

Wednesday 21 April 2021

New suicide prevention teams for St George & Sutherland Shire

An outreach team based at Sutherland Hospital and a drop-in centre in Kogarah were officially launched this week, to help prevent suicide and support the mental health of residents from the St George and Sutherland Shire areas.

Sharks players Jackson Ferris and Royce Hunt and representatives from KOPS (Knock Out Play School) boxing and mental health program joined officials from NSW Health to celebrate the launch of the SafeHaven centre in Belgrave Street Kogarah.

Also officially launched today was the Suicide Prevention Outreach Team (SPOT) based at Sutherland Hospital, which is an assertive outreach service that supports people in the community.

Ange Karooz, General Manager, Mental Health Services, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, said the two services will provide support for people experiencing mental health challenges and suicidal distress.

“Instead of struggling alone or heading to an emergency department, people experiencing mental health distress can come into the purpose-designed SafeHaven and meet with peer workers who will provide a safe, non-judgemental and comfortable space,” Ms Karooz said.

“At SafeHaven people have the opportunity to learn about their own response to crises and to develop self-management skills to help them to maintain their mental health on an ongoing basis. You can chat to staff, have a tea or coffee, join in an activity or sit in a quiet spot and listen to music.”

The SPOT service provides mobile outreach support to people experiencing a situational crisis or suicidal distress in a place where they feel most comfortable by taking critical care into the community. SPOT focuses on people who would not otherwise come to the attention of the mental health system or present to emergency departments.

“Both SafeHaven and SPOT provide people with information about community-based services that will help with immediate or longer term needs, as well as providing opportunities to speak with staff members, many of whom have had their own personal lived experience of suicidal distress,” Ms Karooz said.

Jackson Ferris said the launch of these two services was great news for locals – whether or not you’re a supporter of the Sharks.

“Darryl from TAFE, who conducts the counselling course a number of the Sharks boys are undertaking, brought the SafeHaven centre and SPOT to our attention and we jumped at the chance to support the launch event. People suffering mental health challenges need the type of support Safehaven and SPOT will provide and they will be a great service to the community,” Mr Ferris said.

Providing support to people who are experiencing suicidal distress and situational crisis and are components of the NSW Health Towards Zero Suicide Program, which is a NSW Premier's Priority investing \$87 million over three years in new suicide prevention initiatives.

In NSW, there is an average 18 suicide deaths every week.

If you, or someone you know, is thinking about suicide or experiencing a personal crisis or distress, please seek help immediately by calling 000 or one of these services:

- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
- NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511

To access SafeHaven, please call 9113 2981 or just walk in. No appointments or referrals are needed. Safehaven is located at 20/24 Belgrave Street Kogarah (entry via Kensington Street).