

INNER SOUTH


## Teen mental health: Brighton Secondary College trials Boss Brain

As the demand for mental health services soared during lockdown, a Bayside community health organisation was leading the way with a ground breaking program for teens.

Lucy Callander, Bayside Leader

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A groundbreaking mental health program trialled by Brighton Secondary College students will be offered to high schools across Bayside and Glen Eira.

The Boss Brain initiative focused on increasing mental health literacy, help-seeking behaviours and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness.

As part of the pilot 270 Year 11 and 12 students at the Brighton school were trained in teen mental health first aid – teaching them how and where to get help for themselves and their peers.

Students also designed and developed a mental health video for the school featuring an interview with a mental health practitioner from youth support organisation Headspace – providing students a clear avenue of support in a challenging year.

“All our Year 11s and 12s sat down at the same time and watched the video we made – this was the first time anything like this has ever happened at our school,” Year 12 student Argia said.

“It sends a very clear message that mental health is something our school takes seriously, and it was an important step in raising the profile of mental health as an important issue to tackle together.”


Brighton Secondary College student wellbeing manager, Peter Mangold, said Boss Brain had proven an invaluable investment by the school in a challenging year.

“Not only did Boss Brain enable our young people to make a difference in their community, but it has given them the training they need to manage mental health and skills to promote good mental health for their peers,” Mr Mangold said.

“This year has been one no-one could have foreseen, but armed with the skills and confidence to address their mental health, our students have certainly fared much better than they would have without it.”

Boss Brain was developed by Connect Health and Community in partnership with Headspace (Elsternwick/Bentleigh Branch), Bayside City Council, Glen Eira Council, Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning & Employment Network and Holmesglen Institute.

Connect Health and Community chief executive Amanda Murphy said it would help students become the driving force for change by starting conversations about mental health.

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"We know these conversations can be difficult, but we also know how important they are, particularly at the moment," Ms Murphy said.

She said Boss Brain was well received within the student community and survey results demonstrated its potential to continue making a positive impact.

"Mental health is the number one health issue for young people and as a community we need to support our youth to openly talk about their issues and experiences," Ms Murphy said.

The Coroner's Court recently revealed that as many Victorian boys took their own lives in just nine months in 2020, as did over whole years before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report found 13 males under 18 died by suicide before September 30 this year, "which is approximately equal to the full-year frequency for this group in earlier years".

It compares with 13 teenage boys taking their own lives for all of 2019, 10 in 2018 and 11 the year before.

The deaths are being investigated by the coroner "to identify any potential underlying issues", the report notes.



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