

## Taking University to the Streets

The region's first 'Street University' will be established in Penrith by the end of the year and will provide a free community space that embraces young people's art, music and culture while providing early intervention for addiction and mental health issues.

Announced today by Minister for Health, The Hon Greg Hunt MP, the 'Street University' concept engages and motivates young people and helps them develop new abilities and opportunities while assisting them with personal health or social issues.

Funding for this service is provided by the Federal Government's Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Treatment Programs through the Primary Health Network.

Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, has commissioned the concept's founder, the Ted Noffs Foundation, to design and operate the Penrith service, building on the success of the seven existing 'Street Universities' across Australia.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay said, "We are excited to be able to bring this innovative youth service to the streets of Penrith."

"Essential to what we do as a Primary Health Network, and as a regional health planning and funding body, is knowing our region and understanding the primary healthcare needs of our community," she said.

"Our region has been lacking addiction support services and particularly services that engage with young people in a non-clinical setting."

"To be able to respond to an identified need like this, and to provide greater local support to young people struggling with mental health and addiction issues, is at the heart of why Primary Health Networks were put in place," she added.

The 'Street University' uses art, dance, music, theatre, design, writing and technology to engage young people while providing more traditional services such as addiction and mental health counselling, along with educational and vocational training. Research shows that the combination of engagement and treatment leads to a wide range of positive outcomes for young people.

Ted Noffs Foundation CEO, Matt Noffs said, "The 'Street University' is a non-residential drug treatment model. Across our services we see a 60% drop in crime, over 50% drop in drug use, with many ceasing use altogether, and significant reductions in suicidal ideation post-treatment. But the success really comes from the fact that while the treatment aspect is based on the best evidence out there, each centre is co-designed with the young people themselves."

Federal Member for Lindsay, Melissa McIntosh MP said, "Today the Minister for Health and I met with participants and mentors who will be involved in the Ted Noff Foundation's Street University program. Early intervention and preventative health programs are a passion of mine and I look forward to seeing how 'Street University' will directly help young people in our community. This is part of a collaborative approach between the Morrison Government and our local PHN and I will continue to advocate for more funding and programs that deliver successful outcomes."

The Penrith 'Street University' will also be home to specific programs for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander young people, based on connection to country and cultural identity. In addition, these programs will be delivered through schools and community venues throughout the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Penrith and Lithgow Local Government Areas. They will include culturally safe case management for those young people who need addiction or mental health support.

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The Nepean Blue Mountains PHN is a program run by  
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works to improve health for the communities of Blue Mountains,  
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