

5 March 2024

headspace Hawkesbury Officially Opens

The new headspace Hawkesbury centre was officially opened on Friday 1 March, by the Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health, together with Susan Templeman MP, Member for Macquarie.

headspace Hawkesbury is federally funded through Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, who commissioned Uniting NSW.ACT to establish the service. The full-service centre provides free early intervention support to young people aged 12-25 years across mental health, physical health, work and study, and alcohol and other drug needs. The official launch welcomed stakeholders from across the region who played a part in helping to secure and establish the centre, including young people from the community. It was an opportunity for people to come together to celebrate the successful opening of a new service to benefit young people in the local area.

Lizz Reay, CEO of Wentworth Healthcare, said they have worked closely with Uniting NSW.ACT to deliver a service that addresses the increasing mental health needs of the Hawkesbury region, where anxiety and depression are two of the top five most prevalent diagnoses. It is estimated that of those aged 5-17 years in the Hawkesbury, over a quarter have mental health needs or are affected by a mental health disorder.

“We are passionate about improving the mental health of our local communities and know there is a real need for ongoing services in the Hawkesbury. headspace services play a vital role in supporting young people and their mental health, as well as their family and friends. Young people in the Hawkesbury have been through so much over the past few years, from drought to bushfires, a pandemic and multiple floods. Early intervention programs such as headspace are critical as they not only impact young people’s lives in the present but can influence the whole community as these young people mature into adulthood,” she said.

“Together with the community, we have been advocating for over seven years for additional youth mental health services in the Hawkesbury and are proud to finally open this headspace centre. The addition of headspace Hawkesbury means that our region now has a headspace in every local government area, adding to headspace Katoomba, Lithgow and Penrith,” said Ms Reay.

To meet the needs of the region, the headspace centre has been co-designed by the community creating a space designed by young people, for young people. Through the planning process, Uniting NSW.ACT conducted a series of focus groups, interviews and surveys to gather information from 129 young people across the Hawkesbury area, as well as parents, carers and others, like teachers, school counsellors, psychologists and youth officers. This information helped inform all aspects of the centre, from the floorplan, furnishings and colours to the ways that headspace information is presented to young people. With the help of community consultation, the service is also providing permanent outreach in Windsor. This is in addition to outreach services still being provided in North Richmond through Flood Grant Funding.

Chantal Nagib, Head of Recovery at Uniting NSW.ACT, said they are thrilled to see the new permanent headspace site in Hawkesbury open its doors.

“Our dedicated team is committed to working with Wentworth Healthcare to provide the mental health support this community so desperately needs. With our experience in operating headspace



Katoomba and Penrith in this region, and recent outreach services in the Hawkesbury, we are well placed to deliver this new headspace centre,” said Ms Nagib.

“It is refreshing to see the promise of this centre become a reality. We are energised to get on with the job of providing face-to-face support for the young people who need it most. We want to reassure the community that headspace Hawkesbury offers a safe place for all young people to seek the help and care they need for all their mental health concerns,” she added.

Leah Venables, a member of the headspace Hawkesbury Youth Advisory Committee said “It’s going to be so great to know that young people have a safe space to go, regardless of their backgrounds and current situations. I’ve seen a lot of young people struggle to find help in this area.”

“Having a headspace centre available in such an easily accessible area is so incredibly important. It’s going to be really rewarding to see how beneficial the new services will be to the community,” she said.

Jason Trethowan, headspace CEO, said: “Nearly 40 per cent of young people in Australia aged 16 to 24 have experienced a mental health disorder in the previous year. That’s why the work happening at headspace Hawkesbury, and at headspace centres across the country, is so important.

Providing young people with a place where they can get friendly and inclusive mental health services is at the core of all we do at headspace. Young people are resilient and, with support from organisations like headspace, they can and do weather tough times to get back on track.”

Located behind the Richmond Mall complex at **120 Francis Street**, the centre provides young people with easy access being close to transport, parking and shops. The headspace centre is open 9 am – 5 pm weekdays, except public holidays. Afterhours appointments can be made from 5 pm – 6 pm by individual arrangement. Outreach is provided every Thursday at **North Richmond Community Centre** from 10 am – 5 pm and every Friday at **Old Hawkesbury Hospital, 6 Christie Street, Windsor** from 9 am – 5 pm, except public holidays. Young people can walk-in at any of these locations during their opening hours. No appointment or referral is needed.