

**Date** 30 May 2012**Subject** New program to address youth mental health issues in the Clarence Valley

Mental health is one of the biggest issues facing today's youth, with one in five Australian young people battling illnesses such as depression and bipolar disorder. Despite its prevalence, there are no non-clinical mental health services currently available in the Clarence Valley region.

To address this need, nib foundation has partnered with CRANES Community Support Programs to deliver a range of evidence-based, psycho-educational and social support programs for people aged 14 to 18 years living in the area.

CRANES Manager, Mark McGrath, said proven mental health programs such SenseAbility, HeadStrong and Reach will be implemented at high schools throughout the region to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

"These strengths-based programs, developed by The Black Dog Institute and BeyondBlue, enhance and maintain emotional and psychological resilience in young people," Mr McGrath said.

"By teaching our local youths about adolescent mental health issues it will help them identify and manage mental health issues," he added.

The program will also provide limited case management services to young people experiencing mental health problems and access to internet-based therapies such as moodGYM, Anxiety Online and e-couch.

In addition, a youth-friendly space has been set up in Prince Street, Grafton to provide a dedicated mental health resource centre. An adolescent mental health case worker will also be available to provide active listening, validation and problem solving support for local youth.

nib foundation Chairman, Terry Lawler said the program was an important tool that will help address adolescent mental health issues in the region.

"Early intervention is vital in reducing the burden of disease created by mental health issues," Mr Lawler said.

"Through our funding young people in the Clarence Valley region will now have access to mental health resources and support in Grafton making early diagnosis of mental health issues possible," he added.

The CRANES youth space is located at 132 Prince Street, Grafton, and will be open from 1pm-6pm Tuesdays and Thursdays.

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