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# Kids left to bear brunt of suicide

**| Angela Pownall**

Alan Miller was only 35 when he took his own life, leaving behind his wife and two children.

His daughter Alison Xamon, who was 11 at the time, says her beloved father also left behind a lifetime of grief and trauma for her and her brother.

Almost 36 years on, Ms Xamon, a former Greens MP, has spoken about his death to raise awareness of the impact of a parent's suicide on their children.

His death also spurred Ms Xamon, president of the WA Association for Mental Health, to drive the creation of Australia's first specialist long-term support service for children bereaved by suicide.

"It's been a desperate need to try to make sense of what happened to me and to ensure that there is something in place for children in the future," Ms Xamon said.

The State Government will

today announce a pilot service for children aged six to 18.

Ms Xamon, who is also on the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention, which advises the Government, said that research showed a child who lost a parent to suicide was three to four times more likely to take their own life.

The Rev. Miller, a Uniting Church minister in Perth's northern suburbs, died in October 1980 after suffering severe depression.

Ms Xamon said she was not offered support afterwards.

She urged suicidal parents not to believe their children would be better off without them.

"It's not a burden to your children to be alive, no matter how unwell you are," Ms Xamon said.

"It's a burden to your children to take your life. All you do is shift the pain from yourself to your children."

**If you are or someone you know is thinking of suicide, phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 or visit [lifelinewa.org.au](http://lifelinewa.org.au)**