Good morning everybody.

I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, I pay my respect to their elders both past and present.

I'm actually going to spend a moment on what the Prime Minister said and thank him for his words.

It's a galling thing when you're Leader of the Opposition that the Prime Minister yells slogans at you one day, and you think oh why did he do that?

But then occasionally he gives a speech like that and I think, you're not too bad after all. It really was a good set of words.

Mind you, by Question Time that thought will be erased.

I'd like to thank Mike Kelly and Andrew Wallace filling in for Julian Leeser for bringing all of us here today.

We've got the Shadow Minister Julie Collins and we've got the Minister Greg Hunt.

Yesterday afternoon when I was preparing my words for this morning, I stopped to think about people I'd known who'd taken their own lives. And you start to construct that list.
I'm sure I'm not unique. I think most Australians find out after the event, someone they liked or loved has taken their own life.

As I got thinking about it, I could think of about seven people I knew. I actually stopped there. Because I knew the longer I thought, I could think of families with their kids and other people.

The thing about these people I thought about, is that they remain forever young.

You can still imagine them. You can remember not everything that you should, but you can remember some of their jokes perhaps, some of their ideas, some of their abilities.

I think about RUOK and I thought what could we have done then, what could I have done then?

And what has been done today to help this be prevented in the future.

I think about each of these people, and I went through the process of writing down their names just to start reconstructing.

Because you don't always think about the people who have passed, you move on, the events move on.

And I think, was there some sign that they weren't well? Was there some signal, some marker?

Is there something you could have done differently?

Some of the people I think of were teenagers, highly-talented. They seemed to be very successful at everything they did. But inside they were battling illness and great, great depression.

And when I thought about seven people I could think of I was reminded that seven Australians take their life on average every day, and possibly seven more will today. Every single day.

It is a silent crisis at the heart of our nation.

I'm sure all of you have sat with parents at their table when they're numb with incomprehension, when they're shattered by grief. When they're trying to write words to say farewell to their child or their adult child, taken too soon.

I still recall a school assembly where the school captain or someone very senior in the school said he died on a train, that's what we were told. It was only years after that I found out that was the way the school dealt with the fact that he had taken his own life.
And you do think about what you could have done.

I think about veterans who are let down by the nation that they served.

Seven Australians – every day.

And what I wanted to say is that these are preventable deaths – we are not talking about a terminal condition, some dreadful metastasising cancer spread throughout a human body.

These deaths are preventable, there is nothing inevitable about suicide.

And we know that expert assistance can make the difference but it is in short supply.

Our emergency departments work very well. If you turn up with say chest pains, terrible chest pains I reckon nearly all of the time you'll get the right diagnosis and the care is there.

When I was talking to Professor Pat McGorry who is here today, you know and he worries that you can turn up to an emergency department and you've got a very serious case of potential self-harm, or as a suicide risk.

Do we have the resources there to the same proportion as a medical condition, another medical condition? I don't think we do.

And I know every Member of Parliament here regardless of their political affiliation will have constituents who come to them desperate, red-eyed saying I've got a child, an adult child who really needs that sub-acute care. And the search for the beds that aren’t there.

We know that suicide is the scourge of rural and regional communities.

It takes a shocking toll on our people in the bush.

We know the suicide rate is twice as high amongst our First Australians, Pat Dodson has written movingly about those nights when his phone rings with the tragic news that another young person in the Kimberley has taken their life.

We know, as Mike Kelly alluded to, that suicide is more common and more frequently attempted by young LGBTI Australians grappling with their sexuality, fearing rejection. Completely alienated and unsure of where they fit in.

And we all do have a responsibility to call-out that hateful discrimination and language, particularly in the weeks ahead.
The simple truth is no part of our nation has a wall tall enough to keep the scourge of suicide from that postcode. Suicide is no respecter of ethnicity, of income.

It does not care which god you pray to, or who you love, it affects every Australian and therefore it is within the power of every Australian to do something about it.

We live in a world where it has been easier than ever to see what our friends and our family are up to.

I remember when I was a backpacker 25 years ago, I could be back home before any of the postcards which I had sent to Mum and Dad.

These days you feel like you're on everybody else's holiday half the time, as soon as you turn on the computer.

Australians aged between 15 and 24 spend an average of around 18 hours a week online.

And while social media has a tremendous ability to bring us closer together, Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat also create emotional distance. A carefully-curated view of each other's lives: exotic holidays, glamorous events, fun nights out, fancy meals.

We have now got a situation where before teenagers will eat the food, they will photograph it.

But the challenge for us is to look beyond the superficial snapshots of endless good times, to go further than simply clicking 'like' and scrolling on down the feed.

It's about digging a bit deeper.

And in conclusion, that's why we are here.

It's time to make that call, to send a message, to drop-in for a visit – to really see how someone is going.

I actually think Parliamentarians are well placed to understand RUOK Day.

We've all seen our own challenges with mental health, I think previously in this parliament.

In this very large building with thousands of people, it can be hard and isolating experience.

It is important that RUOK day occurs because it is a reminder that we need to distinguish and not let the urgent distract us from the important.
There is always time to:

- Ask
- Listen
- Encourage action
- And check-in

There is always time to start a conversation.

I think about all the people that I have known - and I am not sure I could have done anything then to change something.

But I wish that I knew then what I know now, and was able to ask these people: 'Are you ok?'

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