Blue Mountains Mental Health Forum: Suicide Prevention

In the Nepean Blue Mountains Region, suicide rates have risen since 2013 and continue to be higher than the NSW average. The region is the second highest in NSW for reporting high or very high psychological distress, and there has been a significant increase in the levels of psychological distress in people 16 years and older. These levels are even higher for the Aboriginal community.

Local consultations indicate that the actual incidence of suicidal behaviours and risk is likely to be underestimated, because the community is not adequately aware of the warning signs that point to risk or how to support people who may display these behaviours.

Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network (NBMPHN), with the support of the Mental Health Professionals Network, is holding a Blue Mountains Mental Health Networking Forum: *Suicide Prevention across the Lifespan*. Organised by the local Blue Mountains Mental Health Shared Care Committee, a joint initiative of NBMPHN, Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District and the Blue Mountains Mental Health Community & Cultural Development Consumers and Carers Group, this Forum aims to facilitate local GPs, clinical practitioners, health workers, service providers, members of the community, schools, parents and carers to network, express their views and stay informed about locally relevant mental health and psychosocial issues.

Lizz Reay, CEO of Wentworth Healthcare said, "We know that mental health and suicide are complex issues that are influenced by a number of interacting psychological, social and cultural factors, and that it is important to take a holistic, community-centred approach."

"Community participation in events like this is important, as it helps reduce the stigma of suicide, raises awareness of mental health related issues and creates the opportunity to discuss suicide prevention strategies," she said.

The Blue Mountains Mental Health Networking Forum: *Suicide Prevention across the Lifespan* is being held on **Tuesday 22 May** from **12:30pm - 4:00pm**, at the **Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub**, 104-108 Macquarie Road, Springwood. A free lunch will be provided from 12:00pm with the opportunity to network.

Register for the event online at www.nbmphn.com.au//MentalHealthForum or for more information, please contact Maddie Blunt on 4708 8100.

"Together with our community partners, we welcome anyone with an interest in mental health to attend this free event to hear from experts about suicide prevention, risks and indicators for suicide, and have their say about strategies for supporting the wellbeing of people who may be at-risk in our community," added Ms Reay.

To find out what other mental health support is available in the Blue Mountains, visit www.mentalhealthhelp.com.au an online tool developed by NBMPHN in conjunction with the community. This site provides general mental health advice and localised information on mental health services, supports, advocacy and programs.

Kids Helpline, a free phone counselling line, is available 24/7 on 1800 55 1800 (for young people aged 5 to 25).

If you need immediate crisis support, Lifeline is available 24/7 on 13 11 14.

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**The Nepean Blue Mountains PHN is a program run by
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