

14 June 2024

Mental Health Commission of NSW visit The Street University in Katoomba

On Thursday 13 June, Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network (NBMPHN), was proud to host delegates from the Mental Health Commission of NSW at two of their funded services in Katoomba and Lithgow.

Mental Health A/Commissioner Deborah Howe, together with two Deputy Commissioners, Pam Rutledge and Daniel Angus, visited The Street University Katoomba, while Deputy Commissioner Tim Heffernan and A/Director Operations and Engagement, Jason Arditi, visited headspace Lithgow.

The visit by the Mental Health Commission was part of a program of regional visits providing insight into the work of seventeen different organisations, across the Blue Mountains and Lithgow, offering the opportunity to hear first-hand about the specific challenges faced by people in the region and some the successful approaches being employed to help address them.

In Katoomba, The Street University had the delegates bopping to music and adding their tags to the graffiti wall. This unique service is free for young people (aged 12-25 years) and embraces art, music and culture while providing early intervention support for alcohol, drug, mental health and wellbeing concerns.

The Street University concept, developed by the Ted Noffs Foundation, is a unique intervention service that offers a diverse range of artistic, cultural and educational programs (called “hooks”) designed to engage difficult to reach young people and bring them into the centres. This “non-traditional” health setting provides counselling to young people that delivers a significant decrease in drug use and crime, and improvement in their mental health and wellbeing.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay said that she was proud to bring this innovative youth service to the streets of Katoomba last year, and to surrounding areas through their counselling outreach activities in the upper-mountains and greater Lithgow areas such as Portland and Wallerawang.

“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 healthcare needs of our community,” she said.

“Our region was lacking alcohol and other drug support services and particularly services that engage with young people in a non-clinical setting. To be able to bring this innovative service to the Blue Mountains, after its success in Penrith, is at the heart of why Primary Health Networks exist,” she added.

Through The Street University Katoomba, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people can also access a dedicated Aboriginal Case Manager and the Deadly Dreaming program, which is outreach program conducted in schools, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

“The Deadly Dreaming program offers a 10-week cultural program offering creative and traditional workshops to provide experiences of custom, lore and value systems to build connections and a sense of belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, while offering early intervention drug and alcohol and mental health support where needed,” said Ms Reay.



The delegates at The Street University Katoomba, were joined by Kelley Phillips Hulm, the headspace Katoomba Team Leader, who shared the great work headspace are doing in the Blue Mountains community. headspace provides free information and support to young people (aged 12-25 years), their families and friends across mental health, alcohol and other drugs and work and study needs. headspace Katoomba is located at 37 Waratah Street, Katoomba and is open 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday. Walk-ins are welcome and no appointments or referrals are needed. For more information, visit www.nbmphn.com.au/headspace

The Street University Katoomba is located at 93 Katoomba Street and is open from 12:00 pm to 7:00 pm, Monday to Friday. Walk-ins are welcome and no appointments or referrals are needed. For more information, visit www.nbmphn.com.au/KatoombaStreetUniversity

For interviews or further information contact:

Bess Bosman

Manager - Media and Government Relations

T 0438 261 015

E Bess.Bosman@nbmphn.com.au