MEDIA RELEASE

Head to Health Pop Up to support people in Western Sydney during the pandemic

A Head to Health Pop Up service is now available for people in Western Sydney experiencing mental health challenges due to COVID-19.

The Head to Health service has been set up by WentWest, the Western Sydney Primary Health Network, and the nine other Primary Health Networks in NSW following $10.6 million in funding from the Federal Government as part of its response to the current pandemic. The new service opened on Monday, 6 September.

To access Head to Health, people can simply call 1800 595 212 to discuss their needs and concerns. The phone service provides a standard intake, assessment, and referral method. Following the assessment process, the clinically-led team will use the information provided by WentWest about the many primary and community-based services available in the region to determine the most appropriate services to meet the needs of the person.

Ray Messom, CEO of WentWest, said Head to Health support would be available to anyone of any age in the community with or without a GP mental health treatment plan. This includes people with conditions too complex for many current primary care services but who are not eligible for or are awaiting care from public community mental health services. No appointments are required to access the service.

"Mental health issues don't discriminate. Many people in our region may have never experienced mental health challenges before but are finding they need support due to COVID-19," Mr Messom said.

"We've quickly mobilised to set up the new 1800 595 212 phone number so people throughout our region can access a new telehealth service which will work alongside existing State and Federally funded mental health support services."

"Head to Health is designed to offer a seamless service for people in distress or feel they are unable to cope with the extra pressures brought on by the pandemic," said Mr Messom.

Liberal Senator for Western Sydney, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, welcomed the establishment of the pop up clinics, which will provide additional mental health support.

"These pop up clinics, established in record time, will be readily accessible and free, and I am confident they will make a real difference for the people in Parramatta and Blacktown impacted by the pandemic," Senator Payne said.

"The current lockdown is having a huge impact on students preparing for their HSC. The clinics will provide vital access for year 11 and 12 students who are facing their final years of schooling and may need additional mental health support."

Head to Health includes the establishment of an initial ten mental health Pop Up clinics in NSW, located within existing health facilities. In Western Sydney, Hubs have been set up in Blacktown and Parramatta. The Pop Ups are located at Unit 29, 20 Tucks Road, Seven Hills, NSW 2147, and 1/146 Marsden St, Parramatta 2150, respectively.

WentWest has worked closely with primary care services, the NSW Mental Health Pandemic Response Taskforce and the State and Federal Governments in identifying the sites for the Pop Up clinic in our region.

"Speaking with our providers and community groups, we are finding that many people are struggling to access mental health services during the pandemic. Unfortunately, navigating the system can be challenging and can act as a barrier that prevents community members from seeking help. Providing a central phone line where callers can speak to an experienced mental health professional, identify their needs, and connect to the best support services, revolutionises the way we approach mental health in our region. It ensures that everyone has access to quality services," said Michelle Quinn, Senior Director, Strategic Commissioning at WentWest.

"In addition to enhanced integration and access to services delivered by general practices and over 30 NGOs across Western Sydney, the Hubs will offer multidisciplinary teams of mental health workers, including psychologists, mental health nurses, and social workers to provide extra support during the pandemic."

For more details, read the FAQs.

www.headtohealth.gov.au/PopUp