



DIRE: Council to Homeless People chief executive Jenny Smith.

Agency hails housing action

A VICTORIAN homelessness council has welcomed the meeting between City of Greater Bendigo, Haven Home Safe, Victoria Police and Parks Victoria as the rough sleeping situation worsens across the region.

Mayor Jennifer Alden said council's data indicates 2,700 people in Greater Bendigo are waiting for low-income housing. "There is no quick fix to helping rough sleepers in our community," she said.

Council to Homeless People chief executive Jenny Smith said she had seen similar meetings in Melbourne. "These coordinated efforts lead to more bang for dollars spent and efforts made," she said. "The situation in Bendigo is dire and getting worse; that is the same as it is everywhere in the country."

Ms Smith said the state government's budget pledge of over \$5 billion for social housing will make a difference in years to come.

"(We need the) Federal Government to raise the Centrelink income and join with state and territories to increase stimulus for social housing," she said.

— KIMBERLEY PRICE



YOUTH SUPPORT: Harrison Carter has opened a new psychology clinic in Bendigo, focused on people aged 12-25. **Picture: DARREN HOWE**

New clinic for region's youth

A NEW service in Bendigo hopes to increase youth access to mental health support.

Private practice Get Psych'd opened at the start of July, aiming to increase availability of mental health support services for young people in the area.

Psychologist Harrison Carter said many young people really needed mental health support, to build up their wellbeing and resilience to get through tough times. But he said there were long wait-lists in the area for such help, with little on offer for young people in the private sector.

Mr Carter said in Bendigo he could see a need for young people's services, as

there had been an escalation in mental health concern relating to COVID-19. He said social withdrawal and deterioration in mental health were often coupled with social isolation from the pandemic.

Mr Carter said as a psychologist he was seeing an increase in anxiety-type presentations, which were probably related to the uncertainty around COVID-19 currently.

He said the clinic aimed to engage young people in mental health support, as that first step was often a barrier.

Mr Carter said this came down to empowering young people to manage their own mental health as they transi-

tioned to adulthood.

"Where you can put those supports in and around [young people] early on, it supports better outcomes later in life," he said.

Mr Carter urged anyone who felt disconnected, or really down, to talk to their friends, family or general practitioner about where to seek support.

More information at: getpsychd.com.au/

If you or someone you know needs support, contact:

- Lifeline, 13 11 14
- Talk it Out, 1300 022 946
- Headspace Bendigo, 5406 1400, headspace.org.au/
- If life is in danger call Triple Zero (000).

— ELSPETH KERNEBONE

Schools support 'logical' decision

BY TARA COSOLETO

BENDIGO principals say they are unsurprised that the General Achievement Test has been postponed for a second time.

The GAT - a three-hour assessment used to create a derived examination score for students who have had an interrupted year - was due to take place on July 29.

But the state government on Friday confirmed it would be pushed back to August 12 as a result of the state's fifth coronavirus lockdown.

Bendigo Senior Secondary College principal Dale Pearce said the decision was "sensible and logical".

"There is some degree of uncertainty," Mr Pearce said. "Schools would have only had one day prior to the GAT to prepare, which would have been challenging."

"In addition, we have students in some schools around the state who are in isolation. A number of schools - Bacchus Marsh Grammar, Trinity College - have been affected by this."

"Rescheduling the date improves the chances of more students being able to sit the GAT and it gives schools more time to prepare."

But Marist College Bendigo principal Darren McGregor said he was concerned about the impact on students.

"If kids were back at school

on Wednesday, our preference would be to have it on the Thursday," Mr McGregor said. "It keeps being this cumulating effect of uncertainty."

"We need to give these kids some certainty, so that element is disappointing."

Catherine McAuley College learning and teaching director Matthew Angove said postponing the GAT was the correct decision.

"The GAT is important as an emergency result if students miss out on other exams," Mr Angove said.

"We don't know what the end of the year will look like. With the environment we're in, it's more important than usual that the GAT happens properly."

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority on Friday also confirmed the Consideration of Educational Disadvantage process would continue in 2021.

The CED process ensures that every student is assessed fairly, with any disruptions to learning throughout the year factored into their results.

Mr Pearce said people needed to remember that the process was comparative.

"What the process is seeking to do is identify students who have been affected above and beyond," he said.

"The baseline is that we have all been affected, but it's about who has been affected more."

You're Invited to a Free Farm Safety Briefings in Bendigo

All Farmers Are Welcome

The VFF's Making Our Farms Safer initiative is holding a farm safety briefing in Bendigo. The farm safety briefing will provide an overview of the safety requirements on farm, with specific advice on quad bikes, labor skills shortage safety issues and child safety on farms. The farm safety briefings will take place at:

All Seasons Resort Hotel
171-183 McIvor Hwy, Bendigo
Thursday 29 July 2021 at 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM



MAKING OUR FARMS SAFER



For more information, or to reserve your place please send your RSVP to mofs@vff.org.au