

## Mental Health

Young people living with mental illness or mental health concerns are capable and resilient individuals. Young people with mental health concerns are at risk of social isolation, neglect and often have less opportunity to participate in community life. Mental health services targeted at young people need to be promoted in a way that young people will have access to them.

Mental illness affects a large number of young people nationwide, but is more prevalent in the 16-24 age bracket than any other age group. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the most common mental health issues experienced by young people are depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse issues and stress disorders. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data (2013) suggests that over three quarters (76%) of people who experience a mental illness over the course of their life will first develop a disorder before the age of 25. Given this large percentage, it is important to promote mental health services to young people and to increase mental health awareness.

There is also a strong correlation between long term physical illnesses and the onset of mental health issues. Young people are particularly at risk of a dual diagnosis of a substance abuse disorder and a co-occurring mental illness. Young people, especially adolescents, have specific needs in terms of how services are delivered. In some cases, hospitalisation is required and it is not considered to be appropriate for an adolescent with a mental illness or drug and alcohol issues to be treated on the same ward as children, however, it is also considered inappropriate for adolescents to be treated with adults. It is also concerning that there is limited support for young people with mental health concerns who have become disengaged from education, employment and social activities as a result of their mental state; transitional services are vital in changing this.

### *YNOT is committed to:*

- Advocating for the introduction of mental health awareness programs in schools to increase understanding of mental illness and taking care of mental health needs.



- Advocating for the provision of youth specific services for young people dealing with personal or family mental health issues.
- Advocating for increased input into the formation of policy from young people dealing with mental illnesses.
- Promoting training and education of youth sector workers to identify and support young people with mental health related issues.
- Raising awareness around mental health in the general community.
- Improving collaborative partnerships between service providers to address disengagement from employment, education and social participation in young people experiencing mental illness.
- Advocating for a youth specific mental health ward at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

### *Future Vision*

A Tasmanian community where young people experiencing mental health concerns are supported and have access to the services they require to seek the assistance they need. This includes being involved with their own health management. Mental health education will be increased for both young people and the wider community and the stigma associated with mental illness will be reduced so young people with mental health concerns feel supported, accepted and safe.

### *References*

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