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Media Release

When Someone Says They're Not OK, Would You Know What to Do?

Ahead of **R U OK?** Day on Thursday 10 September, St John Ambulance SA is urging South Australians to do more than ask an important question: equip themselves with the skills and confidence to respond when the answer is “no”.

As mental health becomes an increasingly important part of conversations in homes, workplaces, sporting clubs and communities, many people still feel unsure about what to say or do when someone they know is struggling.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2020-22 National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing¹ found that two in five South Australians aged 16 to 85 — more than 564,000 people — have experienced a mental health disorder at some point in their lives. More than 304,000 experienced one in the previous 12 months alone.

For more than 140 years, St John SA has helped South Australians prepare to step forward when someone needs help. Its established two-day Mental Health First Aid course builds on that first aid foundation, giving adults a practical way to recognise the signs of a mental health problem, start a supportive conversation and help someone connect with professional and other supports.

St John Ambulance SA Chief Executive Associate Professor Steve Morris said R U OK? was a timely prompt to check in with others, but the conversation should not end with the question.

"**R U OK?** Day reminds us to ask the question, but the moment that matters most may come next: what do you do when someone says, 'No, I'm not OK'?" Associate Professor Morris said.

"Being ready is not about having all the answers. It is about noticing that something has changed, listening without judgement and helping someone take the next step."

The course covers early signs of common mental health problems including anxiety, depression, substance use problems and psychosis, as well as how to respond when a

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release>

situation becomes more serious. Participants learn to use an evidence-based action plan to approach someone, offer appropriate initial support and encourage professional help.

Mental Health First Aid does not train participants to diagnose, treat or counsel. Like physical first aid, it equips ordinary people to provide practical initial help until professional support is available.

"South Australians know and trust St John to teach first aid because our training is practical, evidence-based and focused on helping people act when it counts," Associate Professor Morris said.

"Mental Health First Aid builds on that same foundation. The problem may be less visible, but the need to respond can be just as real."

Participants who complete St John SA's two-day course receive a Certificate of Attendance and are eligible to undertake a short online assessment through Mental Health First Aid Australia. Those who pass become Accredited Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAiders), with accreditation valid for three years.

For course information and bookings, visit stjohnsa.com.au/courses/mhfa.

About St John Ambulance SA

St John Ambulance SA is a not-for-profit organisation which has been supporting South Australians for more than 140 years. As a first responder, St John Ambulance staff and volunteers offer frontline operational and clinical services by attending community and sporting events at major venues across South Australia. St John provides health and medical services, first aid training and products, and delivers community and social programs.

Core activities include non-emergency patient transport for hospitals, care providers and aeromedical services; emergency management support to agencies including the CFS, SES and National Parks during major incidents; operations training to maintain strong clinical capability across the workforce; and operations support and logistics to manage equipment, vehicles and statewide readiness.

Wellbeing is at the heart of everything St John does - helping to ensure a safer, healthier community.

To arrange an interview, please call Verity Edwards at Hughes PR on 0412 678 942.