



1 February 2017

For Immediate Release

## **MEDIA RELEASE: CREATOR OF PENINSULA PRIDE BRINGS GENDER PROGRAM INTELLIGENCE TO TWEED**

LGBTI youth experience significantly higher rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide. Sadly, many LGBTI youth don't have access to family and social supports which can act as protective influences and the place where they feel the most unsafe is at school. So how do we ensure we can provide a safe community for same sex attracted and gender diverse youth?

This is the question which will be put to Seb Stewart – creator of the hugely successful LGBTIQ youth program from Frankston Victoria, 'Peninsula Pride' run by **headspace**. Seb is travelling to **headspace** Tweed Heads to present the Peninsula Pride model and share the strategies which made Frankston VIC a strong LGBTIQ centre of excellence.

"There is such a huge need for a program like this, especially given the high rates of suicide, self-harm, bullying and other mental health issues faced by this group of young people in our area" says Claire Cottone, Community Engagement Officer with **headspace** in Tweed Heads.

"We want to upskill our workforce so we're better able to provide the kind of services and responses which LGBTIQ youth need."

"We also know that if we can work within our communities to reduce discrimination and stigma, that positive community outlooks can have positive flow on effects in schools, workplaces and social environments for LGBTIQ people. So we are creating a focus in services and community for young LGTIQ people in the Tweed and by doing so, we hope to foster diverse, safe and healthy communities for everyone" says Claire.

Peninsula Pride provides social groups, support groups, camps and events for young LGBTIQ people. It also partnered with the Safe Schools Coalition Victoria in delivering extensive training to staff and students at schools across Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula. Safe Schools will be delivered throughout Victoria schools by the Department of Education and Training from March this year.

The Peninsula Pride inclusion project saw an increase of 60% in LGBTIQ participants at headspace Frankston after three years of running the program, which involved running LGBTIQ groups, service capacity building and school engagement around LGBTIQ issues.

"When schools come on board and adopt policies which challenge homophobic and transphobic bullying, they are better able to protect their students who report feeling safer, an increased feeling of belonging and increased ability to get on with learning" says Seb.





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“I hope this workshop will better inform our LGBTIQ community engagement strategy and help to increase our capacity to give this group of young people the best service possible tailored to them, in collaboration with our community partners” says Claire.

One of those community partners is All Sorts - a social group for LGBTIQ+ young people in the Tweed. All Sorts is an initiative which provides a safe space for LGBTIQ young people which they might not be able to find elsewhere. It is open to young LGBTI or gender diverse people between the ages of 16 and 24 who live in or near the Tweed. The group meets once a month from 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm. For more information please call Tammie on ph. 07 5589 1800 or 0439 947 566.

### **TO ARRANGE INTERVIEW**

**Seb Stewart and Claire Cottone (headspace) are available for interview on Thursday 2 February.**

Contact Seb on 0405 963 361 – before 2.30pm

or Claire on 0437 188 715 – **between**

Location: headspace Tweed Heads group room. Level 2, 145 Wharf St Tweed Heads

**End**

***headspace** is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds, along with assistance in promoting young peoples' wellbeing. This covers four core areas: mental health, physical health, work and study support and alcohol and other drug services.*

***Social Futures** is a community-based not-for-profit organisation that promotes fairness and social inclusion in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.*

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