

**10 November 2023**

## **Free Community Event to Welcome Home the Historic Hawkesbury Paddlewheeler**

The return of the historic Hawkesbury Paddlewheeler has provided a stage for the local community to come together and focus on some of the positive steps taken towards recovery following the devastation of the floods.

Once an institution in the local area and a major tourist attraction, the Paddlewheeler suffered major damage in the floods of February 2021, March 2022 and July 2022, when raging flood waters washed the boat downstream from Windsor to Lower Portland, then onto Wisemans Ferry. The boat sustained major damage from hitting the riverbank and debris as it was pushed out of control down the river. It was not until January this year that the Paddlewheeler could be moved to the marina at Brooklyn for repairs.

The Return to Windsor Gala Day, on Saturday 18 November, is being coordinated by the Windsor Experience Group and has been made possible by funding received from Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, as part of their Community Wellbeing and Resilience Grants program. These Grants, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, support the wellbeing and resilience of flood affected communities, allowing them to choose their own way to respond to the losses, anxiety and distress they have experienced.

CEO of Wentworth Healthcare, Lizz Reay, said that the compounding trauma from numerous disasters, like drought, bushfires and floods, in addition to pressures from the pandemic, have taken their toll on many Hawkesbury residents.

“We know it can sometimes take several years for people to realise the huge impact that these traumas can have on their mental health. So, whilst it may seem like these disasters are in the past, the impacts of these events on this community are still being felt,” said Ms Reay.

“Research shows the importance of people coming together, socialising and providing informal support to each other after a natural disaster. This is particularly relevant to the Hawkesbury community that has been severely affected in recent times. The funding of this event focuses on social cohesion and connectedness, supporting mental health healing, and building on the existing strength of the community by encouraging post-trauma growth,” she said.

“The people of Hawkesbury have been through a lot, and they deserve the opportunity to come together to celebrate their recovery through positive community connections that events like the Return to Windsor Gala Day can provide,” she added.

Federal Member for Macquarie, Susan Templeman, said “This event, to celebrate the return of the Hawkesbury Paddlewheeler to its home in Windsor, is a real testament to the tenacity and commitment of Captain Ian Burns. Seeing the Paddlewheeler back in action will be a terrific moment of recovery for the whole community, as its distinctive presence has been missed. I’m proud that the federal government has been able to support this event and others like it that help enrich our sense of community.”

The Return to Windsor Gala Day is free to attend will be held on Saturday 18 November from 7:00am – 3:00pm at Windsor Wharf. There will be a range of entertainers throughout the day, food, drinks and some market stalls.



If you, or someone you know is struggling, there is free mental health support available. Call Head to Health on **1800 595 212** Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 5:00pm. When calling the number, you will be put through to a local mental health clinician who knows the region. They will listen to your needs and help you find the support that’s right for you, and your individual needs.