

Students make film on youth mental health

TWO films created by Year 12 VCAL students at Wonthaggi Secondary College have helped shed a light on youth mental health.

The short films were shown to a packed room of Bass Coast Health staff, Bass Coast Shire Council staff and others at the Wonthaggi Hospital on Thursday, April 20.

Executive director of Primary and Community Care at Bass Coast Health, Paul Greenhalgh, said the films were about raising awareness about youth mental health, and for suicide, a focus on prevention and early intervention.

"Too often our community has had to deal with youth and adults taking their own lives. This is devastating for those that are left behind, for loved ones, for work colleagues, for friends and family.

"It leaves a ripple effect throughout the region. It also leaves a heaviness across the community for an extended period," Mr Greenhalgh said.

The school partnered with Drift Media's Mick Green. He engaged with students at Wonthaggi Secondary College to help them create two films that would bring greater focus to youth mental health.

Students and Mr Green agreed they didn't want to bring up anything controversial, but also didn't want to censor expression in the films.

"It began with students sketching down ideas, writing down the first five words that come into their head when they hear a word, such as depression," Mr Green said.

Students also looked at how they would conceal the main character's identity.

One idea was to say "I had a friend who..." - a common saying used to talk about oneself.

They decided a student wearing a box on his head would work well and called the film 'Boxhead'.

During the film, one student said she thought

people didn't care about her. Another likened depression to a war, but "in your own mind".

Students didn't want to make the film "all doom and gloom", Mr Green said, so they added a scene where the student wearing a box on his head drank from a bottle water - obviously failing, the water ran down the box and onto the ground.

The film showed a number of alarming statistics, including that one in four young Australians experience a mental health condition.

"Even if we take them (the statistics) conservatively, they're scary. I wonder what that would translate to if we were to drill it down to Bass Coast as to whether or not our statistics would reflect the national statistics.

"I dare say they'd be higher," Mr Green said.

In the second short film 'Sketchy', girls from Wonthaggi Secondary College responded to questions such as 'Do you find it easy talking about depression?' and 'How would your friend react if you said you were depressed?'

"It wasn't just the end result, it was the journey," Mr Green said, adding that students began talking about mental health when news of the filming spread throughout the school.

The San Remo Bendigo Bank funded the project, with support from Bass Coast Shire Council.

If you or someone you know is experiencing difficulties, phone Lifeline on 13 11 14, Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or visit www.beyondblue.org.au



Mick Green from Drift Media talking about the issues concerning young people and their mental health, showing two short films created by students at Wonthaggi Secondary College. mm061717



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