



SUICIDE
REPRESENTS
39% OF
DEATHS IN
THOSE AGED
18-24¹

SAFE SPACE

SAFE SPACE, BLACKTOWN

Safe Space is a welcoming community environment that allows people experiencing suicidal ideation and psychological distress to access timely and responsive support. The centre is run by trained mental health specialists, peer workers and support workers, who promote the wellbeing of clients outside of a clinical setting. Safe Space is a walk-in service for anyone aged 16 and over in emotional distress.

Safe Space is run by Stride, a mental health charity delivering a range of services designed to support those experiencing mental health concerns.

Lorna* is 18 years-old and visited Safe Space experiencing high levels of distress and strong, intrusive thoughts of suicide. She was struggling with self-harm and had a history of suicide attempts due to extensive childhood trauma and scored 100 out of 100 on the Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDs).

Lorna spent her time in the Safe Space sensory room and, at first, was very withdrawn and non-communicative. A Safe Space staff member sat with her and gently reminded her that she did not need to speak until she felt comfortable. Slowly, Lorna began to open up about her current struggles, disclosing how her previous trauma was still impacting her life and that she wished the suicidal thoughts would leave her alone. Through conversation and connection, the worker helped her explore these stresses further and validate her feelings and current thoughts.

After four hours at Safe Space, Lorna went from being distressed, visibly upset, and disassociating to being able to talk

comfortably. She even shared some personal poetry and things she does to help keep her safe. The worker helped her create a safe plan. Lorna left the centre feeling supported and with lowered distress levels.

During the 72-hour follow up call, Lorna shared that she had kept herself safe since her visit, and was really proud that she had not engaged in self-harm. Since visiting Safe Space, Lorna has continued to send text messages to let the worker know how many days she has been self-harm free and sends photos of all of the things she has done to maintain her wellbeing. Lorna feels secure with her safety plan and is now linked to a good support network.

For more information about how WentWest supports Western Sydney, visit www.wentwest.com.au.

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of this client.

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020), *Deaths in Australia*, Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/deaths-in-australia/contents/leading-causes-of-death>