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New service to bridge the ‘missing middle’ mental health support gap for Gippsland young people

Young people in Gippsland who are experiencing complex mental health issues will now have access to additional support through a new, collaborative service led by Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV).

From today, the Youth Enhanced Service, known as the YES program, will provide enhanced support to young people aged 12-25 years who are living with, or at risk of severe and complex mental health issues. The service is designed for when more assistance is needed than is available through general practitioners, private clinicians, headspace services and school counsellors; but when specialist services, such as those in hospitals, aren't available.

‘We know that when young people are experiencing mental health challenges, it can be hard to get the right support. Often, they're considered “too well” for specialist services, but the existing services they're accessing can't meet all their care needs,’ said Cate Chaiyot, Manager Youth Mental Health Services at RAV.

‘That's why it's so crucial we reach young people at this point and support them before they fall through the gaps. This is what the YES program aims to do – ensure that those in the “missing middle” get the support that they need.’

The YES program uses a clinical team approach led by a senior consultant psychiatrist. Services are provided by members of a partnership group and experienced, qualified RAV practitioners called Mental Health Navigators, including a First Nations Navigator based in East Gippsland and working across the Wellington area. The Navigators provide holistic, high-quality mental health and psycho-social supports such as individual therapeutic sessions and group work. Navigators also work with young people to develop care plans, with the support of their friends and family if they wish.

Services are available online, via telephone and in person at locations across the Latrobe, Baw Baw, Wellington, East Gippsland, South Gippsland and Bass Coast regions.

The YES program model incorporates lived/living experience of mental health, and input from young people. Key to this is the role of Youth Peer Support Workers who have lived/living experience, and the participation of young people, carers and their friends in service reference groups. As a result, the services will be continuously adapted to ensure they meet the unique and changing needs of young people.

‘When developing the YES program, we asked young people in Gippsland about the support young people need and how they want to be treated in their mental health journey,’ said Jo Huggins, Senior Manager Operations Regional Victoria at RAV. ‘They told us that the lived experience roles are vital in providing

mentorship and support to young people accessing the service. Being able to speak to someone who has had the same or similar mental health experience provides comfort and hope.'

'We know that hearing and learning from young people and those with lived experience is critical not only now, but also in the future,' Ms Chaiyot said. 'We're excited to have young people and those with lived experience actively involved in the operation of the YES program.'

'YES will help young people who have fallen through the gaps of mental health services feel supported, recognised and understood about their mental health and wellbeing,' a Youth Lived Experience Peer Worker told RAV.

The YES program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, with funding administration carried out by Gippsland Primary Health Network. Services are delivered in partnership with the following agencies and private/general practitioners.

- Youth Advocacy and Support Service
- Eating Disorders Victoria
- Dr Leeanne Fisher, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist
- Jo Rouse, Senior Occupational Therapist, The Social Confidence Collective
- Dr Erin Dolan, Clinical Psychologist, Erin Dolan and Associates
- Dr Anna Howsen, General Practitioner, Wonthaggi Medical Group

The service is also engaged with a network of over 70 services across Gippsland to strengthen relationships and networks and be able to connect young people quickly and supportively with other services that they may need.

The service operates between 10am and 6pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; and from 10am to 8pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. After-hours telephone support is available for young people who are existing clients of YES until 10pm Monday to Friday. We invite young people, family members and professionals to contact us to find out more or access our services.

'The YES program is now operating and is here to support Gippsland's young people,' Ms Chaiyot said. 'If you're a young person who needs support for mental health issues, we encourage you to get in touch with us, and chat about your situation, and how our service can help.'

Call 1300 071 166, email yesinfo@rav.org.au or visit www.rav.org.au/mental-health/YES for more information or to get support.

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About

The YES program is led by Relationships Australia Victoria, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Administration of funding is carried out by Gippsland Primary Health Network.

Media enquiries

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