

Trial youth program

Glenelg Shire chosen for mental health teaching

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A YOUTH mental health program, Youth Live4Life, will be trialled in the Glenelg Shire in 2017 in an effort to curb the toll of youth suicide in the region.

The program will be delivered to year eight and year 11 students as part of a one-year trial.

The Glenelg Shire and Benalla Rural City have been chosen to trial the program.

Glenelg Shire chief executive officer Greg Burgoyne said the program would make a lasting difference in the local community.

“One youth suicide is a death too many,” Mr Burgoyne said.

Youth Live4Life is a registered health promotion charity that aims to increase mental health knowledge among students, teachers, parents and carers.

The program will teach “mental health first aid”, with education on how to recognise the signs and symptoms of a developing mental health problem and how to assist a teenager and connect them with a trusted adult to deal with the issue.

Glenelg Shire’s four secondary schools – Portland, Heywood, Casterton and Bayview – will be included in the program, as well as students at Portland Re-Engagement Program and South West TAFE.

The program will be delivered by the Glenelg Shire Council in partnership with the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Local Learning and Employment Network, secondary school nurse Nicky Grayson, Brophy School Focused Youth Service and members of the principals network, with the support of a Myer Foundation grant.

Mr Burgoyne said the Life4Life Glenelg

Partnership Group was currently recruiting two community members to be trained as youth mental health first aid instructors to assist in delivering the program.

“The Live4Life model, which has now been running for six years in the Macedon Ranges, has successfully responded to a growing trend of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide among its young people, ensuring people recognise the signs early and turn a life around.

“We want these same outcomes for our community and are now recruiting volunteers to work within the community and schools to assist in transforming young peoples’ lives.”

Glenelg Shire Council youth and development officer Hayley Dunning welcomed the program.

“As a community it has been identified that our young people are in dire needs of preventative approaches when it comes to mental health,

suicide prevention and general well-being,” Ms Dunning said.

“For many different reasons, young people from the Glenelg Shire are over-represented in national and state-wide vulnerable indicators and data sets.

“Being able to offer a holistic program shire wide, that has already been through the implementation stages and achieved success, we believe, would assist us in being able to turn the curve in a positive manner for our community.”

Youth Live4Life project manager Rebecca Morecroft will provide support to the Glenelg Shire pilot group.

“Locally trained instructors will support the implementation of the pilot by delivering training to students, teachers, parents and community members,” she said.

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Youth Live4Life chairwoman Sarah Mahon said there was no short cut to youth suicide prevention and improved mental health for young people.

“It’s our experience that rural communities are seeking effective models to assist in delivering key mental health education,” Ms Mahon said.

The program announcement comes after a forum was held in Warrnambool on Wednesday, designed to set the framework to develop a suicide prevention strategy for the Great South Coast region.

The forum discussed what services were currently available in the region and where there are gaps and opportunities.

It was attended by program and service coordinators working in schools, sporting clubs, community service agencies, health professionals and service providers, emergency services, local government and community leaders.

To learn more about Youth Live4Life visit www.youth4l.org.au or contact Glenelg Shire Council youth development officer Hayley Dunning on 0437 218 060 or email hdunning@glenelg.vic.gov.au.

* Support is available for anyone who may be distressed by calling Lifeline 131 114, Mensline 1300 789 978, Kids Helpline 1800 551 800.