

6.5 YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Submitting Councillor: Mayor, Cr Klisaris

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Acknowledges the headspace advocacy undertaken to date;*
2. *Acknowledges the increase of mental health services for young people in Monash;*
3. *Acknowledges the letter received from Wendy Black, Chief of Staff from the Office of Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health; and*
4. *Write to Julia Banks MP seeking her support to advocate for funding for a headspace in Monash and to make representation to the Honourable Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health and Ageing and her parliamentary colleagues for this funding.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my motion is to inform Council of recent advocacy that I have undertaken to secure a headspace centre in Monash. Whilst this critical advocacy with and on behalf of the young people in our city is ongoing, I have also worked with officers and agency colleagues providing services to young people in Monash, to arrange for outposted clinicians to provide some services to support the mental health of young people in the municipality.

BACKGROUND

For a number of years Council has strongly advocated for the allocation of a headspace centre to be located in Monash. As previously advised in a report to the 27 March 2018 Council meeting, I have continued this advocacy and met with the Minister for Health and Ageing's Mental Health Adviser, Dr Michael Gardner, in Canberra to highlight our case first-hand.

Following this meeting, I have since met with Julia Banks MP to seek her support for a headspace in Monash and asked her to advocate for and on behalf of the local needs of young people in her constituency. Whilst Ms Banks advised that it is her government's priority to fund headspace programs in regional and rural Australia, rather than in Monash, I urge her to reconsider this position and demonstrate her support for our important campaign on behalf of young people in Monash.

DISCUSSION

The advocacy that has taken place has clearly highlighted the gaps in service and the barriers facing young people in accessing mental health support agencies that are funded to support young people in Monash. I have been working with officers and our community service colleagues to find an interim service provision measure for our young people. I am pleased to advise that this has resulted in a range of agencies now working with Council Officers using office space at Monash Youth Services located at 14 Bogong Ave, Glen Waverley to outpost their clinicians to provide this support. It is an improvement in providing young people with the mental health support they need but I believe is a stop-gap until a headspace centre is provided.

The agencies and the services to be provided to support young people whilst we await for Federal funding are as follows:

- EACH providing Psychological Strategies;
- Eastern Health providing the Youth Engagement Treatment Team Initiative; and
- headspace Hawthorn providing Psychological Strategies through the outposting of two Psychologists.
- In addition Link HC will be providing an Alcohol and Other Drug Counsellor as part of their addiction recovery service.

Essentially the City of Monash now has an interim Youth Mental Health Hub, offering a combination of services that a headspace centre would normally provide. These services have been arranged to attend outposting for two days a week.

This is a great start, but our young people need and deserve more. Two days is better than nothing but it is not adequate to meet the mental health needs of the young people in our community who are crying out for help. Given the above, I propose that Monash Council continues to advocate to the Federal Government to secure a headspace centre for Monash. This is an issue that I am very passionate about and I hope that this humble beginning will be the catalyst for the Federal Government to recognise the importance of providing more accessible and ongoing services for young people experiencing mental health concerns.

Mental health is the number one issue that young people have told us repeatedly is important to them. In 2017 Monash Youth Services consulted with 1,142 young people in the region. The consultations revealed mental health, education and stress as the top three areas of concern for young Monash residents. Of the young people surveyed, 81% identified mental health as a concern. When this was further explored by the Youth Ambassadors working group, they identified coping with stress, pressures from family, planning for their futures and their schooling all impact the health and wellbeing of young people.

Since preparing this NOM, I have just received a letter from Wendy Black, Chief of Staff from the Ministers office outlining that Monash has not been included in the latest round of funding for headspace services. This is a huge disappointment given our advocacy to date, including travelling to Canberra at the invitation of the Minister for Health Greg Hunt, to meet with his senior mental health adviser Dr Michael Gardner in February. Refer to Attachment 1.

This response from the Ministers Office is quite frankly gut-wrenching, as we had high hopes after the meeting. Once again we are frustrated that the voices of our young people and the community are continually being ignored.

CONCLUSION

Our *headspace for Monash* advocacy campaign will and must continue to ensure that our young people have access to the services they need, to support them to become resilient, capable and positive adults in their communities. I call on our community to join us and keep our campaign front and centre with the decision makers.

There is, however a key missing link. Without diminishing the needs of young people in regional and rural Australia, I urge my fellow councillors and the Monash community to seek the support we need from Julia Banks MP if we are to be successful in our advocacy campaign. All we ask from Ms Banks is a formal letter of support that acknowledges the needs of young people in her electorate and to make representation to the Honourable Greg Hunt, Minister for Health and Ageing and her parliamentary colleagues for funding for a *Headspace* for Monash. I urge Ms Banks to take up this cause on behalf of the young people of Monash.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Letter from Greg Hunt MP regarding Headspace