

Strengthened headspace Devonport service a step towards better youth mental health outcomes

23 November 2020

The recent opening of a full headspace centre in Devonport is a significant step towards securing better mental health outcomes for young people in Tasmania's north west.

That's according to Rebecca Wells, an Ulverstone local, and one of the young north west headspace volunteers who helped shape the new-and-improved site.

Doors opened at the new headspace Devonport centre on 3 November as part of an Australian Government-supported expansion of mental health services for young people living in Tasmania's north west.

A special event will be held today to celebrate the upgrade, up until which Cornerstone Youth Services had been running headspace Devonport as a smaller 'satellite' site.

Rebecca says a key benefit of the 'one-stop-shop' nature of the new centre – within which young people can access family planning and alcohol and other drug support, as well as mental health services – is that young people aren't deterred by the prospect of telling their story multiple times.

"Young people need to know there is a safe place in their community where they can go to get the help they need," the 22-year-old psychology student says.

"It's really important that they don't have to retell their story more than necessary, because in the worst-case scenarios, doing that can prevent someone from seeking the service they need."

headspace Devonport data suggests young Tasmanians living in the north west seek out mental health support for feelings of sadness and depression at a higher rate than the national average.

It's a statistical insight Youth Reference Group member Rebecca says reinforces the importance of young people getting help early so they don't fall through a treatment 'gap'.

"Depression is a really serious destination to arrive at, and we need to support prevention if we want to get those numbers down," she says.

Other reasons for seeking support include feeling down, worried, or stressed about family, relationships, or school.

As part of the move to the new Oldaker Street site, headspace Devonport's staff was able to expand to include clinical psychologists, social workers, nurses with specialist skills in mental health and youth support, as well as vocational support workers.

Cornerstone Youth Services chief executive David O'Sign says the new centre – which is considerably larger than the previous satellite and showcases distinctly Tasmanian decorative features – has bolstered access to mental health support for people aged 12 to 25 in the north west community.

“We knew young people in the state’s north west needed a greater level of support, and although it’s early days at the new centre, we now feel we’re in a better position to deliver it,” Mr O’Sign says.

“By growing our service, we’ve been able to recruit even more team members who are passionate about providing young people in the north west with direct, sensitive, and tailored support.

“So it’s not just about having a new, bigger building – it’s about putting the right people in it.”

Primary Health Tasmania chief executive Phil Edmondson agrees it is invaluable to have a highly visible, well-trusted youth mental health service for early intervention and mild-to-moderate mental illness further embedded in the north west community.

“We were thrilled to support Devonport in joining Launceston and Hobart by getting its own full headspace centre,” Mr Edmondson said.

“Young Tasmanians in the north west deserve to be able to get the help they need, when they need it, within their own community.”

- ENDS -

About headspace

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds. Each year, headspace helps thousands of young people access vital support through our headspace centres in 124 communities across Australia¹, our online and phone counselling services, our vocational services, and our presence in schools. headspace can help young people with mental health, physical health (including sexual health) alcohol and other drug services, and work and study support. Centre details, as well as factsheets and resources for young people and their families and friends, can be located on the headspace website: headspace.org.au

² As at September 2020 and inclusive of licensed headspace centres, satellites and outposts