



The *OzHelp Tasmania Foundation* (a not for profit organization) was established in 2007 and is a statewide organization with permanent offices in Hobart and Launceston. It was established as an initiative of the Tasmanian building and construction industry to counter industry statistics (drawn from the industry Super Fund CBus from 1998 - 2003) which highlighted that, on average, the industry was losing 10 apprentices and workers a year as a result of suicide, drugs and alcohol and 'unknown' causes.

In context the suicide mortality rate for men in Tasmania in 2005 was 25 per 100 000, the CBus figures for the building and construction industry in Tasmania reflected 129 per 100 000.

The effect of OzHelp over the last five years has seen a year on year reduction in suicides within the industry as follows:

Year	Pre 2008*	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Completed Suicide	10+	6	5	4	2	2	1	1

* Based on industry Superannuation Fund figures (CBus) – suicide, drug and alcohol and 'unknown' causes.

Complementing these statistics is the level of secondary interventions that reflect suicide ideation disclosure by individuals, or their mates, based on suicide alertness tools provided by OzHelp. This has allowed individuals to gain appropriate support before potentially more tragic consequences occur. Of these interventions all have moved forward in their lives in a positive manner.

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Suicide Ideation	Not recorded	21	22	22	20	14	2

These figures reflect a consistent trend of help seeking behaviour gained from the awareness and alertness activities conducted by OzHelp combined with our direct presence to provide immediate and appropriate access to support and referral pathways.

It is suggested that the presence of OzHelp has, at the primary level, increased the capacity of the Tasmanian building and construction industry to identify people at risk, provide support and build individual resilience and, at the secondary level, provided specific support to a high risk population (men and youth) as well as individuals at risk of suicide.

On a statistical basis the reduction of suicide in the building and construction industry (predominately male) from an industry rate of 129 per 100,000 in 2005, to 11 per 100,000 in 2014 (in comparison the Tasmanian rate of suicide for men in 2012 of 23 per 100,000 – ABS 2013).

Training and Support Activities

Playing a significant part in the decrease over the last two years are the activities that companies have adopted including the Apprentice Workplace Life Skills Tool Box Training program, the Mentor / Supervisor program and Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace program. These programs have provided both tools to protect individuals against suicide and tools to be alert to someone who may be thinking about suicide.

At the same time the above courses have:

1. Provided practical *life skills* for young apprentices and trainees to develop resilience and coping skills (especially during their transition from school into the workplace).
2. Provided workplace supervisors and mentors with the practical skills to manage and look after their apprentices and employees.
3. Provided workplaces with an introduction to mental health and wellbeing to enable employees to look after themselves and others.

The Support Service includes:

- Apprentice and trainee support
- Worker support
- Employer support
- Advisory and counselling support

This encompasses outreach services, counselling, brief intervention support and referral to professional, public and private sector community support organisations.

Over the past seven years the Foundation has continued to provide support to individuals that are having difficulties in their professional or personal lives. Whilst still providing crisis intervention, increasingly the Foundation is receiving earlier referrals allowing issues and problems to be managed before they become critical. From around 324 clients in 2007 the Foundation now supports on average 900 clients a year.

The Broader Impact – Supporting a change in culture

The building and construction industry by the very nature of its work is a tough and robust industry. Whilst in recent years physical OH&S has feature highly within the workplace, mental health and wellbeing has not.

What is being evidenced through evaluation and support occasions is a shift in culture within the industry that says *'it's ok to ask for help'* and that *'mental health and wellbeing'* is just as important as physical health. In particular this cultural shift is strongly supported by the underlying trait of *'looking after your mate'*. Whilst many individuals are actively seeking support, a significant number of referrals are from a *'mate'* that is concerned about someone else.

Supporting this change at the supervisor level is the provision of *'tools'* to enable them to connect their workers to assistance. Thus rather than have to struggle with dealing with issues such as financial and relationship problems, they can still provide workplace support knowing that their workers' issues are being professionally dealt with.

Expanding beyond the building and construction industry

Whilst still undertaking its primary role of statewide suicide prevention and social capacity building within the building and construction industry OzHelp Tasmania has broadened its scope due to the success of the program, requests for training and support from other industries and recognizing that overall workplace mental health and wellbeing was not being fully addressed. Training is now undertaken in a variety of workplaces including private companies and government organisations and within the civil engineering, hospitality, mining and automotive industries.

Working in TasTAFE

Based on the success of its programs within the building industry (particularly the apprentice Workplace Life Skills and Supervisor programs) the Foundation provides training and support services to all apprentices enrolled at TasTAFE through the *Skills for Life* program. This program provides support services to all apprentices and students enrolled at the TasTAFE and includes four hours of life skill training to all first year apprentices (capturing over 80% of Tasmanian building and construction apprentices) and supervisor mentor training for teaching staff.

The Foundations presence within TasTAFE has contributed to a reduction in suicides as reflected in the table below:

	2010 / 11	2011 / 12	2012/13	2013/14	Jul – Dec 14
Completed Suicides	2	0	0	0	0
Suicide Ideation	21	8	8	7	0
Suicide Attempt	2	3	2	0	0
Suicide Post-Vention	21	8	7	10	2

Staff

The Foundation has five permanent staff as follows - Chief Executive Officer, Administration and Training Coordinator and three Regional Support Co-coordinators (one for each region). Additionally it utilizes contract trainers to undertake training activities and maintains partnerships with other State suicide prevention agencies to provide support and counselling activities.

For more information see our web page at www.ozhelptasmania.org.au