

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **\$3 million investment sought for new approach to mental health and wellbeing support for young people in the Goulburn Region of Victoria**

Mental health, youth and community service providers, young people, their families and the Open Dialogue Centre are meeting on August 27 in Shepparton to continue their drive to raise \$3 million for an initiative that inspires a different approach to addressing the mental health difficulties young people face in their community.

The Goulburn Region faces significant and urgent challenges in youth mental health, with high rates of disengagement from school, employment and community life on top of service gaps, fragmented experiences and limited access to timely, and culturally safe care.

To overcome these challenges, the Open Dialogue Centre, a not-for profit organisation, in conjunction with the local Youth Foyer and the local Infant, Child and Youth Mental Health Service, are looking to establish a collaborative way to work which provides an alternative to emergency department visits.

Mr Bryant, CEO of the Open Dialogue Centre, said an investment of \$3 million was required to establish the pilot in the Goulburn Valley region.

“We know that young people are feeling traumatised and stigmatised by referral-based approaches, and Open Dialogue offers real potential to transform the lives of young people and their families quickly and effectively,” Mr Bryant said.

He said that instead of a young person talking to a therapist alone – Open Dialogue directly involves family, friends, peers, leaders and mentors alongside services to meet as and when the person needs support.

“Rather than focus on diagnosing a problem, the emphasis is on what is needed right now, and how the group of trusted supporters can help,” Mr Bryant said.

Currently initial psychiatrist consultations can cost up to \$670. The mental health system has created a "postcode lottery" where a person's location determines access, with wait times for urgent appointments are months longer than clinical guidelines recommend.

The World Health Organisation considers Open Dialogue to be a world standard for community mental health services. It has produced [guidelines](#) for those who wish to develop or transform their mental health system and services to align with international human rights standards including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## What is Open Dialogue

Open Dialogue brings people, family, mental health and community services together to collaborate and connect. It is a way for people who are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing to get the support they need by bringing people together from different areas of their life. Instead of people talking to a therapist alone – family, friends, peers, leaders or mentors can meet where and when the person needs, with support from services. Rather than focus on diagnosing a problem, the emphasis is on what is needed right now, and how the group of trusted supporters can help.

## Media enquiries

Keith Bryant will be available for interviews following the meeting through:

**Penny Underwood on 0409 9252 99**