Lifeline Connect



Welcome to Edition 4 of Lifeline Connect!

In this issue, we'll update you on the latest happenings across all areas of Lifeline Mid Coast. This issue is all about appreciation, recognising the dedication, achievements, and everyday impact of our amazing staff, volunteers, and supporters.

Thank you for being an essential part of the Lifeline family.



CEO Corner



Catherine Vaara
CEO

As we move into the final quarter of the 2024–2025 financial year, I want to reflect on the remarkable resilience, renewal, and forward focus that have shaped the past few months.

Even as we were tested by nature's fury, important progress continued behind the scenes. Looking ahead, we've been actively preparing for our 2025–2026 strategic objectives.

To ensure Lifeline Mid Coast continues to meet growing needs with excellence, the Board and management team have undertaken a thoughtful review of our organisational chart. One of the most exciting outcomes is the creation of the **Lifeline Mid Coast Training Program**, which will expand both Centre and community-based learning and development. We're thrilled that Di Bannister, our experienced Crisis Team Manager and Trainer, will lead this new initiative as Training Program Manager. Her energy and leadership will be instrumental in growing this program into a pillar of our future.

With Di stepping into this role, the Crisis Team Manager position will now focus solely on our **13 11 14 program**, and on the care and support of our exceptional Crisis Team staff and volunteers. This dedicated approach reflects our enduring commitment to crisis response and mental wellbeing services of the highest standard.

Not to be outdone, our retail team has been working with great dedication to create a consistent, professional, and high-performing retail environment. Our stores, already recognised for their exceptional presentation, are now being further strengthened by several strategic enhancements, including the rollout of an updated **Retail Manual**, the implementation of a more sophisticated **POS system**, and the adoption of best-practice **protocols in health and safety.**

A special thank you goes to **Samie** for her outstanding support of fellow Shop Managers in establishing their new systems, all while her own store in Taree continues to undergo repairs and refurbishment following the recent floods. We also extend our sincere thanks to **David and Samantha**, whose leadership has been instrumental in driving these initiatives forward, ensuring our retail operations are fully aligned with our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan.

These past months have reminded us of the importance of adaptability, connection, and courage. While we've faced significant challenges, we've also laid the groundwork for Lifeline Mid Coast's next chapter of impact. Thank you for continuing to stand beside us—together, we're creating real change.

Catherine Vaara
CEO
Lifeline Mid Coast

Board Update



Neville Parsons
Board Chair

Facing Challenges Together

One of the critical elements of any organisation is the ability to adapt and respond to the circumstances faced. Our own organisation's resilience and strengths were evidenced through the recent disastrous weather event we endured in May.

I congratulate you on how you responded - supporting each other while maintaining focus to ensure our day-to-day operations and critical services continued. The teamwork and care shown during this event reflect the very best of our culture.

I'm proud to be Chair of Lifeline Mid Coast, and the commitment shown across our team - staff, volunteers, senior management and the Board - highlights the true spirit and sense of community within our organisation.

Strategic Planning 2025 - 2029

Vision - An Australia free of suicide.

Mission - Committed to being a steadfast leader in crisis support and suicide prevention, we reach out to those in need and stand by our community through every season, fostering support and resilience.

Strategic Focus -

- Community: Create exceptional experiences at every interaction
- People & Culture: Recruit, develop and retain the right people
- Finances: Boost sustainability by increasing revenue and profitability
- Systems & Processes: Improve efficiency and customer experience

Operational plans are now being finalised to align with this strategy and ensure continued positive impact across our services.

Major Projects Underway

Our Board Building Committee, led by ***Peter Orford***, is overseeing several key projects:

- **Burrawan St Admin Centre** – Final designs complete, DA documentation underway
- **Kempsey Shop** – Refurbishment progressing
- **Taree Shop** – Repairs dependent on insurance and trade availability
- **Wingham Shop** – Completed and trading well
- **Solar Panel Installations** – Preliminary planning in progress for three sites
- **IT Systems Review** – Consultant recommendations are shaping upgrades across finance, POS, and volunteer systems

Strength in Unity

Lifeline Mid Coast continues to transform to remain resilient and sustainable, ensuring we can deliver:

- Affordable goods through our retail shops
- Lifesaving support via the **13 11 14** crisis line
- Suicide prevention/postvention and bereavement services
- Community engagement and training
- Operational strength through our administration team
- Vision and stability from our Board, CEO, and senior management

We will also continue to pursue the inclusion of our services in Emergency Management Planning across our region. Our local presence makes Lifeline a vital part of any community response.

Ghandi

Keep your thoughts positive... because your thoughts become your words
Keep your words positive... because your words become your actions
Keep your actions positive... because your actions become your habits
Keep your habits positive... because your habits become your values
Keep your values positive... because your values become your destiny

Lifeline MID COAST

"Every aspect of Lifeline is so important...you are important"

"Everyone in the shops are so welcoming"

"There is no way I'd be where I am today if it weren't for this group"

"Thankyou Lifeline for your work. It may be silent but you are so appreciated"

"Lifeline is the only line I feel safe enough to talk about suicide and my addiction"

"Unbelievable service...they have helped me so much"

Acknowledgment From Our Community

"Such a beautiful place to be"

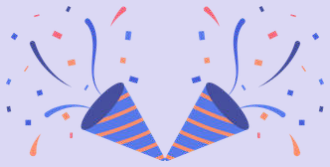
"Thank you it was a big relief to share tonight and connect"

"You have helped me more then you could ever imagine"

"I wish to acknowledge the wonderful atmosphere in the Wauchope Shop under the new management. Congratulations on your efforts on behalf of the community I was told the new manager's name is Bronwyn"

"Beautiful people from a wonderful organisation"

Lifeline SHOP News



Huge Congratulations Forster Shop!

Shoutout to the Forster team for an incredible month of June - $8K up and a fantastic $50K up from January to June! What a stellar achievement. Your hard work and dedication are making a real difference - well done!



Square POS System Rollout

A big thank you for helping kick off our Square POS rollout and for being such a reliable support throughout the transition. To all our managers, retail staff, and volunteers - your adaptability, teamwork, and positive attitude have made all the difference. We truly appreciate your efforts!



Welcome Bronwyn

A warm welcome to Bronwyn as she steps into her new role as Wauchope Shop Manager. We also want to thank all our amazing volunteers for their patience and support during this time of change following Rod's recuperation - we're grateful for everything you do.



Volunteer Spotlight

Jeanette - Groovy Granny

If you've visited our op shop lately, you may have spotted some beautifully hand-knitted and crocheted treasures gracing our shelves - each one lovingly made by our very own Jeanette, affectionately known as Groovy Granny.

When she's not helping out as a volunteer, Jeanette spends her spare time creating unique, handmade items for the store - from snuggly beanies to vibrant, eye-catching blankets. Every stitch is made with heart, and every sale helps support our local crisis services and suicide prevention programs.

We are so grateful for Jeanette's generosity, creativity, and dedication. Her thoughtful contributions not only warm our shelves but also warm the hearts of those we serve. Thank you, Groovy Granny!

Lifeline SHOP

Wingham Grand Reopening

On Tuesday, May 6th, our Wingham Shop proudly reopened its doors - and what a celebration it was! Congratulations to the Wingham team on reopening after a tremendous effort throughout the renovation process. As word spread, the community came out in force to support the big day. Sales flew out the door while our delivery truck transformed into a live music stage, showcasing amazing talent from our very own dedicated volunteers, Dave and Faye. The local Rotary Club served a sizzling BBQ breakfast for a gold coin donation, and Chitta Chatta's coffee van kept the crowd energized with barista-made brews and freshly made hot donuts. With dancing in the front carpark and smiles all around, the festivities captured the attention, and hearts, of the whole town!







"In May, we marked a milestone celebration: the Grand Reopening of our Wingham Shop. The day was filled with community spirit- thanks to the Chitta Chattas Coffee Van, live music by Faye and John, and the Rotary Club of Wingham's warm BBQ breakfast. Our sincere thanks to everyone who made this event such a success."

Catherine Vaara, CEO

Lifeline SHOP

In the wake of the devastating May floods, our Mid Coast communities were left reeling - homes damaged, lives disrupted, and businesses, including our own retail shops, impacted by the rising waters. Some of our volunteers faced personal loss, even as they showed up to help clean and restore our damaged stores. Across all affected locations - especially Taree and Kempsey - the spirit of our retail teams has been nothing short of inspiring.

Taree Shop



"Right now, the shop stands as an empty shell, but progress is underway...I am looking forward to having my Taree volunteer family back together again when we can reopen the Taree Shop with all the fanfare it deserves. "

Samie Ferris, Taree Shop Manager.

Kempsey Shop



" Thanks to an extraordinary team effort - including tireless work from volunteers - we've managed to get the shops clean, safe, and back open for business in record time...everyone pitched in without hesitation "

Sydni Greigh, Kempsey Shop Manager.

"In May, our region endured a catastrophic 1-in-500-year flood event, which disrupted many of our planned activities and deeply impacted our Mid Coast and Taree communities. Our Taree Shop, along with many other businesses, homes, and properties in the Taree CBD, were either severely damaged or lost. The impact has been profound, but the response from our community and volunteers was nothing short of extraordinary.
I would like to personally thank Mary, our Volunteer Team Leader, who maintained vital contact with our Taree Shop volunteers during this time of uncertainty. To every member of our team who stepped up during this challenging time - thank you."

Catherine Vaara, CEO

Lifeline
MID COAST



Save lives. Become a Crisis Support Volunteer.

Info Night

Tuesday 29th of July 2025, 6-8pm

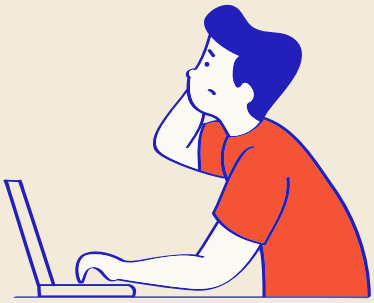
The Westport Club, Port Macquarie

To book: Scan the QR code or email admin@lifelinemidcoast.org.au or call 6581 2800

CS Volunteer Showcase

May Stats

52 active crisis supporters
1840 calls answered
891 hours logged on the phone







Beyond the Call

At Lifeline Mid Coast, we are incredibly proud to shine a light on two of our remarkable volunteers, Jan and Paul. Not only have they dedicated countless hours supporting our crisis phone lines, but when disaster struck during the recent floods, they didn't hesitate to step into an entirely different form of crisis care...face-to-face support.

Providing in-person crisis support during the floods required courage, empathy, and resilience. Jan and Paul met with those affected, offering presence, comfort, and a listening ear at a time when many had lost everything. They provided more than just support - they gave people hope, something that can be truly life-changing during times of crisis.

Jan reflected on the experience ***"It is so very different to telephone crisis support. I feel the big difference is you can see the emotion they are experiencing, rather than just hearing it. Seeing this does have an impact on how you feel, but with the training we receive at Lifeline Mid Coast, it gives you the skills to put your feelings to the side and be there as a support and listening Lifeline friend. I found in all but one interaction with survivors they wanted to talk about what happened and how they were feeling. I believe this is because Lifeline has a trusted name and the folk felt quite comfortable talking with me."***

Paul also shared his thoughts ***"The experience of working with people affected by the Taree Floods was absolutely rewarding – it was really appreciated that there was someone there to talk to and give encouragement."***

To Jan and Paul - Thank you. Your compassion, dedication, and strength remind us of the powerful impact of human connection. We are so fortunate to have you as part of our Lifeline Mid Coast family.

*"I want to acknowledge our incredible Crisis Team volunteers, **Jan and Paul**, who over several weeks, provided invaluable support at the Taree Recovery Hub. Their calm presence, compassion, and tireless service offered relief to those overwhelmed by the flood's aftermath"*
-Catherine Vaara, CEO

Out and About With LLMC

Careers Expo

Lifeline Mid Coast had the opportunity to connect with students at the recent Careers Expo, showcasing our services and raising awareness about the vital support we offer. We were thrilled to engage with young people, letting them know they can reach out for support during tough times - or even get involved by volunteering with us. While others talked careers, we focused on the personal side of the journey, reminding students that Lifeline is here for them through all of life's big changes and decisions. With a Kindness Jenga game to spark real conversations and a bean bag toss to break the ice, our space was designed to be fun, open, and welcoming. It was a fantastic chance to connect with the next generation and remind them that no matter what path they choose, support is always just a call or text away.

The Push Up Challenge

Lifeline was proud to be a beneficiary of The Push Up Challenge 2025, which ran throughout June. This fantastic initiative raised vital funds for Lifeline Mid Coast, with every dollar staying local to support the ongoing delivery of our services. The challenge not only raised over $5000 for local services, but also encouraged important conversations around mental health and inspired people to get moving for their wellbeing. The challenge consists of completing 3,214 pushups in 23 days, representing the 3,214 lives lost to suicide in Australia in 2023. We've been blown away by the enthusiasm and heart shown by participants across the community. A big Thank You and Congratulations.

NAIDOC Family Fun Day

Lifeline Mid Coast was honoured to be part of this year's NAIDOC Family Fun Day on Birpai land - a vibrant celebration of strength, culture, and connection. With this year marking 50 years of NAIDOC Week celebrations, the theme "The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy" invited us to reflect on the past, recognise the present, and walk alongside First Nations communities in shaping a stronger future. Our team was there to listen, stand in solidarity, and support. Visitors were invited to pass on a message of hope through our artistic craft leaves, adding to a growing display of community care. From cultural dances and live music to the sounds of the didgeridoo, clapsticks, and a smoke cleansing ceremony, the day was a meaningful celebration of healing and unity.

Out and About With LLMC

Careers Expo









The Push Up Challenge









NAIDOC Family Fun Day

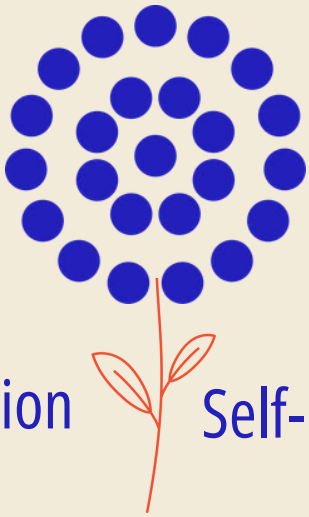








Introducing New Group

BLM

Suicidal Ideation Self-Harm Support Group

Bloom is a support group for individuals who experience suicidal ideation or use self-harm. The group is a safe, non-judgmental space where you are able to connect with others who have a shared experience. We have conversations about suicide and self-harm in a safe place and discuss strategies that may be helpful to cope in healthy ways. The group is led by a qualified facilitator and a lived experience of suicide/self-harm co-facilitator. This group is a closed, confidential group. Participants all start at the same time and will complete six weeks together.

To express interest please contact:

Ph: 02 6581 2800

E: emartin@lifelinemidcoast.org.au

Lifeline Mid Coast Services

ECLIPSE

A Group for Suicide Attempt Survivors

Eclipse is a support group for suicide attempt survivors. This group is a safe, non-judgmental space where you are able to connect with others who have a shared experience. We have conversations about reasons to stay alive and strategies that may be helpful in keeping us safe, so we can see a more hopeful future.

H2R

Hospital to Recovery Program

The Hospital to Recovery Program is a free, 12-week, peer-led support initiative with a focus on non-clinical, practical support. Eligible participants are those who have experienced a suicide attempt, struggle with suicidal thoughts or self-harm. We provide daily living support, referrals and advocacy, engagement and empowerment.

Support After Suicide

Suicide Bereavement Support Group

Support After Suicide Bereavement Groups are for adults who have experienced the loss of someone through suicide. They are open groups, facilitated by trained, experienced people who have also lost a loved one to suicide. The groups provide a safe and confidential environment of trust for people to talk about what they are going through.



Friday Well-Being Group

Our Friday Well-being Group is a relaxed, drop-in space held each week for anyone connected with Lifeline Mid Coast. The group offers a supportive environment to check in with Lifeline about your week, connect with others who share similar lived experiences, and take some time for yourself. Everyone is welcome - come as you are, whenever it suits you.

Suicide Awareness in Aged Care

Suicide among older Australians is a silent crisis, too often overlooked in conversations about care. Older Australians deserve not only care, but connection. Thanks to Lea and our Peer Support Team, suicide prevention is now part of the conversation in local aged care communities, ensuring no one feels forgotten. Lea identified the issue, put a plan into action, and the statistics speak for themselves... now is the time to act.

"We want our elderly to feel more connected, more heard, and never alone."

Changing Environments - Changing Needs

Many older Australians are transitioning from their homes into Aged Care Communities. While necessary, this move can be unsettling and isolating, increasing the risk of mental distress.

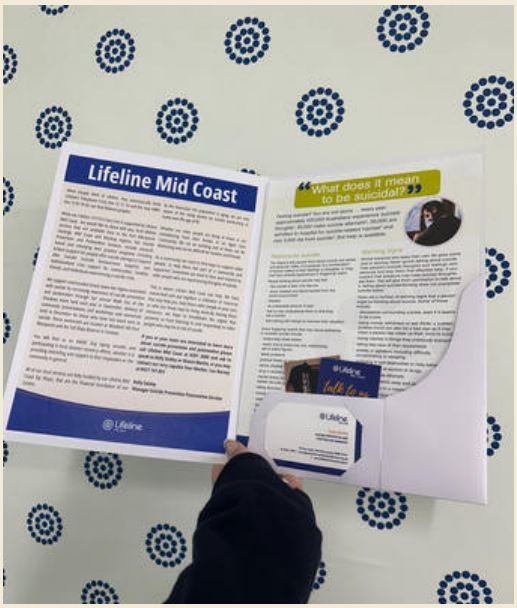
Listening Takes Time

Aged care staff are often time-poor and stretched thin. Without suicide prevention training, the signs of someone thinking about suicide may go unrecognised.

The Power of Connection

Volunteer visitors provide essential companionship but often lack the tools to identify or respond to signs of distress.

- Males aged over 85 years had an age standardised suicide rate of **26.4 deaths per 100,000 persons**. This is higher than the suicide rate for all males, which was **18 per 100,000 persons.**
- While males aged over 85 years had the highest age-specific suicide rate, they accounted for **2.4% of male suicide deaths.**
- Females aged over 85 years had the highest age-specific suicide rate of all female age groups (**10.6 per 100,000**).



Resource Packs

- Information on training from Lifeline Mid Coast
- Toolkits for handling crises, mental health, and difficult situations, offering practical steps and strategies
- Details of local and national support services, including helplines and counseling options
- Information about peer support groups and wellbeing programs available to residents, families, and staff
- Volunteer opportunities for those looking to contribute to the wellbeing of others
- Key contact information for accessing immediate support and ongoing assistance

Bringing Bereavement Training to Sydney

Bereavement Support Training at Lifeline Sydney to Sutherland:

Building Capacity to Support Those Impacted by Suicide Loss

In a significant step towards strengthening bereavement support services, Lifeline Sydney recently welcomed Kelly and Ebanie from Lifeline Mid Coast to deliver a two-day intensive training session focused on suicide bereavement support. This training aimed to equip 20 new facilitators and co-facilitators with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to lead bereavement groups within their communities.

Kelly, drawing on her extensive experience in running bereavement support programs, led the group through a comprehensive and thoughtful training agenda. Participants explored the unique needs of individuals who have lost someone to suicide and learned how to create a safe, compassionate, and structured environment for grief support. The training covered practical aspects such as how to start a bereavement group, recruit participants, and promote the service in a respectful and effective way. It also included vital guidance on facilitating conversations around grief, navigating trauma-informed care, and managing group dynamics with empathy and professionalism.

The interactive sessions allowed participants to engage in real-world scenarios, reflect on their own experiences with loss, and build strong peer connections with one another. The supportive and collaborative atmosphere of the training not only boosted confidence but also reinforced the importance of community-based support in the aftermath of suicide. Ongoing group supervisions are booked with Kelly starting mid-July.

Following the training, the newly skilled Sydney team wasted no time putting their learnings into action. They established two bereavement groups in different locations across Sydney, with the aim of making support more accessible to those in need. In June, the first of these groups officially commenced, offering a supportive space for five individuals bereaved by suicide. The group has already begun to foster meaningful connection, understanding, and healing among its participants.

This training represents a powerful example of the Lifeline network working collaboratively to respond to the needs of those impacted by suicide loss. With more trained facilitators now in place, Lifeline Sydney is well-positioned to expand its reach and continue supporting people through one of life's most difficult experiences. The team looks forward to growing these programs further and ensuring that no one has to face the journey of grief alone.





July 2025
Lifeline Connect

Next Newsletter October 2025

Submission Due September 2025

Lifeline Mid Coast
We are local.