



## **The Hon. Greg Hunt MP**

Minister for Health

## **Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie**

Minister for Sport

Minister for Rural Health

Minister for Regional Communications

## **Andrew Gee MP**

Federal Member for Calare

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

1 February 2018

### **New headspace services for Lithgow community**

The Coalition Government will provide new *headspace* youth mental health services to young people in and around the Lithgow area in the Blue Mountains.

The new services will include a range of activities for early intervention support to young people aged between 12 and 25 years who are facing mental health challenges.

The region has been identified as an area of high need, with high rates of suicide and self-harm.

Federal Member for Calare Andrew Gee said “Mental health issues have been a real concern for the Lithgow community in recent times with tragic cases of local people taking their own lives. The pain and anguish in the community has been immense.

“While community attitudes to mental health issues are changing, sadly there still can be a stigma associated with mental illness. You can’t underestimate the importance of a service like this. It lets our youth know that they are not alone and that there are people to turn to when help is needed. I believe it will make a real difference to the lives of young people in the district. A service like this can save lives.

“Bolstering mental health services for Lithgow has been a top priority for me and the entire community and after taking this issue to the Health Minister, I’m very pleased that the Federal Government has responded to the needs of the Lithgow area,” Mr Gee said.

Minister for Health Greg Hunt said early intervention was absolutely critical to helping young people with mental health issues.

“These new *headspace* services would deliver more front-line support and critically, coordinate the right interventions for at risk young people,” Minister Hunt said.

“I am committed to ensuring that Australians can get information, advice, counselling or treatment, when and where they need it.”

Minister for Rural Health, Senator Bridget McKenzie said getting mental health services into regional towns like Lithgow is an incredibly important step towards supporting young people who are suffering from mental illness.

“I want to thank Nationals MP Andrew Gee for his unwavering determination in building the case for the new *headspace* services in Lithgow,” Minister McKenzie said.

“Young people in regional areas can now access a range of services that will meet their individual needs. *headspace* provides a unique service for young Australians which positively assists and supports them when they need it the most.”

The commitment to provide *headspace* service in Lithgow is funded by the Federal Government by way of \$1.06 million.

It is anticipated that the funding will support the leasing of consulting rooms, the employment of health professionals and receptionist services.

The new *headspace* services are expected to commence in the second half of 2018.

*headspace* CEO Jason Trethowan said the local community and surrounding areas deserve access to youth friendly mental health services, like all young people across Australia.

“The *headspace* service in Lithgow will ensure any young person who may be going through a tough time is welcomed into an inclusive and youth-friendly environment,” he said.

“We are thankful to the Australian Government for their ongoing support for increased *headspace* services around the country.”

The Coalition Government is continuing to build on record levels of investment in mental health services recently announcing an additional \$110 million to extend and expand mental health programs for young Australians.

This included an additional \$30 million for the *headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation*, allowing it to provide further support to Primary Health Networks in commissioning *headspace* services

The Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network will now begin planning for the satellite service in Lithgow, with services expected to be available within 12 months.

The satellite will leverage off existing *headspace* services, which offer support for mental health and wellbeing, related physical health, social and vocational issues, and alcohol and drug use.

Until the service in Lithgow is operational, young people who are concerned about their mental health or the mental health of their families or friends can access the *headspace* service at [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au) or on 1800 650 890.

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