

MEDIA RELEASE**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01AM 13 FEBRUARY 2019****Youth Insearch launches national youth suicide awareness campaign**

Leading youth charity Youth Insearch launched its Blue Heart campaign today to raise awareness of youth suicide.

Suicide is the biggest killer of young people aged 15-24 in Australia today.

The Blue Heart campaign is designed to highlight this fact. Suicide also disproportionately affects Indigenous youth. 40 per cent of children who committed suicide last year were Indigenous.

Youth Insearch CEO Heath Ducker wants young people to know they are not alone in struggling with mental health. Knowing others understand their challenges and care about them, could drive young people to seek help or speak up.

Youth Insearch has enlisted several high-profile social media influencers to help spread awareness. Journalists Julie Snook (Channel 9) and Lisa Hamilton (MTV), comedian and presenter Ciaran Lyons (Triple J), sports personality Phil Gould, actors Hugo Johnstone-Burt and Ezekiel Simat, and model Melanie Jarnson are just some of the influencers to get on board and show their support.

“We want social media feeds to be a sea of blue hearts, to show young people they are not alone, they can ask for help and that help is available”, Mr Ducker said.

“At Youth Insearch we’ve found there’s nothing more important than love and hope.

“We think if young people see someone they admire on social media encouraging them to speak up or share their struggles, it will make a big impact.”

The campaign isn’t limited to social media and has the support of politicians in Canberra.

In a show of bipartisan cooperation, both sides of the House and Senate have been asked to wear blue heart-shaped pins during Question Time.

Supporters of the Blue Heart campaign include the Minister for Social Services, Paul Fletcher, as well as the Liberal Party’s Julian Leeser MP and Labor Party’s Hon Linda Burney MP, who understand this issue closely.

“Whenever a young life is lost to youth suicide, it has a devastating impact on that young person’s family, friends and community,” Minister Fletcher said.

“Every life ended too soon is a tragic waste - and along with the human costs there are economic costs too.

“So we must do everything we can to prevent youth suicide - and I applaud the contribution of organisations like Youth Insearch to this vital work.”

Julian Leeser, MP for Berowra, has been instrumental in introducing the Blue Heart campaign to his parliamentary colleagues.

“It is not an easy time to be a young person.” Mr Leeser said.

“There are a lot of pressures that can be overwhelming for young people. When these pressures lead to suicide it is nothing short of a tragedy.

“Youth Insearch is doing excellent work to turn this around by helping young people support each other. Peer relationships that can sometimes be a cause of stress or isolation, are being used to build confidence, hope and resilience.

“I’m proud to support the work they are doing.”

Mr Leeser’s support is echoed across the aisle by Labor frontbencher, Hon Linda Burney, who will distribute the Blue Heart pins to her Labor colleagues.

“The number of young people dying by suicide is the highest it has been in a decade,” Ms Burney said.

“The young Indigenous population is also disproportionately represented in these figures.

“I applaud any organisation bringing attention to this and am proud to offer my support to a campaign spreading a message of love and hope to those who are suffering.”

Youth Insearch empowers young people to take control of their lives by giving them the opportunity and skills to develop their self-esteem and play a positive role in society.

Youth Insearch participants reported a 65 per cent drop in suicidal thoughts after participating in the peer-to-peer program.

Former Youth Insearch participant, and 2018 NSW Young Volunteer of the Year, Aimee Caulfield, knows what it’s like to stare down the precipice of suicide. At the age of 12, she decided she would not make it to her 16th birthday.

Aimee had spent years in counselling due to family dysfunction, sexual abuse, an eating disorder, depression, and anxiety when Youth Insearch was suggested to her.

“I attended my first program in 2010 at the age of 13 and have never looked back,” Aimee says.

“The program was the biggest reality check of my life, it let me talk to young leaders and people that had experienced parts of my story, it helped me to put names to what I had been experiencing, showed me other young people that were going through something similar.”

Mr Ducker is encouraging people around Australia to get on to social media to share their stories and flood feeds with the blue heart symbol. He wants it to be a symbol of love, but more importantly, a symbol of hope.

“This scourge of youth suicide is preventable,” he said.

“Let’s spread hope one heart at a time.”

You can keep updated via Youth Insearch’s website and social media channels:

Website: youthinsearch.org.au/blueheart
Facebook: facebook.com/Youth.Insearch/
Instagram: @youthinsearch
YouTube: Youth Insearch

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About Youth Insearch

Youth Insearch is a multi-award-winning charity organisation dedicated to helping young people through peer group support. Founded in 1985, Youth Insearch has helped over 31,000 at-risk youth turn their lives around, including thousands at risk of suicide.

Youth suicide is the leading cause of death in young Australians aged between 15 and 24 years of age. The number of deaths by suicide in young Australians is the highest it has been for over a decade, and Youth Insearch aims to change this statistic.

In 2018, 60 per cent of Youth Insearch participants attended feeling suicidal and 44 per cent had attempted suicide. After attendance, 75 per cent were no longer suicidal, with all receiving ongoing follow up support.

On 13 February Youth Insearch will launch Blue Heart, a social media campaign to raise awareness of youth suicide and help prevent it.

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