

****Embargoed to 12:00pm, Tuesday 22 November 2022****

PENRITH SAFE HAVEN OPENS FOR NEPEAN BLUE MOUNTAINS

Residents across the Nepean Blue Mountains region can now access additional free, safe and welcoming mental health support with the launch of Safe Haven, co-located within the Head to Health centre in Penrith.

A Safe Haven is a place you can go with no bookings or referrals required as an alternative to emergency departments if you're experiencing suicidal thoughts or distress. Safe Havens have been co-designed by people with a lived experience of suicidal distress and provide quieter, calmer environments than emergency departments.

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District Chief Executive, Kay Hyman said the District had partnered with Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network (NBMPHN), and Neami National to create a Safe Haven, within the current Head to Health centre, ensuring a coordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of mental health care for the region.

"The new service is staffed by peer-support workers who have lived experience with suicide and recovery. These workers are uniquely placed to offer emotional support and provide information on local services, ensuring people have immediate support when they need it most – without fear or judgement," Mrs Hyman said.

Safe Haven, together with Head to Health, allows people seeking urgent mental health support to receive compassionate and responsive advice in a community driven space where people can sit down, talk, and reflect.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, said the collaboration of the agencies involved is an important aspect in integrating and streamlining mental health care.

"The integration of Safe Haven within the already established Head to Health centre is unique and ensures that key services across the region know what support is available and who can access it. It means that when someone reaches out, they're linked with the most appropriate service for their needs, as soon as they need it, improving the overall experience of accessing mental health support," Ms Reay said.

The NSW Government has committed \$45.7 million to the Safe Haven initiative as part of the \$143.4 million investment across four years in Towards Zero Suicides initiatives. There are currently 19 Safe Havens open across NSW.

Neami National CEO Tom Dalton said the co-designed model of care will help enrich services available to the community.

“Head to Health provides immediate short-medium term care to anyone experiencing psychological distress. The addition of Safe Haven further enhances the services on offer, particularly for those that require a higher-level support,” said Mr Dalton.

“The calm, warm and welcoming environment of the Head to Health Centre flows into the Safe Haven space. The service can offer anonymous care and helps to break down one of the barriers that may prevent people from reaching out for help.”

Safe Haven is located within the Penrith Head to Health Centre, 111 Henry St, Penrith which is funded by the Federal Government. The centre is open seven days a week, 1pm to 9:30 pm Monday, Wednesday - Sunday (including public holidays), and 1pm - 5pm Tuesday.

The NSW Government will invest \$2.9 billion investment into mental health services as part of the 2022-23 NSW Budget.

If you are concerned about your own mental health or that of someone else, the Mental Health Line is available seven days a week on 1800 011 511 or you can call the Head to Health phone service on 1800 595 212 Monday to Friday, 8:30am - 5:00pm.