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New permanent Head to Health service due to open soon in Richmond

The new permanent Head to Health satellite service site in Richmond is complete and will be opening its doors soon. The service 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 in Richmond, the new Hawkesbury Head to Health satellite will be open from 9:00am - 5:00pm Monday to Saturday, except Thursdays, when it will be open from 11:00am - 7:00pm. Unlike the previous Pop Up service, this new site will be open for walk-in support, without the need of a prior appointment.

Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, are the regional funding body and have commissioned Neami National to deliver both the Penrith Head to Health centre and the Hawkesbury satellite service.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Ms Lizz Reay, said that Head to Health was first introduced into the Hawkesbury as a temporary Pop Up service in 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the multiple disasters the region had experienced. She said that in response to the increasing need for better mental health support in the area, Wentworth Healthcare strongly advocated for the Pop Up to be turned into a permanent service.

“We have been working towards securing Head to Health as a permanent service in the Hawkesbury for several years, so today is an exciting day for us as we finally realise the completion of this stand-alone site,” she said.

“Pressures from the pandemic and the compounding trauma from multiple disasters, like drought, bushfires and floods, 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 can still be in their future.

“These services are free for anyone whose mental health is suffering, including those who are experiencing ongoing trauma. No appointment or GP referral is needed, and people can walk in at any time when the service opens,” added Ms Reay.

The new Hawkesbury Head to Health site provides a calm, warm and welcoming place to help people feel safe and accepted. Services are delivered by trained teams of mental health professionals, including peer support workers who have lived or living experience of mental health challenges.

Designed in collaboration with the community, each service is shaped through a co-design process that brings together people with a lived experience of recovery, carers and family, mental health professionals and support services.

Neami National CEO, Tom Dalton, said a permanent Hawkesbury Head to Health site would be an important addition to the region.

“Neami National is thrilled to celebrate the completion of this new purpose-built site for Hawkesbury Head to Health, which has been operating in a pop-up capacity. The people of



Hawkesbury have been through a lot, and they deserve a dedicated, safe place to seek support for their mental health and wellbeing challenges.

“There are staff at Hawkesbury Head to Health who have experienced mental health and wellbeing challenges themselves, and so understand what guests might be going through. Staff will support guests’ individual needs from the moment they arrive to when they’re ready to leave,” he said.

The Hawkesbury region is also supported by the Head to Health national phoneline **1800 595 212** which operates **Monday to Friday between 8:30am - 5:00pm**. When calling the number, people are asked to enter their residential postcode and they are transferred to a local, trained mental health professional, who will talk to them about their concerns and help guide them to the right mental health support for their individual needs. This may be to see a clinician at the Hawkesbury service, or to another more suitable local mental health service.

Ms Reay added that the Head to Health service model, including the Head to Health phoneline, has been set up to be integrated with existing mental health services in the local area.

“Head to Health is a game changer for how we integrate care across our local mental health system and for how we support those experiencing mental health concerns or crises,” she said.

“Head to Health helps ensure that people are accessing the right kind of service, at the right level of care for their needs, so that they have the best support for their individual recovery journey,” she added.