

Support grows for bereaved

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TRAINING taking place in Benalla this week aims to give a group of locals the knowledge, skills and confidence to run suicide bereavement support groups in the Wangaratta area.



Celia Piesse, postvention officer with the Wangaratta Grit and Resilience Program, said the people taking part would extend their caring, community-minded focus to supporting others during difficult times.

“A lot of those taking part have lost a loved one to suicide or may have had mental health issues themselves, and want to be able to help people through those experiences, and to provide more support for them in the local community,” Ms Piesse said.

“From a Grit and Resilience point of view, we are encouraging people who are training specifically for the Wangaratta Area Suicide Prevention group (WASP) in establishing peer support groups for those bereaved by suicide.”

Ms Piesse said prior to the establishment of WASP last year, the district was supported by Wangaratta Suicide Prevention Network, which consisted largely of service-providers, while WASP comprised community members.

“Most people who are part of WASP have lost someone to suicide,” she said.

The group hopes to establish support groups for those bereaved by suicide, with those attending the training to learn vital skills which will enable them to facilitate such groups. Conducted by the Anxiety Recovery Centre, the two and a half day training program focuses on a variety of aspects involved in facilitating self-help groups, including suicide bereavement groups

An expected 23 people are taking part in the training sessions this week in Benalla, including up to 11 from the Rural City of Wangaratta.

Among them is local resident Vic Hounslow, who said after dealing with lived experience of suicide and grief, she knew first-hand how isolating and emotionally crippling it could be, especially in a rural setting.

“My hope is that once we get this community facilitation initiative up and running with the help of the Grit and Resilience team and WASP, it will provide an outlet where people can come and share their experiences with like-minded people, in the hope that it can provide some alleviation from the trauma they’re going through,” she said.

WASP will hold its next meeting on Thursday, February 17 from 5.30pm at the Wangaratta Library, with all welcome to attend.

* If this media article causes you any distress, phone Lifeline on 131 114 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.