



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP

Minister for Health and Ageing

ROGER PRICE MP

Federal Member for Chifley

BOOST TO IMPROVE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF AUSTRALIA'S YOUTH

Youth-specific mental health programs will be expanded and more young people will receive vital care as part of the Rudd Government's \$174 million package to improve the nation's mental health.

Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon and Member for Chifley Roger Price today inspected the *headspace* service in Mount Druitt, which provides mental health and drug and alcohol services for people aged between 12 and 25 years.

"The Rudd Government is funding a \$78.3 million expansion of youth-friendly mental health services so that an additional 20,000 young Australians will be able to access them," Minister Roxon said.

"This is a critical boost to services as three quarters of all mental health problems begin before the age of 25.

"The additional \$78.3 million over the next four years will boost funding to the existing 30 *headspace* sites, will support the establishment of up to 30 extra youth-friendly mental health services across the country, and will improve telephone and web-based mental health support services aimed at young people.

"This is in addition to the \$50.6 million the Rudd Government is providing to *headspace* until 2012 after no provision for funding was made by the previous Government," she said.

Minister Roxon said the expansion of youth mental health services forms an important part of the Rudd Government's commitment to improve mental health services.

"There is an urgent need for a nationally consistent and coordinated approach to help people – particularly younger people – recognise the signs and symptoms of deteriorating mental health, and to know where to go for help," Minister Roxon said.

"Almost half of us will experience anxiety, depression and other forms of mental illness at some time in our lives, and we need to treat them as the serious medical conditions they are and ensure appropriate services are readily available."

Mr Price said Mount Druitt's *headspace* plays a vital role for people living in his community.

"Mount Druitt's *headspace* centre has been making an important difference in the lives of local young people since it opened in August 2008, and has now provided more than 400 people with over 2000 services," Mr Price said.

"The additional Rudd Government support will ensure the centre continues to make a positive difference to the mental health of young locals."

An independent evaluation of the *headspace* program conducted by the University of New South Wales' Social Policy Research Centre late last year found that most young people reported improvements in their mental health as a result of using *headspace* services.

Young people also found that *headspace* helped them develop strategies to manage their mental health, to improve their relationships with friends and family, and to reduce their alcohol and drug intake. After using the service, more young people felt they were also more able to study or work.

Minister Roxon said that as part of the establishment of the National Health and Hospitals Network, the Australian Government has committed to taking full funding and policy responsibility for primary mental health care services for common mental disorders such as anxiety and depression, including those currently provided by State governments.

"The Government has also identified its intention over time to provide greater policy and funding leadership for specialist community mental health services for people with severe mental disorders," she said.

"More work will be done on this with the States, for report back to the Council of Australian Governments in 2011.

"In partnership with the States, the Commonwealth will invest more in youth-friendly mental health services, build a better foundation for mental health care through the primary care system, and provide more sub-acute beds for mental health care," she said.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.

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