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Subject Education program helping students learn ways to beat the Black Dog

Hunter New England school students are being equipped with the skills to tackle mental health issues thanks to a Black Dog Institute program, funded by nib foundation, which encourages early help and intervention.

Launched in the Hunter New England region in late 2009, the INSIGHT program has already been delivered to 12 schools and more than 1,000 secondary students across the region.

Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute, Professor Gordon Parker, said that demand from schools to access the INSIGHT program was much higher than expected, with 28 schools requesting multiple presentations, often across all school year levels.

“The level of interest was extremely high, which shows there is a real need for mental health education services in the Hunter region, particularly among our youth,” Professor Parker said.

“As such the program will continue to be made available to Hunter schools in 2010, starting at Whitebridge High School on Friday.”

Funded by a \$100,000 grant from nib foundation, the project targets early identification, diagnosis and treatment of mood disorders in young people and supports them with information, knowledge and skills to seek help for themselves or others.

“The one hour presentations blend personal stories, Institute expertise and research together in an easy to understand format, with the students also given the opportunity to ask questions,” Professor Parker added.

“It’s a unique mental health education model that has proved very effective in assisting our young people with the skills and confidence to identify, acknowledge and seek help regarding mental health issues.”

A number of schools have now implemented mental health promotion strategies to provide ongoing support for students, while others are integrating elements of the program into their curriculum or pastoral care programs.

nib foundation Chairman, Terry Lawler, said the innovative program is making a considerable difference in the delivery of important social and health services.

“With 14%, or nearly one million young people in Australia dealing with mental health issues, we are delighted to be able to fund such a great program that is giving the region’s youth the confidence to seek help,” Mr Lawler said.

The INSIGHT program was developed and refined over many years through consultation with mental health consumers, carers and professionals within the health and education sectors.

Seven volunteer presenters in the Hunter New England area who have personal experience with mental illness, either as a consumer or carer, have been trained by the Black Dog Institute to deliver the program.

Schools interested in accessing the INSIGHT Program should contact the Black Dog Institute on 02 9382 8320.

About Black Dog Institute

The Black Dog Institute was launched in 2002 and is affiliated with the University of NSW (UNSW) and the Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick in Sydney. The Institute is a not-for-profit, educational, research, clinical and community orientated facility offering specialist expertise for mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder.

About nib foundation

In 2008, nib health funds established nib foundation – a not-for-profit charitable organisation that will support programs aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

The foundation is funded by a \$25 million donation from nib, which was raised through the issue of new shares at the time of listing nib on the Australian Securities Exchange in November 2007.

Since its establishment in October 2008, nib foundation has allocated \$1.8 million in funding of health and wellbeing initiatives.

For more information contact:

Matthew Neat
nib Corporate Affairs
E: m.neat@nib.com.au
P: 02 4914 1777
M: 0411 700 006

Ian Dose
Black Dog Institute Media and Public Relations
E: i.dose@blackdog.org.au
M: 0419 618 606

nibfoundation.com.au

blackdog.org.au