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SOUTH EASTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT RECOVERY COLLEGE – A FIRST OF ITS KIND IN NSW

People who have mental health concerns are benefitting from learning at South Eastern Sydney Local Health District's Recovery College. The College is the first of its kind in NSW, based on a model developed in the United Kingdom and the USA.

Since opening its doors in 2014, more than 800 people have attended the College's free courses. Around 70 per cent of students achieve the mental health and educational goals they set for themselves.

The welcoming hub of the College is based at Kogarah, with courses also held at Jannali and Bondi.

Arna Rathgen, Recovery College Manager, said the College aims to support people who have experienced mental health concerns, carers and family members and to help them in their personal recovery journey towards healing and wellbeing.

"All courses are co-written and co-facilitated by a health professional and a person who has experienced mental health concerns," Ms Rathgen said.

"There are around 100 short courses. Topics include: Exploring Anxiety, Exploring Depression, Understanding Trauma for Women, Exploring Alcohol and Drug Use, Introduction to Mindfulness and Making and Keeping Connections.

"People are taught to become experts in self-care and achieve the goals and ambitions they set for themselves. For many people this is gaining a better understanding about how to manage mental health concerns and how to get into further study or the workforce."

Kayln Bents is a success story of the College. Since 2015 she has completed 10 courses and now works at the College as a part-time administration officer and peer educator. She is about to start her double degree in journalism and politics.

"Three years ago I didn't think tertiary education was a possibility. But being a student here got me back in the classroom, got me to think critically, and to listen and learn again. So now University is not that daunting," Ms Bents said.

"I have learnt a lot from the College courses but the most important thing for me was acceptance. The College gives you strength to become anything you want to be."

To be eligible to attend free courses people must live within the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District catchment area. For further information go to the website:

http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Recovery_College/