

15 February 2022

## **NEWCASTLE PERMANENT FUNDING TO HELP CENTRAL COAST AND HUNTER YOUNG MEN TO BE “TOP BLOKES”**

Young male Central Coast and Hunter students will have access to more social education and mentoring support to help manage challenges to being “top blokes”, thanks to Newcastle Permanent.

Top Blokes Foundation has received \$15,000 from Newcastle Permanent staff to run its weekly in school program at four local high schools including Erina and Gorokan (Central Coast), and Kurri Kurri and Glendale (Hunter).

The Foundation’s Hunter and Central Coast regional coordinator, Dan Allars, said the funding will help it to support more young males to be their best selves and lead healthy and safe lives.

Mr Allars said the high school program runs over 18 weeks across two school terms. In the first term, participants look at topics such as positive mental health, drugs and alcohol – including vaping, risk taking, and anger management. In the second term, more challenging topics such as sexual health, consent and domestic violence, racism, sexuality, privilege, and leadership are covered.

“Our holistic, evidence-based programs help young males to think critically about the issues impacting them and develop strategies to minimise risk for themselves and others,” Mr Allars said.

“We challenge them and help foster good decision making skills. Our group mentoring sessions facilitate discussions between the young males rather than lecturing them, and we don’t tell them how to behave,” he said.

“The big issues impacting young males such as suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, violence and incarceration can all be prevented. Our programs are targeted to give young men awareness and skills to navigate these issues, which benefits them and the community.”

He said Top Blokes is set to work with around 312 young males across 26 Central Coast schools this year, and 309 young males across 17 Hunter schools, and has a wait list for its programs.

“Without funding from Newcastle Permanent staff, local kids would be missing out on this fantastic program.”

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Jai Menser did the program as a Year 10 student at Erina High School. The now 20 year old said he didn't expect to get much from the program but it had a big impact on him then, which has stayed with him. He said the program's practical nature and the way the Top Blokes facilitator treated students with respect and got to know each of them made it appealing.

"Top Blokes was so good and changed me as a young man," Mr Menser said.

"One seemingly little thing was that we shook hands with the facilitator and looked each other in the eye at the beginning and end of every session. I have taken this into my work now as a football coach and parents and other people are noticing and complementing me on the approach," he said.

He said the program showed him the benefits of goals and gave him strategies to be resilient. This year he has set himself the goal of completing a 100km ultra marathon in the Blue Mountains in May to raise money for Top Blokes.

"The program taught me if you are disciplined, committed and consistent you do so much more than you think you are capable of doing."

Under its Community Assist Program, Newcastle Permanent employees donate almost \$60,000 a year to charities. Each year, staff vote on the four charities to receive support. Newcastle Permanent also provides two days paid volunteering leave to support charities or community groups.

A Newcastle Permanent financial advisor for the Hunter and Central Coast, Megan Usher, nominated Top Blokes for funding support. The mum of two said she knew little of Top Blokes until a family friend started to work with the organisation. She liked the approach and saw one of their seminars.

"It is great that the program is done in schools with groups of boys and the Top Blokes' team is passionate, experienced and kids relate to them," Ms Usher said.

"Some of the topics covered can be difficult for parents to discuss with their sons and vice versa," she said.

"As a parent, resilience and positive mental health is an important area, so programs that help boys and young men manage the pressures they are facing is a great thing for them and the broader community."

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# Media Release



A three year Social Impact Study of the program by Ernst and Young (EY) showed it delivered a 74 per cent improvement in mental health, a 78 per cent reduction in antisocial behaviours and a 77 per cent improvement in life skills and outlook. Young males experiencing the program and having a mentor are four times better off than those who don't have a mentor.

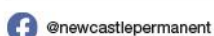
The study also found the program helps increase school attendance and reduces the time schools spend dealing with boys' behaviour. (*A Social Impact Evaluation of the Junior Top Blokes Mentoring Program*, August 2019.)

Top Blokes started in the Illawarra region in 2011 and has mentored more than 15,000 young males. It has been working on the Central Coast since 2017, and the Hunter since 2018, and offers programs in Sydney and parts of Queensland. For more information about accessing its programs or donating to support the expansion of its work visit [topblokes.org.au](http://topblokes.org.au).

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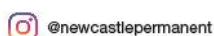
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## Why does Top Blokes work with young males?

#1



cause of death in those aged 15-24 was suicide <sup>1</sup>

75%



of all intentional self-harm deaths were male <sup>2</sup>

79%



of one-punch cases were caused by young males under the influence of alcohol or drugs <sup>3</sup>

42%



of men have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since age 15 <sup>4</sup>

13



was the median age that males first viewed pornography <sup>5</sup>

90%



of young people in the juvenile justice system on an average night were male <sup>6</sup>

### SOURCES:

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019, Deaths in Australia, cat. no. PHE 229, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/deaths-in-australia/contents/leading-causes-of-death>>.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, Causes of Death, Australia, 2017, cat. no. 3303.0, <[www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/3303.0-2017-Main%20Features-Intentional%20self-harm,%20key%20characteristics-3](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/3303.0-2017-Main%20Features-Intentional%20self-harm,%20key%20characteristics-3)>.
3. Pilgrim, J.L., Gerostamoulos, D & Drummer, O.H. 2014, "King hit" fatalities in Australia, 2000-2012: The role of alcohol and other drugs', Drug and Alcohol Dependence, vol. 135, pp. 119-132.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, Personal Safety, Australia, 2016, cat. no. 4906.0, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>>.
5. Lim, M.S.C., Agius, P.A., Carrotte, E.R., Vella, A.M. & Hellard, M.E. 2017, 'Young Australians' use of pornography and associations with sexual risk behaviours', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 438-443.
6. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018, Youth detention population in Australia 2018, bulletin no. 145, cat. no. JUV 128, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/55f8ff82-9091-420d-a75e-37799af96943/aihw-juv-128-youth-detention-population-in-Australia-2018-bulletin-145-dec-2018.pdf.aspx?inline=true>>.

WHY YOUNG MEN?

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