

16 February 2024

Community Celebrates Flood Recovery at Festival on the Fields

Last Saturday, 10 February, over 400 locals enjoyed the Festival on the Fields event at Cougar Park, home of the Colo Soccer Football Club. This free event provided a well-deserved opportunity for the local community to come together and focus on some of the positive steps taken towards recovery following the devastation of the floods.

The Festival on the Fields was organised by Colo Soccer Football Club and 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 Federal Government, 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.

Colo Soccer Football Club was severely affected by the multiple flood events that hit the Hawkesbury region during 2021-2022. The Club suffered significant infrastructure damage and losses that impacted the local sporting community and families who rely on the facilities. Many of the volunteers who assisted the club in the clean up after each flood event, were also personally affected by the floods. Event organisers, Colo Soccer Football Club, said that this event was a chance for the Club to thank volunteers for their support and to lift the spirits of the extended community. The organisers said that Sharon Bell was the driving force behind the event, from the first application through the grant process and to the delivery of the event. The Club would like to thank Sharon and everyone involved in the event planning for such a wonderful event.

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 Festival on the Fields provide,” she added.

Federal Member for Macquarie, Susan Templeman, attended the event and congratulated Colo Soccer Football Club on the initiative and thanked Wentworth Healthcare for getting the funds out to the community.

“It takes communities years to really come back from a flood like the ones we saw, and this funding is designed to assist that process of recovery.”



“While I love seeing kids playing soccer on these fields, I was really impressed with the professional set-up of Festival on the Fields, and the terrific musician line-up.”

“It was an ideal venue for music and relaxing and was just the sort of free community event that can help people reconnect.”

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, 8.30 am – 5.00 pm. 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.

The permanent Hawkesbury Head to Health satellite service is now open and provides free mental health support in a safe and welcoming environment for people experiencing distress or crisis. It also supports those wanting to find other mental health support for themselves, or someone they care about. Located at 1-2 Musson Lane in Richmond, the service is open for walk-ins without the need of a prior appointment, from 1 pm – 5 pm Monday to Saturday, with extended hours on Thursday and Saturday until 7 pm.

For young people aged 12-25 years, the new Hawkesbury headspace centre at 120 Francis Street, Richmond is open 9 am – 5 pm weekdays, except Public Holidays. Permanent outreach is also provided in Windsor at the Old Hawkesbury Hospital, 6 Christie Street, twice a week on Fridays from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (except public holidays). Young people can walk-in at either location during these times. No appointment or referral is needed.