MEDIA RELEASE

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Indigenous youth urged to seek headspace help

The National Youth Mental Health Foundation, headspace, has launched a new campaign to encourage young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to seek help when they are having difficulties.

Speaking at the launch in Melbourne today, the Federal Member for Hasluck, Ken Wyatt AM, said the campaign was designed in consultation with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Australia.

“Over a 12-month period, these inspirational young people travelled to Melbourne from areas such as Broome, Elcho Island and Darwin to attend workshops where they provided input and direction into every element of the campaign,” Mr Wyatt said.

“The result is a unique campaign created by young people who have actually used mental health services and understand the problems their peers are facing.

“The aim is to raise awareness of the services that are available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, and to let them know there is no shame in asking for help.”

The Assistant Minister for Health, Fiona Nash, said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were almost twice as likely to have high levels of psychological distress than other Australians, but often don’t access support services.

“If left untreated, mental health issues that manifest in a person’s younger years can develop into more debilitating illnesses later in their life, and can increase the risk of suicide,” she said.

The headspace programme, established by the Coalition Government in 2006, provides nationally coordinated support services to young people aged between 12 and 25 years who have mental health or drug and alcohol problems.

“The Government has committed an additional $14.9 million in the Budget to expand the headspace network by 10 new sites, for a total of 100 locations throughout Australia by 2017-18,” Minister Nash said.

“Once all 100 headspace sites are fully operational, they will assist up to 80,000 young Australians each year.”
Young Australians who do not have convenient access to a headspace centre can also use eheadspace.org.au—a free, confidential and anonymous telephone and web-based mental health support service.

For more information on the campaign, please go to: www.headspace.org.au

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