headspace Youth Mental Health service opens in Bankstown

Bankstown has become part of the nationally-successful headspace youth mental health initiative.

The Bankstown headspace centre will open its doors at 41-45 Rickard Road on Monday 23 March.

The centre brings together a range of tailor-made services for young people aged from 12 – 25, including mental health and wellbeing support services, general medical support, vocational and educational services and alcohol and drug services.

The Centre is managed by RichmondPRA, which is lead agency for many other organisations involved.

With a youth-friendly atmosphere and culture, the centre is designed to make young people feel more comfortable when seeking support from professionals including psychologists, medical practitioners and other specialist staff.

headspace operates under a ‘no wrong door’ policy, meaning as many services as possible are offered to young people from one central location, usually in partnership with other organisations.

About seven full-time-equivalent staff will work from the centre, in addition to a range of other professionals from consortium organisations and private practitioners.

Psychologist Tom Traae has been appointed to head up the centre as the Clinical and Operations Manager.

Dr Josey Anderson, Clinical Director of the Black Dog Institute, is the Chair of the Bankstown headspace consortium. Dr Anderson was previously Director of Child and Youth Mental Health in Western Sydney. She has also been closely involved in setting up headspace centres in other parts of Sydney.

The other organisations that will bring skills and experience to the centre are:

- Aftercare
- Bankstown City Council
- Black Dog Institute
- Break Thru People Solutions
- Family Planning NSW
- New Horizons
- South Western Sydney Medicare Local
Given the diversity of the Bankstown community, the Arab Council of Australia, ACON, First People’s Disability Network Australia, Mission Australia, Transcultural Mental Health Centre and Bankstown Multicultural Youth Service will also assist Bankstown headspace in its work.

“The roll-out of headspace in Bankstown is wonderful news that I am sure will be welcomed by the entire community,” RichmondPRA CEO Pam Rutledge said.

“Young people are some of the most vulnerable when it comes to dealing with life’s challenges, particularly when mental illness is involved.

“headspace is all about early intervention – getting on top of mental health issues in the community before they get out of hand.

“It’s well known that reaching out to people with mental health issues in the community is much less disruptive to people’s lives as opposed to ending up in hospital.

“Simply having someone trustworthy to talk to can make an enormous difference for young people who are struggling with issues.”

Clinical and Operations Manager Tom Traae said one in four young people have a mental health issue and only 25 percent of those people generally seek help.

“We want to reach out to young people in Bankstown and their families and break down barriers that are often around mental health,” Mr Traae said.

“We expect to support about 100 local young people every month and more than 1,000 every year.

“One of the best things about headspace is that there are no eligibility criteria for accessing services. People don’t jump through hoops before they get support.”

Fatima Eid, a Senior Youth Access Clinician, said the service was able to respond to any issue.

“We work with a variety of issues including relationship break-ups, depression and anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse and problems at home or with friends,” Fatima said.

“Young people seeking help will be linked to the best person for help, and in a one-stop shop where they won’t need to tell their story over and over again.”

Young people wanting to make contact with Bankstown headspace on behalf of themselves or someone else can phone on 9393 9669 or email headspace_bankstown@richmondpra.org.au.

There are currently 70 headspace centres across Australia with another 20 – 30 centres to open in the coming year or two.

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