

24 June 2021

Grass-roots Community Grants support bushfire affected communities in Hawkesbury

As part of the Federal Government's \$76 million 'Supporting the Mental Health of Australians Affected by the 2019/20 Bushfires' package, Primary Health Networks were provided with funding to support the mental health, wellbeing, resilience and recovery of communities in impacted areas through initiatives such as community grants.

Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, launched the first phase of their 'Community Wellbeing Grants' last year and have now provided funding to 40 individuals to conduct small grass-roots, community connection activities across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Lithgow areas.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, acknowledged the challenges many communities within the region have faced over the past 18 months and emphasised the important role that these Community Wellbeing Grants play in aiding community recovery.

"We know that community connection and cohesion is vital for community recovery during and after times of adversity," said Ms Reay.

"Our communities know their people and are best placed to know what they need in terms of support. The first phase of our Grants have focussed on small community-led initiatives that bring people together and allow them to choose their own way to respond to the loss, anxiety and distress they have experienced," she said.

Some of the activities funded so far include local craft events, mindfulness workshops, dance lessons, picnics, live music and more. A full list of funded activities is available on Wentworth Healthcare's website.

Kim Crambrook was given a micro-grant of up to \$1,000 to host a high tea and information session on child car seat restraints and child first aid for 20 mums at Hawkesbury Community Outreach Services.

"It is so important for mums to connect, not only for mental health but socialising their children too. It takes a village to raise a child, as the saying goes, and these days we are often removed from family support; so knowing that there are community members and other mums you can chat too if you are feeling down or overwhelmed is a very valuable thing to have," said Ms Crambrook.

Event attendee, Lea, said her daughter was born in the peak of the bushfires and just before COVID-19.

"I very quickly had no access to all the regular places you would meet other new mums like myself. I lost confidence in seeking out other mums and children," she said.

“I found both presentations very informative and easy to understand. Attending this community event gave me the confidence to start attending regular playgroup. My daughter and I attended our very first session the following week where I met some lovely local mothers, and she had fun mixing with some local children.”

Senator Marise Payne said the government was continuing to support the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains on the road to recovery.

“While these projects are small in scale, they have a large and important impact on residents still grappling with impact of the bushfires,” Senator Payne said.

“I commend the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network and the grantees for their ongoing work which is having a real difference on the ground.”

Wentworth Healthcare is still accepting applications for their ‘micro-grants’ of up to \$1,000 which will remain open **until funding is exhausted**. The second phase of their Community Wellbeing Grants which included larger grants of up to \$10,000 closed in mid-May and are currently being assessed. The outcome of these Grants will be announced in the coming months.

For more information on the ‘up to \$1,000’ grants, including how to apply, visit www.nbmphn.com.au/communitygrants

- END -

For interviews or further information contact:

Krystle Goulding

Communications Project Officer

T 02 4708 8199

E Krystle.Goulding@nbmphn.com.au

Bess Bosman

Communications Manager – Marketing & Media

T 02 4708 8148

M 0438 261 015

E bess.bosman@nbmphn.com.au