13 July 2016

**Men’s Health Week 2016 – What makes you happy?**

Residents are urged to start a conversation with a friend, partner, father or son about what makes them happy this Men’s Health Week 2016 (13 to 19 June).

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) Acting Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Clinical Psychologist, Mr Richard Spence-Thomas said it’s the perfect time to talk about mental health.

“Statistics show men are far less likely than women to seek medical and psychological help. This is thought to be a learned response to gender roles of ‘being a man’ and ‘being self-sufficient’. This can result in fewer males asking for help when they need it,” Mr Spence-Thomas said.

For more than a decade, during Men’s Health Week communities across Australia reach out to men, boys and their families to promote health and wellbeing through engaging activities, events and promotions.

2016 theme ‘**HEALTH ELEMENTS**’ is about encouraging communities to start those conversations about the elements of life that build health and life’s purpose.

Health professionals say the most effective way to get more men involved in both discussion and engagement with mental health treatment is to continue education into how ‘normal’ and ‘common’ these issues are.

“It’s about reducing stigma and engaging in conversations within society. This approach takes time, but it is clearly working as we are far more open to discussing mental health than 20 years ago, it’s just that men are a little further behind the process than women,” Mr Spence-Thomas said.

“We encourage everyone to start the process of seeking information about mental health services with their G.P. Your G.P. is the central point for all your health issues, including mental health.

“It’s important they are aware of your health concerns; additionally they are able to refer directly to mental health services should this be required.

“G.P.s are also able to refer patients to additional support services with a Mental Health Plan, which will allow the patient to access a Medicare funded Psychologist,” he said.

The SCHHS offers 24 hour access to mental health services in a crisis through the help line 1300 MH CALL (1300 64 2255).
For more information on Men’s Health Week, or to register for an event, visit http://www.menshealthweek.org.au

Fast facts on men’s health:

- A baby boy born in Australia in 2010 has a life expectancy of 78 years, while a baby girl born at the same time could expect to live to 82.3 years
- From an early age, boys suffer more illness, more accidents and die earlier than their female counterparts
- Men take their own lives at four times the rate of women (that’s five men a day, on average)
- Accidents, cancer and heart disease all account for the majority of male deaths.

ENDS

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