



MEDIA ALERT: Friday, 17 July 2015

## Launch of Western Sydney youth-led mental health program

An innovative new mental health program for high school students that provides the skills and knowledge to be a “mental health buddy” is launching in Parramatta today, after two year of development by a group of young people from Western Sydney.

*Friend2Friend* will begin delivering workshops in high schools later this year, providing students with the skills and knowledge to be a good friend to peers going through a tough time.

The program began following the inaugural *What's Up West?* youth conference in 2013, which was organised by the peak organisation for young people and youth services in NSW, Youth Action.

Youth Action Western Sydney project coordinator Natasha Lay said participants at the conference highlighted the challenges they faced approaching mental health issues, and decided to develop a program that filled the void.

“Even though there were mental health resources available, participants said they were not always accessible, weren’t always confidential, and never felt as comfortable as having a friend to talk to,” Ms Lay said.

“They felt there needed to be an alternative, and a group of about two dozen young people — aged from their teens to early twenties — set about the hard work of creating it.

“*Friend2Friend* provides a toolbox for young people to give them the skills to talk comfortably about mental health issues with their friends — essentially to become a ‘mental health buddy’.

“After a lot of hard work, the first round of youth-led, youth-developed mental health workshops will take place in Western Sydney high schools later this year.”

### Launch of *Friend2Friend* mental health program:

**When:** 11am, Friday 17 July, 2015

**Where:** Building EA, UWS Parramatta Campus,  
James Ruse Drive, Parramatta

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