

12 March 2018

Interim Mental Health Support for Young People in Lithgow

Interim mental health support is being made available for young people in Lithgow in response to the high rates of psychological distress among youth in the area, ahead of the launch of the new headspace outreach service due later this year.

As part of the Federal Government's package to support youth anxiety and depression, announced in February, Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network (NBMPHN), will commission the new Lithgow outreach headspace service, expected in mid-2018.

Young residents of Lithgow, aged between 12 to 25 years old, who hold a current Centrelink issued Health Care Card, can now access up to 12 sessions of free or low cost (\$10) psychological services through a referral from their GP.

Lizz Reay, CEO of Wentworth Healthcare said, "It is important that young people in Lithgow experiencing psychological distress can access the support they need, while we work with headspace to establish the service in the coming months."

In order to further improve access for young people to timely psychological support, NBMPHN is also developing an additional referral pathway through Lithgow High School's Wellbeing Centre. This would allow students in need of support to access one or two sessions, with a mental health practitioner, prior to being assessed and referred by a GP.

"This innovative localised solution, set-up in collaboration with healthcare providers and Lithgow High School, demonstrates what Primary Health Networks can do to address local health needs. We understand our community and we can create tailored solutions to meet our community's needs," said Ms Reay.

"This Friday 16 March, the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence, serves as a reminder that young people who are victims of bullying, are at increased risk of poor mental health and suicide. Early intervention is critical, which is why support like this in schools is so important."

"We know that in recent times a significant spike in suicides in the Lithgow area has deeply affected the community. This is why wellbeing support in Lithgow High School is so vital. To be able to react to an identified need like this, and find a way of providing greater local mental health support by re-aligning funding at a regional level, is at the heart of why Primary Health Networks were put in place," she said.

NBMPHN has also commissioned Wesley LifeForce to deliver free suicide prevention education and training workshops in Lithgow during March and April 2018. These programs will specifically target members of the community who may have a gatekeeper role; for example teachers, sports coaches etc. and will equip them with the tools to recognise and help someone who may be at risk. For more information or to register go to www.nbmphn.com.au/WesleyLifeForce.

To find out what other mental health support is available in Lithgow, visit www.mentalhealthhelp.com.au an online tool developed by NBMPHN in conjunction with the community. This site provides general mental health advice and localised information on mental health services, supports, advocacy and programs.

Kids Helpline, a free phone counselling line, is available 24/7 on 1800 55 1800 (for young people aged 5 to 25). If you need immediate crisis support, Lifeline is available 24/7 on 13 11 14.

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The Nepean Blue Mountains PHN is a program run by
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Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith.

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