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KIC funds youth psyche program

Kwinana Industries Council (KIC) and the Rockingham-Kwinana Division of General Practice (RKDGP) have formally signed a three year, \$30,000 sponsorship, to provide of a youth psychiatric service for the area.

KIC has been a long time sponsor of the community health work conducted by the RKDGP and has been supporting its youth health treatment clinic.

RKDGP identified the need for specialist treatment of psychological issues which were being uncovered by clinicians and approached KIC, seeking support for this aspect of its operations.

In a joint initiative with KIC, the Town of Kwinana and City of Rockingham, RKDGP maintains youth GP services at two local youth centres: the Youth Station in Rockingham, and the Darius in Kwinana.

The broader service that KIC funded has enabled the provision of a Sexual Health Nurse to service this client base in a specific way.

The additional support by KIC enables RKDGP to also provide specific directed health services with Psychologist support.

The target community for this project is the adolescents and young adults living within the area who have, or are at risk of mental health issues.

The service will provide both crisis management (at the time of the clinic) and ongoing psychotherapy services to young people who are referred by the youth GP.

Each of the mental health programs delivered by the Division, have been seen to:

- Provide effective evidence based psychological services which improve the functioning and reduce the distress felt by those accessing them
- Provide psychoeducation and awareness to the community
- Reduce the stigma attached to living with mental illness
- Provide information and support for GP's and health practitioners managing people with mental illness

The Rockingham Kwinana area is home to an ever-increasing population with diverse and often chronic needs. The mental health of our residents is documented as being worse than other West Australian metropolitan areas, especially within the adolescent/young adult cohort.

Their profile is unlike any other area in Australia.

Located within the Rockingham Kwinana Divisional boundaries are:

- Garden Island Naval Base, with many wives, husbands and children/adolescents experiencing transition and adjustment issues;
- Kwinana industrial area with individuals working long (shift) hours in stressful environments (leading to increased depression, stress and anxiety);
- many families with poor socioeconomic status (depression, hopelessness and isolation);
- increasing drug and alcohol use (increased drug/alcohol induced psychosis);
- high rates of teen pregnancy (depression and anxiety); and

- a housing boom creating an influx of residents who are trying to escape the 'city' of Perth.

Each of these characteristics places our population at an increased risk of poor psychological health, suicide, and self harm, thereby impacting on our community as a whole.

Evidence indicates a higher-than-average number of people suffering with mental health issues in the Southern Metropolitan Region.

For example:

- the Rockingham Kwinana area has 8% more young women with mental health problems than the state average, while
- our young men experience 'medium to high' levels of psychological distress at a rate 3% greater than that of the state %.
- Peel (51.7%) and Rockingham/Kwinana (31.3%) have a higher incidence of youth suicide than the State average (Source, South Metropolitan Health service: Population and health profile 2004).
- Additionally the recently released population and Health profile of the Rockingham Kwinana region, November 2005 indicated that the area had a higher rate of mental illness, behavioural disorders and suicide/self harm than Perth and the rest of Australia.

Unfortunately, this area has minimal services equipped to deal with these issues, especially when dealing with the adolescent /young adult population.

Research indicates that assisting young individuals to develop a sense of identity reduces the likelihood of personal (psychological) vulnerability, whilst promoting autonomy.

The construction of self identity is an ongoing creative process which requires acceptance of the self and of ones abilities as being fluid and evolving.

Such acceptance leads to the formation of creative problem solving skills and an ability to develop cultural awareness and a sense of place.

Key Themes and Messages

The Youth Doctor Counselling Scheme will:

- Reduce the mental distress experienced by those engaging with the service
- Provide valuable support to those accessing the service and the GP working within it
- Provide crisis assistance during the youth GP hours of operation
- Better support the community to manage mental health locally

Most importantly, the program aims to reduce the occurrence and incidence of mental distress, self-harm, and suicide in adolescents and young adults in our community