

DECEMBER 2024 (VOLUME 3)

# BLUE SKY

GREAT SOUTHERN SUICIDE PREVENTION  
ADVISORY GROUP NEWSLETTER



We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters throughout the Great Southern and pay our respects to Elders past and present. It is a privilege to be living and working on Noongar country and ask for the guidance of Aboriginal people to support the health and wellbeing of all people in this country.  
This always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.



Welcome to the third edition of the Great Southern Suicide Prevention and Postvention newsletter.

If you have anything to contribute to future editions, or have any feedback to give, please contact:  
Great Southern Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) Kaitlin Johnson  
[kjohnson@palmerston.org.au](mailto:kjohnson@palmerston.org.au)



## Merry Christmas!



GSSPAG would like to wish the Great Southern community a very happy, safe Festive Season! We hope that you get the opportunity to take some time off to spend with your family, friends and loved ones to recharge for the year ahead.

Although Christmas is a celebration, we know that this season can also be a time of loneliness, trauma, unpredictability, fractured relationships and stress. Many of us will spend this Christmas period grieving for people we've said goodbye to, and/or managing difficult relationships, expectations and unmet needs.

We hope that this newsletter will give you handy tips, and some simple ways you can look after your mental health and wellbeing during this time of the year.

# 'tis the season

THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR, CAN ALSO BE  
THE MOST STRESSFUL - CHECK OUT OUR TIPS FOR  
KEEPING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN GOOD SHAPE!

## 10 tips for taking care of your mental wellbeing this festive season

**Avoid activities that cause stress:** Make self-care a priority by giving yourself permission to put yourself first. It will be difficult to care for others if you are feeling stressed.

**Recognise your signs of stress and use techniques that help you relax:** Relaxation techniques are useful when you begin to get irritated or upset. Take a few deep breaths, go for a walk or try some mindfulness.

**Drink in moderation:** Drinking responsibly is about drinking in moderation. Alcohol can have a negative impact on our mental health, so make informed choices and know your limits when it comes to drinking.

**Stay active:** It is important you stay healthy over the holidays and exercising can be a huge mood booster and a great way get you out of your own head for a while.

**Stay connected:** Keep in touch with friends and family. Even if it's just a short phone call, having people to talk and laugh with is a great protective factor for our mental health

**Set boundaries:** Boundaries are essential to healthy relationships and a healthy life. Understand and communicate your limits to your loved ones to avoid feeling resentment.

**Find Gratitude - Even if it's something small:** It's easy to focus on the negative things in life but we all have something to be thankful for. Write down or think about something you're grateful for, even if it's as simple as a rainbow or someone letting you in to busy traffic.





**It's okay to say "no" to some things:** Be assertive if you need to be and know it is OK to say no. Put your wellbeing first and don't over commit yourself. It's okay to decline someone's offer or invitation without feeling guilty or shameful. It is OK to put yourself first.

**You are not alone:** Don't think you are alone. Lots of people find Christmas difficult. Stay strong and seek connection with others if you are struggling.

**Let someone know if you are struggling:** If you are struggling to cope, find someone you can talk to.

Suicide Call Back Line: 1300 659 467  
[www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

Lifeline: 13 11 14 (24 hours)  
[www.lifelinewa.org.au](http://www.lifelinewa.org.au)

13Yarn: 13 92 76

Lifeline Text Service: 0477 13 11 14

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800

## Boundary setting tips for the festive season



- **Make time for rest and play:** this time of year is a good opportunity to relax and recharge your batteries so you can enter the new year with energy! Be sure to set aside time for rest, and to do things that bring you joy.
- **Don't go into debt buying presents:** times are tough, and it can be hard to manage the expectation of gifting without putting yourself into financial difficulty. It is okay to be honest if you can't afford gifts. Those who love and care for you will understand, and they may even feel relieved themselves!
- **Honor your own Out Of Office:** if you are taking time off over Christmas/New Year, be sure to switch off your work phone/emails and create some boundaries with yourself around doing work related tasks while on leave. Breaks are important in preventing burnout, and in most cases: the work emails can wait!



# Self Care corner

## Christmas self care ideas

- Read a holiday themed book, or watch a Christmas movie.
- Try a Christmas recipe, or a Christmas craft activity - there are lots of ideas online!
- Decorate your home or work space for the holiday season.
- Get involved with local community events, such as Carols by Candlelight, Christmas markets, etc.
- Take a break from your phone/social media.
- Find ways to be social, whether it be writing Christmas cards for loved ones, hosting a low-key holiday dinner, or grabbing a gingerbread latte with a friend!

## 2024 in reflection

*journal prompt ideas*

- Name one new positive habit you formed this year?
- What is something/someone negative you let go of this year?
- What was an unexpected joy you experienced this year?
- Were there any unexpected challenges you overcame this year?
- Name 3 things you are looking forward to in 2025.
- Are there any new hobbies/experiences you want to try in 2025?

## Goal setting for 2025

An education or career goal



A health and wellbeing goal


A financial goal



A personal goal







## Alcohol and Other Drug News

# Staying Safe in the Silly Season!

The Festive season is upon us again – feeling every year like it's arriving sooner and sooner!

For some, this festive season may invoke feelings of joy, cheer and excitement, and for others it may feel like the opposite. Whatever the feelings around this time of year one thing is certain – Australians tend to imbibe more over the November to February period.

For some, it's an over-abundance of social events where the alcohol is flowing, and often an expected part of the occasion, that may lead to more alcohol use than usual. For others, it may be heightened feelings of anxiety, stress, or isolation that can come with the holiday season that lead to a few extra self-soothing drinks in an attempt to help manage these feelings.

Whatever the reason may be, here are a few tips to keep both yourself and others safe over the festive period:

- **Keep an eye on your emotions!**
  - How are you feeling? Alcohol is a depressant, so if you are already feeling down, a drink may make you feel worse.
- **Remember the alcohol guidelines!**
  - The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends that to reduce to risk of harm from alcohol, adults over 18 should drink no more than 4 standard drinks on any one occasion, and no more than 10 standard drinks per week, and young people under 18 years should not drink at all.
- **Space out your drinks!**
  - Try and drink water or a non-alcoholic beverage in between each of your alcoholic drinks.
- **Remember to eat!**
  - If you are planning to drink alcohol, make sure you eat a good meal both before and during.
- **Plan around your activities!**
  - It is safest not to drink alcohol if you are planning on driving or operating machinery, swimming, around fires, or will be in an unfamiliar or potentially unsafe landscape.
- **Don't mix alcohol and other substances!**
  - If you plan to use any other drugs, or are on any medications, make sure you are aware of how they may interact with each other so you can keep an eye on any negative side effects that may require medical attention.

To read more, please visit the **Alcohol and Drug Foundation** website on <https://adf.org.au/>

If you would like support around alcohol, call your local **Community Alcohol and Drug Service** – in the Great Southern this is **Palmerston**, who can be reached on **08 9892 2100**.

If you are concerned that you or someone else may need urgent medical help, call **000** for an **ambulance**.

# The link between what we eat and how we feel...

## Good Food = Healthier Gut = Increased Mood and Brain Functioning

Alongside practical mental health professional advice and sometimes medication, it is also well known that what we eat and how much physical activity we undertake plays a major role in our wellbeing. For instance, did you know that our gut and brain talk to each other? Did you also know that there is a population of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites that live in our gut and are essential for our health and survival? What's more there is approximately 1-2kg of this health-giving microbial community in our gut (mainly in our large intestine).



What can we do to improve the health of our gut, so that it is a positive relationship with our brain?



Have you ever heard the saying 'a gut feeling'? Or felt nervous about something and felt it 'in your gut'? Or has that feeling of nervousness sent you running to the loo? This is all due to that very close connection between our brain and our gut bug population (also known as the gut microbiome). Research shows that the health of our gut directly impacts the health of our brain, (and our whole body) including our mental health.



We know that processed and ultra-processed foods that contain chemical additives, excess sugar and unhealthy fats affect the gut environment by reducing the diversity and number of healthy gut bugs. This in turn increases the risk of disease, reducing immune function and contributing to poorer mental wellbeing.



## Suggestions for a healthier gut and improved mood

Eat whole foods and avoid packaged or processed foods where possible, which are high in unwanted additives and preservatives that disrupt the healthy bacteria in the gut.



Eat enough fibre and include whole grains and legumes in your diet – gut bacteria feed on the fibre in your diet.



Instead of vegetable or fruit juice, consider increasing your intake of fresh fruits and vegetables. Frozen fruits without added sugars/additives are a good choice too.

Include probiotic-rich foods such as plain yogurt without added sugars.



Adding fermented foods such as kefir (unsweetened), sauerkraut, or kimchi can be helpful to maintain a healthy gut.



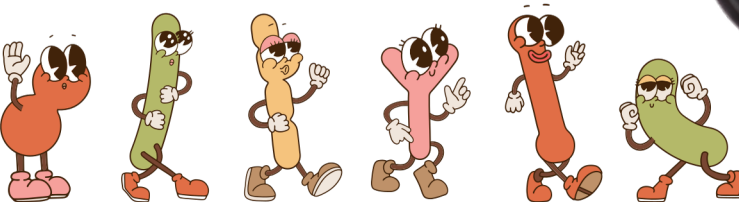
Eat a balance of seafoods and lean poultry, and less red meat each week.



Add a range of colourful fresh fruits and vegetables to your diet.



**Exercise improves gut bug diversity and numbers**



Getting as much variety as possible is beneficial for your gut bugs. This will provide you with lots of different nutrients, for you and your gut bugs!

*Try getting at least 20 different varieties of fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices each week.*



## Simple ways to increase your variety:

### Breakfast

Try an omelette with red onion, capsicum, garlic, tomato, mushroom, parsley, and cheese - 4 different vegetables and a herb!



### Ingredients for a Mood-Boosting Smoothie

Try a different combination of ingredients and vary the quantities to create a smoothie that you enjoy. The key is to create your own smoothie based on your personal taste but try to include ingredients from each category. Note that some ingredients fall into more than one category

Or try a mood boosting smoothie! Here is a recipe for you!



#### Base Liquids

Iced water  
Cow's milk  
Rice milk  
Almond milk  
Coconut milk or water  
Unsweetened, 100% fruit juice



#### Healthy Fats

Nuts e.g., almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts  
Seeds e.g., chia seed, flax seed, sesame seed, pumpkin seed  
Oils e.g., coconut oil, flax seed oil  
Avocado



#### Protein

Nuts e.g., almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts  
Whey protein powder  
Plant protein powder (e.g., rice, pea, hemp, etc)  
Yoghurt (natural)

#### Prebiotics/ Probiotics

Fibre e.g., psyllium husk, wheat bran  
Yoghurt (natural)  
Honey  
Most fruits and vegetables  
Natural oats  
Coconut flakes



#### Antioxidants & Anti-inflammatory

Fruit e.g., apple, banana, berries (all sorts), Kiwi fruit, orange, mango  
Vegetables e.g., spinach, kale, commercial greens powder  
Others: natural cacao powder, cinnamon, mint leaves

Adrian Lopresti PhD | Personalised Integrative Therapy For Anxiety & Depression © 2018

For further information visit...



Harvard Health  
Publishing  
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL

Deakin University FOOD&MOOD CENTRE  
<https://foodandmoodcentre.com.au/blog/>

Gut feelings: How food affects your mood - Harvard Health  
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/gut-feelings-how-food-affects-your-mood-2018120715548>





Simply put, mindfulness is the act of keeping our mind in the present moment. One of the common ways to practice mindfulness is through meditation. While meditation is a practice many people find helpful for their health and wellbeing, the term meditation might make us think of people sitting cross-legged repeating mantras to Tibetan meditation music. This might not appeal to all us blokes and may turn us away from the practice, but meditation is just one avenue to incorporate mindfulness into our lives.

For all of us our mind often gets caught ruminating over the past or worrying about the future. It's important to spend time in the future to plan for upcoming events and also to spend some time in the past to learn from our mistakes. However, spending too much time dwelling on negative events of the past or having our mind consumed by worry about bad things that could happen in the future will lead to heightened anxiety levels. This is why mindfulness and mindful meditation is sometimes used in the medical industry as a tool to help tackle diagnosed mental illnesses, such as anxiety disorders. Extensive research into the practice has shown that it improves mental health and wellbeing outcomes in addition to other areas in our lives such as chronic pain management and addiction.

Our time perspective encompasses the amount of time we spend with our mind in the past, present or future. To practice mindfulness, we need to bring our thoughts back to the present. Pay more careful, non-judgmental attention to the here and now. If our mind starts wandering, simply accept the thought and bring ourselves back to the present.

### **There are some simple ways to practice mindfulness in everyday life:**

**Mindful breathing** – Spend time (ideally seated) with our thoughts focused on our breath as our chest moves in and out. If we are trying to calm ourselves during a stressful moment it might help to take an exaggerated breath to bring ourselves back to the present.

**Mindful driving** – Have you ever had a long trip in the country and not remembered the drive? This is because we are often 'mindless' when driving. To practice mindful driving, we start by bringing our focus to the breath and our mind to the present – we bring our attention to the feel of our hands on the steering wheel and sound of road noise.

By incorporating mindful exercises into our life, we may come to realise that we are spending a lot of time completely mindless. And, over time, we will be better able to enjoy life's pleasures as they arise. When we take timeout to smell the roses, we might just see an improvement in our overall health and wellbeing.





# Keep it moving!

*Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) for Aboriginal people is influenced by connections to land, culture, spirituality, family, and community.*



Physical activity plays a central role in Aboriginal traditions and continues to have cultural significance. WHO statistics illustrate that Aboriginal children are more physically active than non-Aboriginal children, but adults are less likely to engage in regular physical activity. Group-based activities, especially with family and friends, are strong motivators for participation.

Physical activity programs can be diverse, fun and provide opportunities for older people to obtain incidental exercise. Participation in sport is great for reducing chronic disease and improves SEWB outcomes such as improved self-esteem, confidence, and stress reduction.

Successful programs are culturally safe, community-led, and align with Indigenous values, enhancing cultural identity and strengthening connections to family and community.

## 6 easy ways to increase movement in your everyday life

- Park further away when you go shopping
- Find gentle exercise ideas that you can do at home or work throughout the day, such as: calf raises or wall squats.
- Walk around the block each morning.
- Play with your kids or pets outside.
- Try a 10-minute workout video on Youtube.
- Find ways to get out on Country and go for a walk.

# FREE COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON



**Christmas Day - Commencing at 12 Noon**  
**Hosted by Steve and Karen Marshall**  
**Grace & Glory Ministries International**  
**Held at PCYC - 77 Sanford Road, Albany**

This years 2024 Free Community Christmas Luncheon will once again be hosted by Steve & Karen Marshall from Grace & Glory Ministries International.

We have been hosting the Free Community Christmas Luncheon for over 50 years and It is provided to everyone within the community completely free of charge and without any obligation at all. If you are not joining anyone else, or are alone at Christmas, then we would love for you to share this Christmas with us.

Perhaps, you may like to assist us with the preparation before, the help with packing away afterwards, or volunteer in some capacity on the day. You may even desire to help us with a donation



## Free Community Christmas Luncheon

### Event Details

Time: 12 noon

Location: 77 Sanford Road, Albany WA 6330

Venue: PCYC

Cost: Free

### Event Date(s)

Wednesday 25th December 2024

To register for the luncheon, volunteer your time, or donate to the dinner head here:  
<https://www.christmasluncheon.org/>



# Mental Health and Wellbeing for our LGBTQA+ community

Prioritising wellbeing is essential for LGBTQA+ people and allies as it fosters resilience, connection, and empowerment within our diverse communities. Whether it's through supporting others, setting personal boundaries, or navigating the digital world, these small but meaningful actions can help create a stronger sense of belonging and mental balance. By encouraging each other to focus on both self-care and community engagement, we can build a more inclusive, vibrant, and supportive environment for everyone.

## Tips to support your mental health and wellbeing

### Help others

Sometimes nothing feels better than getting outside of your own head and thinking about others. Science backs it up – helping others makes you feel better about yourself, and depending on how you choose to get involved, this can be an awesome way to meet others and feel more productive or motivated. LGBTQA+ people have a rich history of supporting intersectional, vulnerable communities from a local to a global scale. Are there social issues that you're passionate about, and is there some way you can contribute within your own capacity? Remember, there are heaps of opportunities within and outside of LGBTQA+ causes.

### Pick your battles

Remember that you don't have to be a switched-on queer advocate every hour of the day. There are so many issues faced by LGBTQA+ people on an individual level as well as a community level and being the person to always speak out can get very tiring. For your own well-being, think about the people and places in your life where it's important to speak up and only open up when it's right for you. If you notice yourself not traveling too well, take a break from the advocacy and look after yourself!

### Revamp your algorithm

We know you're sick of being told to just switch off (social media is killing us!) but you don't have to go cold turkey all the time. Realistically, heaps of LGBTQA+ people live in places with fewer options to connect with other queer folks in-person, so being connected online is important. If you use social media, can you tweak the pages you're following so you feel less empty on the inside after an hour-long doom scroll? Try looking for local groups with hobbies you like, news outlets that you trust, funny cat videos (or whatever funny things take your fancy) and with topics you find interesting. This takes an active approach so reflect on what you can unfollow if it's not adding in a positive way to your time online.





### Find your people

Building meaningful connections is vital for wellbeing, but it's important to find what feels right for you. Whether it's through in-person meetups, online communities, or shared hobbies, connecting with others in ways that align with your comfort level can help reduce feelings of isolation. For LGBTIQ+ folks, not every space will be right for you, and that's okay—explore different options until you find what feels supportive, inclusive, and affirming. Remember, meaningful connection looks different for everyone, so trust your instincts and embrace what works best for you.

### Affirm yourself

Affirming your gender, sexuality, or sex is an ongoing, personal journey that looks different for everyone. This might involve exploring your identity through clothing, pronouns, or self-expression that feels authentic. It could also mean seeking out media, role models, or communities that reflect and celebrate who you are. Safety is always important, so if you don't feel safe affirming your identity in front of others, think of some ways you might be able to express your true self in your own space, for just yourself.

Remember, there's no 'right' way to be yourself—what matters is finding the practices, spaces, and relationships that empower you to feel seen, respected, and affirmed

Sometimes we can't always outwardly express our identity, but remembering that identity comes from within, and you are the person who knows who you truly are.

Being part of the LGBTIQ+ can be challenging but it also brings a great amount of love, respect and support – bringing together a beautiful and diverse group of people. You are never alone in this journey.



Visit [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au) for more helpful information, resources and upcoming events!







# blank walls

AN ART COMPETITION TO FILL  
THE WALLS OF HEADSPACE ALBANY  
& AN EXHIBITION TO CELEBRATE  
GREAT SOUTHERN YOUNG ARTISTS

SUBMISSIONS\_CLOSE

24 · MARCH · 2025

DROP OFF TO  
VANCOUVER ARTS CENTRE



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# Find the correct answer



Which of Santa's reindeer has bad manners?



Because of his bad 'elf

Where do snowmen go to dance?

Carbon footprints

Why did Father Christmas go to the doctor?

A mince spy.

Why does Santa have three gardens?

Snowball

Why did the donut maker sell his shop?

Snowflakes

Why has Santa been banned from sooty chimneys?

He had no body to go with.

What do you get if you put a bell on a skunk?

Because he wasn't chicken

Why was the snowman looking through the carrots?

Rude-olph

Who hides in the bakery at Christmas?

He got fed up with the hole business

What do snowmen have for breakfast?

Jingle smells.

Why couldn't the skeleton go to the Christmas party?

He was picking his nose

Why did the turkey cross the road?

So he can 'ho ho ho'



# Postvention Information

## What is postvention?

Postvention refers to activities or interventions occurring after a death by suicide, to support those bereaved or affected (family, friends, professionals, peers, responders, community) to cope with stressors and manage the experience of loss and grief.

Research shows that there are approximately 135 people who are directly impacted by a single suicide death.

Everyone experiences grief differently in their bereavement process. Although individual bereavement experiences vary, they share similar features and reactions.

People bereaved by suicide, similarly to people bereaved by other types of death, experience general grief reactions such as shock, denial, sadness, confusion and anger, and may need additional support to help them cope.



StandBy is Australia's leading postvention program dedicated to the assisting people and communities impacted by suicide. The StandBy program is focused on supporting anyone who has been bereaved or impacted by suicide at any stage in their life, including:

- Individuals, families and friends
- Witnesses
- First Responders
- Service Providers

StandBy is accessible seven days a week, providing free face-to face and/or telephone support at a time and place that is best for each individual

### Phone



1300 727 247

### Email



standby.greatsouthern@anglicarew  
a.org.au

### Website

[www.standbysupport.com.au](http://www.standbysupport.com.au)

# In loving memory this Christmas

THOSE WE LOVE  
DON'T GO AWAY,  
THEY WALK BESIDE  
US EVERY DAY.  
UNSEEN, UNHEARD,  
BUT ALWAYS NEAR.  
SO LOVED, SO  
MISSED AND VERY  
DEAR



For those grieving a loved one, Christmas can be particularly difficult. Absences from family celebrations can feel more obvious during the festive period, and can often cause people to feel a rollercoaster of emotions while they navigate through their grief. The first Christmas without a loved one can feel particularly hard, and for some, the loss of their loved one will never feel easier.

People may find Christmas without their loved one to feel lonely, daunting and may not be feeling up to celebrations. Other people take comfort in creating new traditions, and finding ways to honour their loved ones. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and it's important to give yourself permission to do what feels best for you, and implement boundaries for yourself where required. It's okay if you don't feel up to participating in your usual festivities, but seeking support from family and friends may help you to feel less alone.

Whilst everyone will manage their grief differently, there are some ways we can remember loved ones during the festive season.

## Share Memories

Don't be afraid to talk about the person who died. It is important for people to know their loved one is being remembered. If appropriate, share memories, photos or funny stories of the person.

## Set a place at the table

A simple way to honour your loved ones, is to set a place at the family dinner table. This allows families to hold space for the person.

You could also honour your loved one by having a memorial ornament on the Christmas tree, or hanging a Christmas stocking for them.

## Light a candle

Lighting a remembrance candle is a simple way to honour lost loved ones, and is a symbolic way to bring light into your home. You can even choose a scent they loved.

## Toast to your loved one

When gathered with friends and family, take a moment to mention your passed loved ones, and share a toast in their memory.











## Our language matters

The way we communicate about mental health and wellbeing, mental health concerns, suicide, and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) can have either a positive or negative impact on a person's life. The words we choose to use can make all the difference. When talking about mental health and suicide, consider using the following language:

 <b>Consider the language you use</b>		
Issue	Problematic	Preferred
Presenting suicide as a desired outcome	✗ 'successful suicide' 'unsuccessful suicide'	✓ 'died by suicide' 'took their own life'
Associating suicide with crime or sin	✗ 'committed suicide' 'commit suicide'	✓ 'took their own life' 'died by suicide'
Sensationalising suicide	✗ 'suicide epidemic'	✓ 'increasing rates' 'higher rates'
Language glamourising a suicide attempt	✗ 'failed suicide' 'suicide bid'	✓ 'suicide attempt' 'non-fatal attempt'
Gratuitous use of the term 'suicide'	✗ 'political suicide' 'suicide mission'	✓ refrain from using the term suicide out of context
 EVERYMIND  Mindframe  mindframe-media.info		

For more information, visit <https://mindframe.org.au/>

## Support Services

BEYOND BLUE: 1300 224 636

HEADSPACE: 1800 650 890

HERE FOR YOU: 1800 437 348

KIDS HELPLINE: 1800 551 800

LIFELINE: 13 11 14 (24-HOURS)

MENSLINE: 1300 789 978

13YARN: 13 92 76

QLIFE: 1800 184 527

THIRRILI: 1800 805 801

STANDBY: 1300 727 247 (24-HOURS)

GRIEF LINE: 1300 845 745

RURAL LINK: 1800 552 002 (24-HOURS)

SUICIDE CALL BACK LINE: 1300 659 467

ALCOHOL & DRUG SUPPORT LINE: 1800 198 024



For more information on service providers available to the Great Southern, scan the QR code below or visit

<https://www.albany.wa.gov.au/documents/14774/great-southern-mental-health-service-providers>

