

29 February 2024

Suicide Aftercare Supporting our Community on The Way Back

Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, is pleased to announce that Stride has been successful in their tender to establish and operate The Way Back - Penrith, a new suicide aftercare support service.

The service, due to commence operation in April 2024, is based on The Way Back NSW model of care that offers trauma-informed, non-clinical psychosocial support to people after an attempt to end their life or following suicidal crisis.

Wentworth Healthcare is the regional funding body commissioning the service, which is co-funded by the Commonwealth and NSW Government under the Bilateral Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Following a rigorous tender process, they are excited to be partnering with Stride to deliver The Way Back, which will initially respond to the needs of the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA) with view to expand to additional LGAs across the region in the future.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, said the aftercare service provided to people in the weeks and months after an attempt to end their life, or following suicidal crisis, is important in reducing the risk of further suicidal behaviour or crisis.

“Research indicates that the risk of suicide for people who have been hospitalised for a previous attempt is up to 20 to 40 times higher than the general population, and the three months after an attempt is a particularly vulnerable time,” said Ms Reay.

A recent review by the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry found that coordinated proactive aftercare has the potential to decrease suicide attempts by up to 19.8%. The Way Back NSW model of care ensures people have support for up to three months following a hospital admission for suicidal crises or a suicide attempt.

“The Way Back - Penrith will provide non-clinical psychosocial support through a proactive outreach approach. In this model, the support coordinator’s lived experience of suicide is recognised and valued. Each coordinator will also have access to clinical advice and supervision and will play a vital role in linking clients to their existing networks, such as carers, family and friends, and to other clinical and community-based services,” said Ms Reay.

“This model assists people by helping to improve their emotional state, wellbeing, coping skills and resilience, and by enhancing protective factors, such as their social and community connections, and engagement with parallel clinical treatments. This helps to ensure that people remain safe and supported once they leave the hospital and that they continue to access community-based services that meet their individual needs,” said Ms Reay.

“We believe that with Stride’s experience operating various mental health services across Australia, they are well placed to deliver The Way Back - Penrith service,” she continued.

Stride is Australia’s longest serving mental health provider that first started to help people to find a place to live and work once their hospital care ended. Over 100 years later, Stride now provides 80 mental health services across five states to improve the lifelong mental health of children, young people and adults, and help people with complex needs to live better.



Stride will work closely with Wentworth Healthcare and Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District to ensure people who present at Nepean Hospital emergency department after an attempt to end their life, or following suicidal crisis, are referred into the service.

Stride CEO, Drikus van der Merwe said “Stride are delighted to be partnering with Wentworth Healthcare on this service. We have considerable experience in providing psychosocial supports and have commenced meeting with the local community members to ensure we offer a service that is tailored to meet the needs of the region”.

Ms Reay added that as part of the Bilateral Agreement, the Primary Health Network (PHN) has developed, implemented and delivered various mental health support services right across the region.

“As a PHN we are committed to providing comprehensive, coordinated and community-focused mental health and suicide prevention services in our region. Funding under the Bilateral Agreement is helping to integrate primary, secondary and tertiary mental healthcare and suicide prevention services, helping people access and receive the right care at the right time.”

If the content of this article has brought up strong emotions for you and you would like to seek support, please contact **Lifeline on 13 11 14** or reach out to one of the services listed below.

The **Head to Health** mental health support line, **1800 595 212**, is open **Monday to Friday 8:30 am - 5:00 pm** (closed on public holidays). For those in the Penrith area, the **Head to Health Centre** located at **111 Henry Street, is open every day, including public holidays, for walk in mental health support** from 1:30 pm - 9:00 pm except Tuesdays, when it is open 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm.

Collocated with Head to Health is **Safe Haven**, a mental health service that provides a safe alternative to the emergency department for individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts or distress. Open from 1:00 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, Wednesday to Sunday (including public holidays), and 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm on Tuesday. No appointment or referral is required.

Anyone with or without a referral can contact the **Suicide Call Back Service** on 1300 659 467 for phone or video support. suicidecallbackservice.org.au

13YARN offer a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter who can provide crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on **13 92 76**. 13yarn.org.au