

MEDIA RELEASE

8 September 2016

Youth Mental Health a key focus for the Sydney North region

Northern Sydney PHN reaffirms its commitment ahead of World Suicide Prevention Day

With intentional self-harm representing the greatest cause of death in 15-24 year olds in NSW¹, the Northern Sydney PHN is committed to improving primary mental healthcare services in the region.

In the lead up to World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September, the Sydney North Primary Health Network (SNPHN) recently issued grants to local health services to help support this need. These grants will allow additional psychological services to be targeted to vulnerable groups in the community.

“Suicide prevention is a key focus for SNPHN, and is one of six mental health priorities for Primary Health Networks nationally,” said Sydney North Primary Health Network’s CEO, Lynelle Hales.

“We have identified suicide and self-harm as a major mental health issue in the Northern Sydney region, particularly among young people aged 15-19.”

In the Sydney North PHN region, on average approximately two young Australians in this age group present at an emergency department every day with suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts or self-harm².

The **Gaimaragal Group** is one of the local organisations that received grant funding to run two Indigenous youth mental health programs. The first is about community consultation and identifying and coordinating services for at-risk youth in the region. The program includes cultural activities and *Healing and Reflective Circles* which link young Aboriginal people with a community member and social worker.

The second program works with local school Principals, community, parents, carers and staff on trauma education to improve service provision for at-risk young people.

“Since the rate of mental health incidence is highest in the 15-19 year age group, it is essential that these young people are assisted in accessing appropriate and timely services,” said Ms Hales.

“We want our ongoing work with community members, carers and service providers to improve outcomes and access to psychological services for populations who experience difficulty accessing mainstream services.”

SNPHN is currently engaging with stakeholders in the region to plan and design mental health services.

Other grant recipients included **Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury**, **Lifeline Northern Beaches** and the **Centre for Disability Studies**. To read more about the other innovation grant recipients, visit <http://sydneynorthhealthnetwork.org.au/snphn-innovation-grants/>.

¹ SNPHN Needs Assessment Report 2016/2017, p. 60, <http://sydneynorthhealthnetwork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/SNHN-Needs-Assessment-Report-2016.pdf>

² SNPHN Needs Assessment Report 2016/2017, p. 59, <http://sydneynorthhealthnetwork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/SNHN-Needs-Assessment-Report-2016.pdf>

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About Sydney North Primary Health Network

Northern Sydney PHN, operating as Sydney North Primary Health Network, is **one of 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs)** established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community.

We work across the local primary healthcare system with general practice, allied health providers and services to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes so that they receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

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Interview Opportunities

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