



Lived Experience Statement by Pauline Neil Co-Founder of Live4Life

The Live4Life model was first implemented in 2009 in the Macedon Ranges Shire as a direct response to local services identifying two suicide deaths of young people and a suicide attempt over a short period of time.

Local services (police, community health, Macedon Ranges Shire Council) came together through the Local Community Safety Partnership and shared what we were seeing and experiencing in our local community. In a professional capacity, many of us had provided services to or worked with young people, families and community members that had been impacted by suicide. In a personal capacity, some of us were also community members working and living locally with personal ties to the area. We felt the broader impact of these suicide deaths on young people and others in our community.

Some of us had our own lived experience of suicide, including my own experience of losing a family member by suicide. Our involvement was not by design but by default. We had the powerful need to act. The plethora of resources, literature and evidence now available to guide meaningful engagement and collaboration with people who have lived experience did not exist back then. Our conversations with sector partners in the mental health and suicide prevention space identified that an understanding of the role that people with lived experience could play was still in its infancy. We had to find our way; we built our knowledge as we went.

We initiated a conversation with the five secondary schools in Macedon Ranges and secured their commitment to designing a whole-of-community support model focused on improving young people's mental health and reducing suicide deaths in our community. The first iteration of the Live4Life model was developed in 2009 as a result of this initial conversation. Involving young people from the start was important — young people led the design of our model logo and name. Students also played a key role in informing the mental health promotion activities and some took an active role in supporting the delivery of mental health education in the classrooms with an instructor.

Many of the teachers, principals, youth workers, school health and wellbeing professionals and broader school community members that supported Macedon Ranges Shire Council to implement the model in Macedon Ranges have experienced the impact that a suicide death can have on young people and the broader school community. Like those working in local services, many of these professionals were also community members and some of them had personal ties to the young people that had suicided.

We thank Jesuits Support and colleagues at Sunbury Cobaw Community Health who worked with us and supported those in our local schools that had been impacted by suicide.



Pauline Neil

Pauline is a Principle Master Instructor of Mental Health First Aid, and received national and state recognition for her work in mental health awareness raising and suicide prevention (working with young people and their communities). Pauline is Co-Founder of the award-winning Live4Life mental health education and youth suicide prevention model, designed specifically for rural and regional communities.

At Youth Live4Life we acknowledge the contributions of people with a lived experience of suicide or mental illness that helped to drive and shape the development of the Live4Life model.

We acknowledge the contributions of people with a lived experience of suicide or mental illness that have led local implementation activities in Live4Life communities.

We acknowledge the contributions of people with a lived experience of suicide or mental illness who work for Youth Live4Life to improve youth mental health and reduce suicide in regional and rural communities.