

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10am Wednesday, 17 November

FUNDING HELPS PORT STEPHENS' YOUTH ACCESS LOCAL COUNSELLING SUPPORT

A [Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation](#) funded project to provide free counselling services to young people in Port Stephens is showing encouraging benefits in reducing feelings of anxiety and depression.

Caring for Port Stephens Youth (COPSY) received \$55,000 in funding in May to provide 700 counselling consultations through its youth counselling service, jupiter.

Almost 400, more than half, of the fully funded consultations have been delivered to 85 local young people. Using the (RCADS) Revised Children and Depression Anxiety Scale, and other measures, jupiter says there is a significant improvement in feelings of anxiety and in feelings of depression among those who have received counselling.

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation Chair Jennifer Leslie today visited jupiter's Salamander Bay centre.

jupiter manager and counsellor, Paul Pearton, said the counselling consultations are targeted at young people who may not otherwise have access to local services. He said the need for mental health and wellbeing support for Port Stephens' young people is great, given its isolation from other youth focused services and limited transport links.

"The Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation funding became even more crucial as the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region," Mr Pearton said.

"There's been a 274% increase in participation at COPSY's, jupiter counselling service, when compared to last year," he said.

"Recent restrictions and lockdowns have further heightened the negative impact COVID-19 has had on the mental health and general wellbeing of young people in Port Stephens.

"Some, isolated young people are also now anxious about going back to school and socialising.

"When lockdowns hit, we were able to adapt and deliver the consultations via telehealth. Now that lockdowns are over, we are back supporting another 30 young people who prefer the security and connection of face-to-face counselling."

Ms Leslie said mental health is a very important community issue, so the Charitable Foundation is pleased to be able to fund a COPSY project for a second time. In 2018, it provided \$53,000 to fit out the Salamander Bay centre.

"COPSY has told us that three-quarters of people who develop mental wellbeing challenges, first experience symptoms before they are 25 so it is vital that we give young people as much support as possible," Ms Leslie said.

"Providing young people with a welcoming and safe space to talk, and offering services close to home is really important in ensuring they feel comfortable seeking support," she said.

jupiter is taking new counselling bookings for the first term of 2022, which will also be available from its new consultation rooms at Port Stephens Street, Raymond Terrace. For more information or to book an appointment visit www.jupiter.org.au or phone 0490 716 265.

3 jupiter self-care tips for young people

Mr Pearton said that, practiced regularly, person-centred self-care can minimise stress, release uncomfortable emotions, and improve physical health too.

- Make time daily for an activity that you find relaxing, fun, or energising. Draw, read or go on an adventure to a place you have never been.
- Move your body. Get outside for fresh air and do light to moderate exercise, or a cold plunge to help your brain to release beneficial endorphins. The right balance of dopamine is vital for both physical and mental wellbeing.
- Relax and chill. Take a moment to focus on breath. A hot chocolate in front of your favourite movie, a warm bath or shower, meditation, watching the sunrise or sunset, and connecting with a friend are great ways to chill.

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About COPSY:

COPSY is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2014 by Port Stephens community members. Its jupiter centres in Salamander Bay and Tanilba Bay provide an accepting, socially, culturally inclusive and gender diverse space for local young people aged 12 to 21 to access free, youth-friendly, person-centred mental health counselling and general wellbeing support. Since 2019, its jupiter service has provided more than 1,300 counselling consultations to more than 200 young people.

About Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation:

[The Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation](#) distributes more than \$1.5 million in grants each year to facilitate charitable projects that address disadvantage in local communities throughout the Hunter, Central West, Central Coast, New England, Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers regions of NSW. Since its establishment in 2003, the Foundation has provided more than \$23 million to 512 community initiatives.