
MEDIA RELEASE

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Christmas not joyful for everyone, warns Lifeline CEO

While the sounds of carols and sightings of Santa will bring joy to many this week, there are others whose response to the sights and sounds of Christmas will be very different.

Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury's CEO, Wendy Carver, has warned that for many people in our community, the build-up to Christmas brings anxiety about family relationships, about money and gift-giving, or about being alone at Christmas time.

"The lead-in to Christmas is often the busiest time for our army of volunteer telephone crisis supporters who'll be working around the clock," Mrs Carver said.

"Whether the festivities bring on suicidal feelings, whether there's the anxiety of anticipating difficult family situations or whether it's having no one to celebrate with, anyone needing to talk or share their distress will find a person who cares, who will listen, if they call Lifeline on 13 11 14."

Mrs Carver pointed out that Lifeline is one of the few services people can reach out to any time of day or night, every day of the week.

"Our phones are answered literally 24/7, including Christmas eve and Christmas Day," she said.

By New Year's eve the crisis support service is expected to have answered almost one-million calls Australia-wide over the past year, more than 100,000 of those answered by Harbour to Hawkesbury telephone crisis supporters.

"Sadly, even with government funding, corporate sponsorship, donations and our own fundraising activities, it's not possible for us to answer every single call, as hard as we try, and it's heart-breaking that some calls do go unanswered," Mrs Carver said.

"Our message to those people is to please stay on the line or try calling again later. You *will* get through."

Mrs Carver also encouraged the community to look out for colleagues, friends and loved ones who might be doing it tough over the Christmas and New Year period.

"It's important we let them know they should never have to feel alone, that help is available – at Lifeline."

Starting in February, Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury will again be running a number of support groups including one for people diagnosed with bipolar disorder and/or depression, a group for people bereaved by suicide and a problem gambling support group. A first for the north shore centre at Gordon will be a support group for family members or carers of people with Hoarding Disorder.

For more information or media interviews contact:

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