

13 June 2019

## Building resilience by sharing men's stories

A project to empower men in the Southern Highlands is now being adapted and rolled out in Liverpool, Fairfield, Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly.

Tackling the Challenge: Talking Men's Health, is a project looking to make a lasting and positive impact on men's health issues by sharing their stories of thriving in times of hardship.

Andy Davies is among the men who have shared their stories. Working as a mechanic in an industry known for its "blokey culture", he is now seen as a men's health mentor.

The Southern Highlands man went through a tough break up, lost his best mate to cancer and was working long hours to avoid facing what was going on around him. He was lost in a fog of anxiety and depression.

His neighbours noticed a change in him and invited him over to share their concerns. This led to him reaching out to Lifeline and making positive changes in his life.

His GP gave him practical tools to take control of his mental health and Mr Davies began rebuilding his confidence.

"I have become a champion for men's health, mentoring friends and colleagues without feeling the stigma of speaking up about mental health," Mr Davies said.

Brendan Bennett, a South Western Sydney Local Health District Mental Wellbeing Health Promotion Officer, said Mr Davies was not alone. He said a project like this can help other men to discover the variety of help available, not just in "bricks and mortar" health services.

"We know that dealing with a personal crisis, recovery or challenges are not typically spoken about by men," Mr Bennett said.

"Through the Wingecarribee Health Association for Men, we are collecting men's stories of recovery or resilience to showcase their help seeking. By sharing these stories, we hope it can help other men learn from each other to get through those difficult times."

The collective behind the project includes the South Western Sydney Local Health District, the South Western Sydney Primary Health Network, Wingecarribee Shire Council, men's shed members, a chiropractor and local residents and, the Southern Highlands model is now being rolled out across Sydney's south west.

"The needs of each project site will be very different to what's happening in the Southern Highlands. It will be interesting to see what is impacting men across our District and how men seek help".

Men in these areas who would like to consider sharing their story can email [Brendan.Bennett@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Brendan.Bennett@health.nsw.gov.au)