

Monday, 6 September 2023

EPILEPSY YOUTH CONFERENCE COMES TO THE HUNTER FOR THE FIRST TIME

30 young people living with epilepsy travelled to Newcastle this weekend, 9-10 September, to take part in Epilepsy Action Australia's (EAA) Youth Conference, made possible by a grant from Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation.

Taking place at the Novotel Newcastle Beach, the two-day event focussed on empowering people aged 16-26 to reconnect with community, build confidence to seek support, and form connections with other young people experiencing similar life transitions and barriers.

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation Chair, Ross Griffiths, said the conference was a wonderful opportunity for young people with epilepsy to gain new skills, confidence and make connections.

"Epilepsy is one of the most [common chronic neurological conditions](#), which is why it is so important to connect the younger cohort of this group, ensuring they feel supported, educated and empowered to live their fullest lives," Mr Griffiths said.

"This was the first EAA Youth Conference to take place outside of Sydney, which is so important given EAA estimate there are more than 800 young people across our Foundation's operating regions who are vulnerable to the mental and social wellbeing risks associated with epilepsy.

"This weekend's program was packed with useful sessions, covering topics such as mindfulness, managing money and successful budgeting, creative opportunities, as well as empowering young people with the skills and confidence to smoothly transition to adulthood.

"To ensure safety and peace of mind for all attendees, two epilepsy specialist nurses were on hand throughout the entire weekend."

EAA CEO Carol Ireland said their conferences provide a true insight into the realities of young people living with epilepsy.

"Our previous National Conference survey results showed that, 80% worry people will view them differently if they find out about their epilepsy, 85% feel isolated and or anxious, and 80% felt epilepsy was a barrier to finding employment," Ms Ireland said.

"Attendees also said they often 'hold back' due to fear of seizures and judgement, which has significant consequences on their capacity to live meaningful, independent lives.

"We are grateful to be able to bring this important conference to Newcastle as a result of our partnership with Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, and offer all attendees not only the chance to learn, but also enjoy themselves with fun activities, great food and time creating connections and hopefully making new friends."

The conference is the centrepiece of EAA's 'Youth Peer Support – Connecting Young Australians with Epilepsy' program, which has been facilitated by a grant of \$46,600 from Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation.

Media release

With support of youth mentors who attended previous Sydney conferences, the overall goal of the program is to create community connections, reduce social isolation, and improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people with epilepsy in the Hunter and beyond.

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About Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation provides more than \$1 million in grants each year to charitable projects aimed at improving the health and social wellbeing of vulnerable people in regional New South Wales. Since its establishment in 2003, the Foundation has provided more than \$25 million to some 550 community initiatives.