



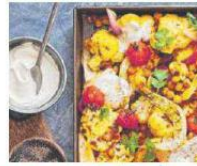
**MONEY STEER**  
Cars teaching kids about finances P2



**SQUAT SQUAD**  
Michelle Bridges on the craze P3



**HOME SOURCE**  
Meals made from your pantry P8



**SAD FAREWELL**  
Hannah doesn't want Ted to go P4

## A higher calling

**AS LIFELINE CELEBRATES 60 YEARS OF HELPING AUSSIES, THE NEED FOR VOLUNTEERS IS RISING WITH THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS**

### WELLBEING

PATRICK TADROS

Cost-of-living pressures are triggering a record demand for help, support and food across the nation as many Australians struggle to make ends meet.

Data by Lifeline's search engine shows there were more than 26,000 searches for assistance and support in January, the highest on record.

Referral searches by Lifeline's helpline counsellors specifically relating to financial issues and homelessness went up 49 per cent between August and January.

The crisis support organisation – which celebrates its 60th birthday this week – is calling for more volunteers to work in their centres, due to the “significant increase in demand for financial support, including food distribution”, says Lifeline Australia CEO Colin Seery.

“We are seeing this happen right now, all across the country,” he says.

“Our centres are reporting an increase in help seekers who have never experienced financial stress before. And we know cost-of-living pressures also disproportionately impact the most vulnerable, including people who are unemployed, renters and young families.”

While demand for its services has remained high, volunteer hours are beginning to reduce.

“This is not unexpected, given the levels of volunteer fatigue coming out of lockdowns and the fact that

people, now able to attend work and social events, have less free time,” Lifeline Australia director Chris Siorokos says. “The well-reported drop off in volunteering across Australia is impacting us, just as it is for other charities.”

“We have estimated that we need an additional 100 crisis supporter hours per week to reach an above 90 per cent call answer rate, based on current call levels. This is the equivalent of 25 crisis supporters doing four-hour shifts.”

### ON THE FRONTLINE

People like Tess Jackson, 28, have been more than willing to lend a hand in a crisis and are encouraging more people to do the same.

The Sydney-based program manager works full-time and volunteers for a four-hour shift at Lifeline every fortnight. She shares what it is like to be a volunteer.

“The pandemic left a destructive path of humanitarian, social and economic crises ... Australians were impacted in a multitude of ways, and it became clear to me how many people were struggling psychologically,” Jackson says.

“I simultaneously recognised my privilege and realised I was in a position to help and contribute, so I signed up for a Lifeline information session and the rest is history.”

She says being a volunteer crisis supporter is often rewarding, but doesn't come without challenges. Her second phone call was from a young girl who was suicidal.

“She was coherent and relaxed when I picked up the phone, and it



Tess Jackson, 28, says it's an honour to be a Lifeline volunteer.

wasn't obvious that she was in the process of ending her own life,” Jackson says.

“After about 15 minutes, her voice began to fade, she became extremely confused and her breathing changed. We alerted emergency services and were able to provide her with the help she needed in time. I truly believe Lifeline's service saved her that day.”

Then there was the gentleman whose home was affected by last year's floods. “He was standing in his flood-damaged house, with his phone about to be cut off, \$10 to his name and waiting on a government disaster payment,” Jackson says. “His stress levels were high and he didn't know how he was going to get his next meal, expressing he just couldn't do it

### Welcome rewards

#### Benefits of volunteering:

- Gives us empathy and a deeper understanding for the challenges faced by others as they deal with life issues.
- Growing research shows helping others has a positive wellbeing impact for those who choose to help.
- Recalibrates how we see challenges as we look at them informed by what others are facing.
- Teaches us about limits we face in our lives – we cannot solve every problem we or others face.
- By committing time to help others we become better at prioritising issues of importance in our own lives.

Source: Motivational psychologist Eve Ash

any more. I sat with his pain, and we organised a welfare check to keep him safe.”

### ANSWER THE CALL

Confronted with crises on every shift, Jackson is constantly reminded of her faith in humanity.

“From the strength of callers on their darkest days and the power of connection between two humans, to being able to provide a safe space for someone and working with them to explore options for support,” she says.

“It's an honour and privilege to take calls from Australians in their time of crisis.”

Motivational psychologist Eve Ash says volunteering can be beneficial. “Mental health is so prominent and covers a wide range of emotions, from feeling down or general anxiety to dealing with extreme trauma,” she says.

“Volunteering as a health and wellbeing support can provide us with a sense of perspective as we seek to deal with issues in our own life.”

If you or someone you know are feeling overwhelmed, phone Lifeline on 13 11 14. To volunteer or donate, visit lifeline.org.au

## DOING LIFE

WITH JOE HILDEBRAND



Tune in every Wednesday for our SMARTdaily columnist's guide to serving time in suburbia

### ALL WORK, NO PLAY

THERE is currently a push in Australia to cut the working week from five days to four days.

Meanwhile there is a push in South Korea to increase the working week from 52 hours to 69 hours.

This alone probably tells you everything you need to know about those two countries.

But it's also proof of yet another weird post-pandemic problem that has emerged: Nobody really knows how much

they work anymore. Ever since the chattering classes have been allowed to work from home and never really came back to the office, the line between work and family hasn't so much been blurred as completely erased so that the personal and professional parts of people's lives are now just one gluggy mess.

Even as I write this I am pulled over in the family car on the way to a job for one boss while filing this copy for another, my last Zoom meeting was held at school pickup and my inbox is constantly interrupted by YouTube videos

about Minecraft and tweens doing shopping dares at Target.

What sort of hellscape have we created for ourselves?

Compounding the problem is that work is like a gas. It expands to fill whatever space it is given. And so when there are no boundaries to work it just keeps piling up ad infinitum.

There will always be something else to do and it will always be the person already working the most who will do it.

As the old saying goes, if you want something done, ask a busy person. And it's a saying everyone

in my working life seems to be very familiar with.

But maybe that gas can also be compressed.

Maybe if we officially reduce the working week to four days, everyone will just do five days worth of work in the same time – or at least the ones who do all the work in the first place.

On the other hand there is also merit in extending the working week to 69 hours – at least it would give Sally Rugg only one extra hour to complain about.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go. My other boss is calling.