation	Anne Deveson Research Centre: Dedicated Research Lead, Research Officer, Head of Research and Evaluation, Deputy CEO and Research Centre Director, Data Analyst	Day Four Projects
Marketing and Communications	Marketing Manager	Hotglue Think HQ oOH Media Borrowdale Communications Snaffle
Lived Experience	Lived Experience Lead	
Clinical Support	Clinical Director	
Online Community Management	Marketing Manager	Quiip

Key Insights

- A number of external suppliers will have expertise in their field but will need support in terms of safe and appropriate messaging when it comes to a suicide prevention campaign. **Mindframe guidelines** for communicating about suicide are an essential starting point when briefing agencies.
- SANE Australia had the benefit of inhouse research and clinical expertise to run this project with appropriate academic rigour. If organisations don't have this expertise internally, partnership with a university or research body is recommended.

Alongside the day to day project team, a range of experts were consulted from the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention sector – including **Everymind** (Life in Mind and Mindframe) **Beyond Blue**, **Orygen**, **Roses in the Ocean**, the **Black Dog Institute** and **Lifeline Australia**.



SANE staff and creative agencies celebrate the completion of the six week campaign wave, February 2020



Bonnie Vincent, *Better Off With You* Project Lead



Designing the Campaign

Research tells us that online peer-to-peer campaigns can be effective in reaching at-risk populations to drive public health promotion and suicide prevention messages. These online campaigns can increase awareness, change attitudes and encourage help-seeking behaviours in a cost effective way.

What We Did

The *Better Off With You* campaign pilot's design and delivery was developed through community-based research activities. The process was iterative; each phase of the research and evaluation was informed by the previous phase to investigate safety, feasibility, and effectiveness of the campaign within the two targeted communities.



Better Off With You Research Lead with local evaluation partners

“Incorporating research and evaluation activities into the design and delivery of a campaign is an effective way to ensure the campaign meets the needs of the community, is safe and has the intended reach and impact.”

Dr Marianne Webb, Research Lead

Better Off With You Research and Evaluation Phases

Research phase	→	Purpose	→	Method
Background Research		<p>To identify the evidence base for the suicide prevention campaign</p> <p>To understand local sector needs, including rates of suicide</p>		Literature review, local data analysis, stakeholder consultation
Focus Groups		To explore campaign messaging and local implementation considerations		Discussion with a group of local people with lived experience
User Testing Workshops		To review draft campaign materials		Discussion with focus group participants, and additional local people with lived experience
Closed Study Evaluation		<p>To identify if there were any negative or unintended effects before campaign launch</p> <p>To test the acceptability and effectiveness of the campaign materials</p>		<p>Near-final campaign materials, and feedback surveys, shared by SMS (text messaging) with participants from local sites including local employers, educators, services and community organisations</p> <p>Follow up interviews with selection of participants</p>

The *Better Off With You* Research and Evaluation Steps

The following steps were undertaken to deliver the research and evaluation component for the *Better Off With You* campaign. Anyone considering a suicide prevention campaign should develop a tailored research design and consultation approach suitable to their project, including workshops with people with lived experience and protocols to ensure safe participation.

Step 1: Research & Recruitment



- Developed a research design for the study that included study objectives and methodology for designing and testing the campaign.
- Obtained ethics approval for all phases of the research and evaluation study.
- If you don't have internal research expertise, consider partnering with a research institute or university. More information about ethics committees, including those directly accessible to NGOs, can be found here: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/human-research-ethics-committees>.
- Recruited local people with lived experience as research participants, and implemented screening and duty of care processes for all activities according to the ethics protocol. This included inviting a local clinician to support the focus group discussion.
- Ran focus groups to explore campaign messaging and delivery considerations in the local communities.

Step 2: Drafting Collateral



- Developed draft campaign collateral, incorporating focus group feedback about campaign messaging and delivery.

Step 3: User Testing



- Invited original focus group participants to return and recruited more local people with lived experience to participate in user testing.
- Conducted user testing workshops to review draft campaign collateral.

Step 4: Refining Collateral



- Finalised the campaign collateral, incorporating user testing feedback.

Step 5: Evaluation

- Ran a closed evaluation study with targeted groups in the community to test the acceptability and effectiveness of campaign materials.
- Conducted follow up interviews with a selection of study participants for further in-depth understanding of the impact of the campaign.

Key Insights

We would have liked more time allocated to research design

As *Better Off With You* was an iterative and multi-phased project involving a topic that requires sensitivity and thought, six months was not long for the research design and managing resourcing and capacity challenges was ongoing.

We put in place several safety strategies above and beyond the usual engagement and governance protocols for public health campaigns

Given the subject matter was suicide, we implemented a range of measures, such as increased clinical support during focus groups and safety protocols for the closed study. This ensured we prioritised the safety of participants, reduced distress and met the safety expectations of Ethics Committees who class a suicide prevention initiative as a “high risk” research project.

Engaging local people to support communication was essential and helped counteract initially low recruitment rates (particularly for men)

As SANE Australia staff were physically located outside of the pilot communities and relied on remote communications such as phone and email, engaging local people to support research recruitment and partnerships was important, as was providing ‘ready to go’ recruitment materials to local organisations. Strong connection with recruitment sites and ensuring significant early ‘buy-in’ from partners helped.

Using mobile phone and SMS (text messaging) communication was effective for content delivery and data collection

The recruitment, intervention and data collection phases of the closed study were conducted primarily using online survey software and mobile phones, following a significant testing period. There was a high completion rate for the closed study.

“When I watched those videos, I walked away from it being like, ‘Okay, I feel understood. I feel like my feelings aren’t being invalidated, but I also feel like there is help out there. I also feel like I’m less alone, and because I feel less alone about those feelings, it makes me feel like, ‘Okay, it’s not just me. It’s not me. I’m not a burden. Maybe it’s just something that I’m feeling. Maybe it’s something I need to get help with.’”

Research Participant, Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac Region



Participation by People with Lived Experience in Campaign Storytelling

“It was my absolute privilege to be able to be a part of the *Better Off With You* project. It was definitely very well received in ours and the surrounding communities and I was given a lot of great feedback out of it.”

Nic, Campaign Participant

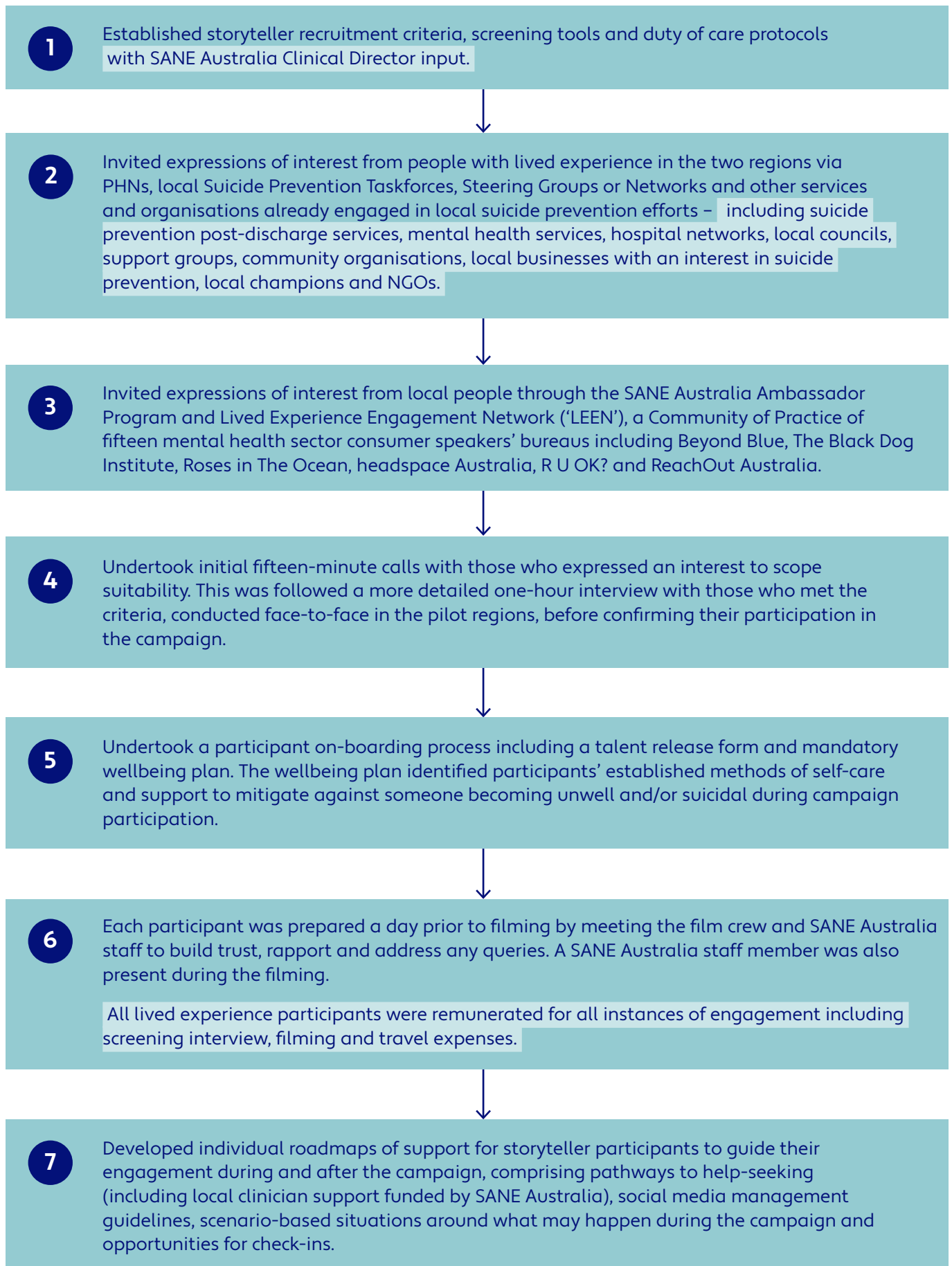
What We Did

Local people with a personal experience of suicide (including feelings of being a burden on others) were engaged and supported by SANE Australia as storytellers for the campaign. These stories were central to the campaign with the people who featured being recruited, screened, and supported throughout by a rigorous duty of care process. This process was led by a dedicated program manager with experience in supporting people to meaningfully and safely share their story publicly and included oversight by a senior staff member with clinical expertise.

The criteria for potential lived experience storytellers for *Better Off With You* was that they:

1. Fit the demographics of the target group identified by the Primary Health Networks (PHNs) for the campaign
2. Had survived a suicide attempt (more than 12 months ago)
3. Had local knowledge from where the campaign was targeted (were currently or have previously lived in these areas)
4. Were in a strong recovery space, actively managing their own wellbeing with identified strategies and supports in place (such as clinical and social supports)
5. Were willing to share their story publicly (understanding it was local promotion)
6. Had an ability to speak and understand English and were willing and able to give informed consent
7. Ideally were already speaking publicly in some capacity, including as part of a recognised mental health/suicide prevention speakers' program.

Lived Experience Participant Engagement and Support Process



“Due to the high risk nature of suicide prevention work, several strategies were needed to prioritise the safety of campaign and research participants and the public at large. Clinical governance is critical to the management of risk, especially when delivering a campaign online.”

Karen Fletcher, SANE Australia Clinical Director

Key Insights

- When recruiting storytellers for the campaign, local services sought reassurance that those with lived experience of suicide would have appropriate clinical support to participate, especially if they became unwell or found campaign involvement to be distressing. Face-to-face meetings were arranged to inform stakeholders about the rigour of SANE Australia’s duty of care protocols and screening processes, as well as discussing the benefit of sharing stories as part of the recovery process.
- Our original recruitment criteria was expanded to include acute ideation and suicidal planning as well as suicide attempt. It was also recognised that as long as stories were largely from the PHN area, or a similar neighbouring community, they would continue to feel authentically local.
- SANE Australia did not shy away from frank discussions with participants about potential risks that might arise through their participation. More often than not, participants were highly enthusiastic about being involved as storytellers but had not fully considered the potential risks of local exposure in their communities. We mitigated this through discussion of potential ‘worst case’ scenarios and appropriate actions in the support roadmap.

Finding a safe and supported way to publicly share your story of suicide

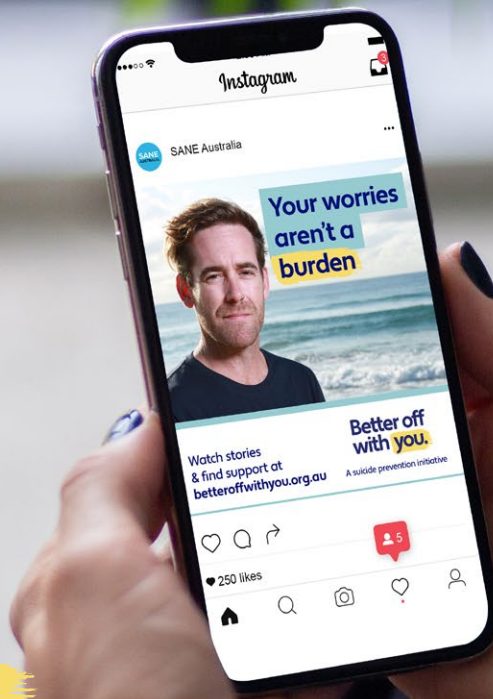
Not everyone who was interested in being part of the *Better Off With You* campaign was able to participate. This was often due to them not meeting the eligibility criteria, or it was not the right time for that person.

Many people whose lives have been personally affected by suicide want to share their story to help others – and there are many ways to do that safely for both the storyteller and audience – with the right support.

If you want to develop a lived experience storytelling campaign, we recommend working with organisations who can make sure people who engage with the campaign can access support quickly and easily if need be.

If you are considering sharing your story, we recommend getting in touch with an established speakers’ program such as our [**SANE Australia Peer Ambassador Program**](#), the [**Beyond Blue Speakers Bureau**](#) or [**Roses in The Ocean**](#).

Campaign Planning



What We Did

Risk Management

A range of risks related to the campaign design and delivery were identified and related mitigation strategies outlined in a risk register, which were monitored regularly.

As well as managing the risk register internally, meetings were held with the PHNs, Mackay Health and Hospital Service, Sydney North Local Health District and Northern Beaches Hospital to confirm a local service listing for the website, local service preparedness and clinical governance plans to escalate any local incidents or complaints about services during the campaign.

We worked with an online community management provider, Quiip, to ensure online safety through social media moderation. They helped us with out of hours social media moderation, the creation of a response guide, a clinical escalation process, risk matrix and FAQs. An important part of this process was Quiip inducting SANE Australia staff members prior to the campaign launch.

With the exception of slipping project timelines, we are pleased to say that none of these risks were realised in the delivery of the *Better Off With You* campaign, demonstrating that the evidence-based, iterative design approach, lived experience duty of care and strong engagement and consultation with PHNs, the sector and local stakeholders was successful in mitigating these risks.

Campaign Messaging and Creative

Two creative agencies – Hotglue and ThinkHQ – were engaged to support the development of the *Better Off With You* campaign assets which included the six video stories, digital assets for campaign promotion, campaign messaging and a campaign website including written suicide prevention information and resources. Additionally, a strategic communication consultant with suicide prevention expertise was engaged to support delivery of the *Better Off With You* project communications objectives, including website content.

Example Risks and Mitigation Strategies

These are some of the key risks and mitigations we used that you may want to consider when developing your risk management strategies.

Risk	Mitigation
The campaign messaging doesn't resonate with audience	Research activities (including a literature review), extensive stakeholder consultation and focus groups/user testing with people with lived experience of suicide provided insights which were incorporated into the campaign design, delivery and evaluation.
Unintended safety risks to the target audience and communities	Mental health, suicide prevention sector representatives and PHN partners were consulted to identify potential risks. Risk management strategies were developed, monitored and reviewed throughout course of project. The closed study tested for safety prior to releasing the campaign to a broader audience.
Unintended consequences for research participants	The research methodology was built from existing evidence-base that participation in suicide-related research does not increase suicidal ideation risk, and rather, may be associated with some benefits. Additionally, the closed evaluation study captured any unintended consequences to inform future campaigns.
Substantial increase in people accessing local services resulting in increased unmet need	Relationships with PHNs, LHDs and their local service providers in the targeted communities are well-established and informed the service listings available to the public on the campaign website. Budget allocation for additional phone/online clinical support resources was in place to cover increased service needs during campaign.
Risks to the safety and wellbeing of lived experience participants, including potential loss of life	Recruitment of video participants was strategic, via existing organisations in PHN locations. Clinical assessment and support was provided through recruitment process, wellbeing plans were developed, and support was in place throughout the course of the project. Follow-up support for video participants was also provided post-campaign.
Delays or changes to production schedules and/or costs	Careful planning around sequencing between research, stakeholder engagement, content development, and production/post-production was undertaken.

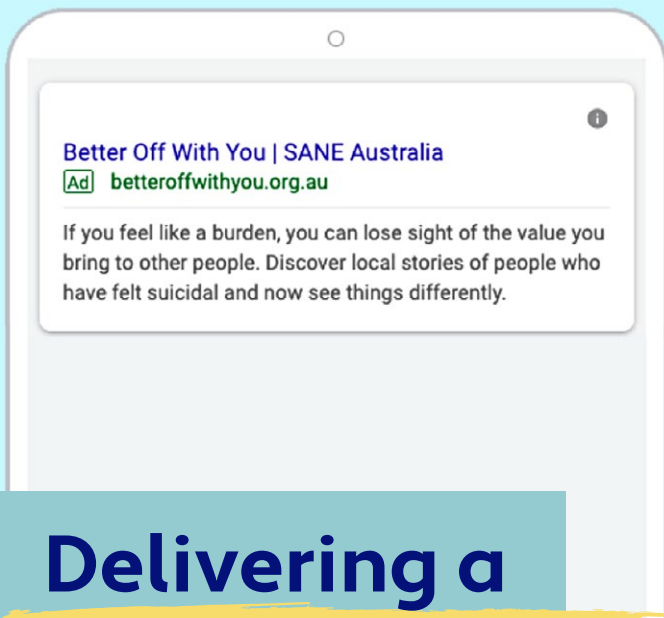
Key Insights

Designing one 'look and feel' campaign for two different targeted geographic areas

Designing the campaign for two different regions presented challenges around imagery and messaging. Content needed to resonate with both target audiences, without excluding others who may engage with the materials. This was considered in all video and written content as well as the overarching brand. For example, it was important that although both communities have a strong beach culture in common, it's often the people existing outside of the dominant culture who are most vulnerable. Given *Better Off With You* was designed to reach these people specifically, it was important to ensure that the campaign didn't alienate them.

Getting the campaign messaging right

Landing on a clear call to action and developing nuanced messaging to ensure a safe, effective and research-guided suicide prevention campaign was challenging. A large amount of liaison between SANE Australia and the creative agencies was required across the asset development process, including providing the agencies with considerable clinical, research and subject matter expertise.



Delivering a Digital Campaign

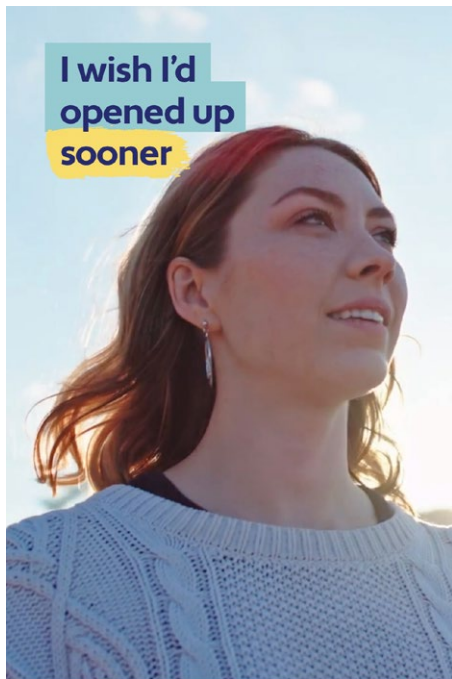
What We Did

Better Off With You had a multi-channel approach to campaign promotion, across TV, Radio, Press, Out of Home advertising and Digital activity, utilising a combination of paid media activity along with bonus and Community Service Announcement (CSA) activity.

Given this guide is to support delivery of online suicide prevention campaigns, we have focused below on digital strategies used and lessons learned.

Digital Content and Distribution

- 30 second version of the six lived experience video stories were promoted to generate campaign awareness and static social media tiles were used to encourage click throughs to the campaign website, where longer three minute **video stories** were housed.
- Digital promotion involved three key strategies:
 1. Social Media (Facebook/Instagram, based on geographic and demographic information aligned to the target groups)
 2. Programmatic (Facebook/Instagram, based on 'interests' of users aligned to the video story content e.g. FIFO work, surfing)
 3. Paid Google Search.
- Given the short duration of the campaign and the challenge of building an audience from scratch, the strategic decision was made not to establish new *Better Off With You* social channels across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter but rather to use established SANE Australia channels for trust and legitimacy.
- The *Better Off With You* website www.betteroffwithyou.org.au provided the key call to action for the campaign, supporting promotion across all digital and other media channels. The primary objective of the website was to provide access to the longer versions of the six stories, support information, an online forum and local and national service listings.
- Stakeholder packs for each region were designed as a key engagement tool to provide information and resources for locals and organisations to support the campaign. This included how to share the campaign on social media (including hashtags and downloadable 30 second videos and social media tiles).



I wish I'd opened up sooner

Watch stories & find support at betteroffwithyou.org.au

Better off with you.
A suicide prevention initiative



You can get through this

Watch stories & find support at betteroffwithyou.org.au

Better off with you.
A suicide prevention initiative



I felt like a burden

Watch stories & find support at betteroffwithyou.org.au

Better off with you.
A suicide prevention initiative



You are better off here

Watch stories & find support at betteroffwithyou.org.au

Better off with you.
A suicide prevention initiative

Innovative use of traditional media can help drive online traffic and engagement

Pro-bono partnerships with TV and radio networks and large format and retail digital (shopping centre) panels through **oOH Media** provided visibility of the campaign and built momentum in local communities. Launch events hosted by PHN partners were also held at the commencement of the campaign wave, engaging local stakeholders.



Key Insights

Below we have listed some of our headline results and corresponding insights. A reminder that our digital strategy focused on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google Ads and paid search terms driving people to the campaign website content and an online forum.

Digital channel	Headline results	Key insights
Social Media – Video Engagement	387,135 completed views across the six 30 second video stories via social media.	Completion rate of videos featuring males, on average, achieved a higher completion rate with the male audience than videos that featured female participants. This was the case in both PHNs we tested in. Overall, females are more likely to click and to watch each story to 100% completion.
	The Northern QLD pilot region had a higher post engagement than the Sydney NSW pilot region, where 25-34 years showed the most interest despite having a lower level reach. The Northern Beaches videos resonated best with the 18-34 year age range as well as the over 65+ years.	Male viewers are more likely to resonate with a storyteller of the same gender and similar age. Female viewers tended to have a similar amount of views of the female stories across all age groups with an additional spike in views of the male stories by females aged 25-34.
	Click through rates from programmatic digital promotion in both areas continued to increase for each week of the campaign.	
	Click through rates for videos posted on social media were significantly greater than static tiles.	Video content that is short and easy to consume while scrolling is preferable to static tiles.
Social Media – Information Seeking and Online Community Management	There were no identified critical risk incidents online or elsewhere as a result of people engaging with the campaign.	Even though the online comments during the pilot campaign were manageable, we had a plan in place to ramp up moderation resources at any time if needed.
	Information seeking behaviour peaked on Friday, with a higher click through rates on Friday through social media and an increased video completion rate on Saturday.	Promote content at peak times for online activity and ensure appropriate levels of online community moderation is in place at those times.
	Key timing for click through rates was late at night, and the early hours of the morning, with spikes noted between 2-3am and 8-9pm.	Although there was little activity between 12am-6am, we decided to moderate during this time, as people experiencing distress may be online and unable to sleep. There is also the option to turn off ad delivery during these hours, which may be a consideration for other campaigns.
	SANE Australia launched the campaign with a Tier 1 level of social media moderation support, meaning that comments were moderated every hour, 24 hours a day. We then adjusted to Tier 2 (moderation every two hours), and found this to be appropriate for the level of engagement in the campaign.	Given the subject matter, SANE Australia needed to brief the external online community management provider to adjust moderation tone to make it more colloquial and friendly, to encouraging conversation and comfort, rather than adopting an overtly clinical tone. Moderation procedures should include a logging process (for positive and negative commentary) as well as transparent escalation procedures.
	Many people in the community related to messages around burden, reaching out, and help-seeking.	
	The community generally praised the campaign, in particular the use of authentic peer narratives and the general messaging.	
	Due to the size of the audience, there was a low risk of a critical escalation – and indeed, we didn't receive any critical risk comments during the campaign.	The response online suggests that social media ads are unlikely to be a place where people feel comfortable to leave vulnerable and personal comments in relation to suicide, however they did comment on broader social issues, relating to the isolation in remote work and mental health challenges experienced by the storytellers.

Digital channel	Headline results	Key insights
Social Media – Storyteller Duty of Care	Due to the localised nature of the campaign, many people seeing the ads recognised and tagged participants or their family members. Even though these comments were positive and supportive, we did have to hide them on Facebook to protect those identities. On Instagram, there is no option to hide comments.	Exercise caution in revealing storyteller identities via their social media profiles. Ensure there is a process in place as part of both the participant support roadmap and moderation guidelines, giving participants options around their level of online participation.
Website	<p>13,039 website users across 6 weeks - 5,449 from New South Wales and 5,646 from Queensland.</p> <p>90% of website visitors were new visitors.</p> <p>There was a range of age groups using the website, with the largest proportion (25%) from the 25-34 year age bracket, closely followed by the 35-44 year age bracket (20%).</p> <p>The majority of people (67.9%) accessed the website from their mobile phone, with 21.2% from their desktop and 10.9% from a tablet.</p> <p>The average time spent on the story pages was significantly higher than other pages on the website.</p> <p>The longer 3-minute story videos on the website had a total of 17,194 impressions and 1,656 users watched the stories to completion.</p>	<p>There were lower than expected numbers of visitors to the campaign website compared with the number of people reached via social media. This suggests that people are more likely to scroll, watch the content on a social media platform and then move on, rather than going to a website.</p> <p>Taking a mobile first approach to website design is essential.</p> <p>The website homepage was found to be a more engaging entry point for our campaign. Traffic was initially driven to the landing page, whereby audiences were more likely to view multiple pages and spend more time on site. However, shifting to the strategy to the individual pages, resulted in the majority of the audience staying on the one page, for a shorter period of time.</p>
Google Ads and Paid Search Terms	<p>Searching Google for “mental health” was a top traffic driver across both pilot regions.</p> <p>Click through rates were strongest in the 45-54 year age group.</p> <p>63% of people were using their mobile to search.</p>	<p>Although the broader awareness terms resulted in higher costs per click, they drove high volume. They also generated a strong clickthrough rate, which indicates that the people searching found our Google Ads relevant to them.</p>
Better Off With You discussion topic on the SANE Australia Online Forum	<p>The campaign conversation thread, syndicated from the 24/7 moderated online SANE Australia Forums, provided a space for peer support and complemented the peer-to-peer storytelling focus of the project.</p> <p>At the commencement of the campaign wave, community guides on the forums seeded comments in the thread to help encourage conversation.</p> <p>Over the six week campaign, the forum discussion had 735 visitors, 48 posts and 30 new membership sign-ups.</p>	<p>Detailed discussion was most common on the SANE Australia Online Forums, with several detailed comments on the seeded thread entitled What does ‘feeling like a burden’ mean to you?</p> <p>Some participants disclosed their lived experience of suicidal ideation or attempts. This mostly occurred in the forums rather than on more general social media, and was generally more detailed on the forums.</p> <p>As with the website, the translation from engaging with the stories online to participating in a forum discussion was not as high as expected.</p>

Peer-to-peer suicide prevention campaigns do not necessarily need to include local storytellers to have resonance and take-up

A strategic wider dissemination beyond the two PHN regions was undertaken via social media for one week to build greater insights and understanding of how the campaign might be received based on the story itself rather than localised content. The response and reach indicated that while local imagery was perceived as being relevant and appealing to the local communities where people were featured, this may not be essential to success.

Future campaigns could potentially develop and use ‘archetype’ stories to extend the reach of the campaign across communities, however engagement with services and other stakeholders in the regions where campaign materials are delivered is essential.



Understanding the Campaign's Impact

“[The video] showed the future, from a dark place... it showed a possible future.”

Research Participant, Northern Beaches

What We Did

As outlined in earlier sections, *Better Off With You* was a rigorously managed project in terms of iterative design, stakeholder engagement, testing and closed study evaluation.

Digital and other media activity was carefully monitored across the six week campaign wave and analysed against the closed study evaluation results. This included social media views, shares, comments, and demographics of people accessing the campaign. In addition, social media comments were collated and analysed to identify themes.

The **Campaign Delivery** and **Closed Study Evaluation** phase of the project found that:

- The campaign format and messaging was deemed safe and was generally perceived as authentic, highly acceptable, engaging and relevant.
- The iterative design phase activities, involving high levels of local stakeholder and lived experience engagement, produced a pilot campaign which was highly acceptable and positively received and supported in the target regions.
- The campaign was particularly successful in:
 - **Engaging men:** 64% of website users were male and male stories had particularly high completion and clickthrough rates by male viewers on social media.
 - **Engaging the target audience:** In both regions of those groups identified by PHNs as being at the greatest risk of suicide.
 - **Resonating beyond the target regions:** A one week broader dissemination on Facebook of three videos to target groups outside the PHN areas revealed that stories resonated with those of similar age, gender and interests (such as field of employment, lifestyle etc).
 - **The broad message of burdensomeness resonated with the community:** Analysis of a small group of participants with elevated levels of burdensomeness suggests the campaign has potential to reduce perceived burdensomeness among people experiencing these thoughts, however, further work is needed to test this with a larger target sample.

- Peer-to-peer storytelling has the potential to reduce stigma around suicide among community members and provide new insights and empathy around mental health issues and suicidal ideation.
- There was a small but significant increase in the intention of participants to seek mental health and other support information online.
- Localised content was a driver of success, with feedback and public commentary around the resonance of seeing familiar places and faces within the campaign.
- Social media responses reflected strong engagement and resonance with the campaign messages around burden, reaching out, and help-seeking.
- The six lived experience video storytellers felt well-supported and had a positive experience of campaign participation.

It should be noted that while social media and Google Analytics metrics can be extremely useful to get a high-level impression of how individuals are interacting with a campaign, these metrics don't necessarily provide insights into changes in behaviour or thinking. Future studies are needed to measure and track whether exposure to a campaign leads to changes such as rates of help-seeking and reduced suicide attempts in the community.

Key Insights

Key insights from the campaign delivery and evaluation, including post-campaign interviews with local stakeholders, are described below.

The campaign was well supported due to it feeling authentically local: The *Better Off With You* campaign gained a lot of local media presence and stakeholders noted that many people were talking about it. Both regions were seen to 'own' *Better Off With You* as a local initiative.

We got better buy-in due to the campaign being complementary to existing work on the ground: *Better Off With You* was seen as a good and valuable addition to PHN Suicide Prevention deliverables.

SANE Australia was viewed as a legitimate and appropriate project lead: SANE Australia was viewed as providing a unique balance of clinical and mental health expertise with the campaign development expertise which provided credibility to help get stakeholders on board.

Sharing stories in this way was different to other suicide prevention campaigns and that worked: The inclusion of first person stories and sharing experiences of suicide survivorship was seen as a unique point of difference compared to other suicide prevention campaign approaches.

Future campaigns don't necessarily need to focus on the concept of burden like we did: Messages of hope and empathy were viewed as equally important to the focus on reducing the feelings of

burden, presenting future opportunities to undertake co-design around broader suicide prevention messaging.

Striving for best practice in lived experience inclusion was a good learning experience for all: *Better Off With You* was seen as a good learning experience for the PHN and other stakeholders for lived experience engagement in projects.

Having a flexible approach met national and local suicide prevention objectives: *Better Off With You's* flexible approach was seen as having the potential to meet national prescribed and consistent suicide directives while offering a regionally tailored, localised approach.

PHNs have a better understanding of campaign resourcing implications thanks to the pilot: While PHN partners did not find the project onerous, their role and potential local resourcing needs can now be better defined with learning from the pilot.

When you're working with real people and their personal stories, it takes time and shared understanding: This aspect took a lot of work and key learnings from the pilot were to be clearer with local stakeholders about who we were recruiting and why, detailed criteria and a longer lead time for identifying suitable individuals.

“I can honestly say this is my biggest and proudest achievement to date. Thank you for allowing me to tell my story.”

Damon, Campaign Participant

Awesome work Damon on talking about mental health issues and making everyone aware. You are an awesome young man.

I think it's very brave and inspiring of John, Phoebe and Mark to speak so open and honestly of their experiences. In each case the putting aside of feelings of shame, inadequacy and failure and finding the courage to open up about those feelings was liberating and helped each to realise how loved – and how innately valuable – they were and are. And in fact, we all are.

What an awesome campaign! I can't read a lot of it at the moment as I'm not too well. I had an attempt yesterday and nearly died today which has led to me being in hospital...but that burden feeling I resonate with so much and this campaign is amazing.

Heartfelt good on you Nic, live laugh and love for the rest of your life and spread your message for others that are battling to fight off their demons.

That is so true and thank you for sharing. I know it will get better but the process is so long and hard but it is worth it.

Comments on social media during the campaign

**Better off
with you.**

A suicide prevention initiative

**SANE
AUSTRALIA**