

Mental health hits the road

HUNTER New England Health's Youth Outreach Service is 'taking it to the streets', with bright and colourful new youth van.

The distinctive van is heading to schools and TAFE and youth services around the Manning as part of its introductory 'Bouncing Back Tour,' that coincides with Mental Health Month.

Youth mental health project officer and occupational therapist, Lauren Vaughan said the idea for the 'bouncing back' tour was linked to the main themes of Mental Health Month on building resilience to help people cope better and bounce back from our problems.

"Everyone's life involves up and downs," says Lauren.

"Developing a greater level of resilience doesn't stop bad or stressful things from happening, but it can reduce the impact these events have on our lives and the time it takes to recover."

HNEH plans to use the beginning of the year program to gather feedback from their target demographic (14- to 24-year-olds), to find out the issues that are most common, what they want or need to know and tailor the program to suit their ongoing needs.

So far the van has visited Taree Christian College, Wingham High School, Gloucester High School, and Taree TAFE campus, and will head to Chatham High School, Taree High School and both Tuncurry campuses in the next couple of weeks.

"We've had a great response so



Hunter New England Health's Lauren Vaughan and Laura Rigby with some of the helpful information from their Manning Youth Mental Health van.

far," says HNEH mental health team member, Laura Rigby.

"We're really trying to change the kids' perceptions about mental health and get them to realise that it can happen to anyone.

"It's been really helpful for them but also really informative

for us to be able to meet their needs."

Although there is a certain stigma and preconceived ideas in the community about mental health, the girls said they have been pleasantly surprised by the youths' willingness to discuss

their problems and those of others.

The van and the team is based in the Manning and hopes to foster partnerships with existing services to help provide a pathway for young people seeking help.

Did you know:

❑ Depression is the most common mental health problem among young Australians aged between 12 and 25 years. Around one in four young people will have had a depressive disorder by the end of their adolescence.

❑ Around one in 10 young Australians aged between 18 and 25 will experience and anxiety disorder in any 12 month period. For young people aged 13 to 17, the figure is around one in 25.

Need help?

Young people concerned about their own mental health or that of a friend, should contact:

❑ Beyond Blue on 1300 224

636

❑ Lifeline on 13 11 14 or,

❑ Kids Helpline on 1800 551

800

Council rejoins sea change group

GREATER Taree City Council will rejoin the National Sea Change Taskforce after three years.

Council was formerly a member of the group from 2004, however it was decided in 2007 that membership would not be renewed.

The taskforce wrote to mayor Cr Paul Hogan recently, inviting GTCC to renew their membership again, at a cost of \$2750 for 12 months.

After considering the nature of the taskforce, its relevance to