

Art exhibition empowers youth identity

December 2020

- **Young people in the City of Mandurah developed portraits and manipulated imagery to portray their sense of identity, celebrate their individuality, and shout their story from the rooftops, which will be exhibited at the Mandurah Performing Arts Centre.**
- **The official launch of the I AM ME exhibition will be held on 14 December, bringing together the young artists, their support networks, youth groups, and a local school, to explore the art and discuss what it means to be you.**

If you were to make a work of art, what story would you tell? What would you want the world to know about you?

These are the questions young people in the City of Mandurah seek to answer, as part of the I AM ME Art project. It is one of eight community projects funded under the Mandurah Mental Health Initiative, focusing on healthy, inclusive and connected local communities where everybody (especially young people) feels like they matter and belong.

The I AM ME exhibition is designed to engage young people in conversations around identity, mental health, and belonging. Through photography, poetry, graphic design, makeup artistry and more, the young people captured their identity, portrayed their passions, and celebrated their dreams, ambitions, and challenges.

The exhibition is now open to the community and will remain open until early 2021.

This activity, and the Mandurah Mental Health Initiative, is supported through funding provided by the Australian Government under the Perth South Suicide Prevention Trial.

Comments attributed to Mandurah Performing Arts Centre Youth Engagement Coordinator Mark Labrow:

“The exhibition is driven by a desire to give a voice to who we are. Too often young people find it hard to express what makes them who they are. They struggle to verbalise the ways in which they are amazing, the challenges they’ve faced and the strength it takes to be them in this Instagram society.

“I AM ME has given young creatives in Mandurah the chance to express themselves visually, in a creative way and to share with the world what it means to be them. Through photography, graphic design, video and poetry I AM ME gives an insight into what it means to be young, right here, right now.

“I love how resilient young creatives are in Mandurah, every one of them has a story to share and they find different ways to create work that uncovers what they’re really about and what they’re going through. It’s critical that we give them a platform to share that work.

“This exhibition is the start of something bigger and we’re already exploring ways this sort of work can become a more integral part of what we do here at ManPAC. We all want to say a

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huge thanks to WA Primary Health Alliance and the City of Mandurah for making this work possible,” Mr Labrow said.

Comments attributed to WA Primary Health Alliance Suicide Prevention Manager Sharleen Delane:

“This program is designed to ‘wrap’ community around local people and move the focus from doing ‘to’ and ‘for’ young people with greater emphasis on ‘with’ and ‘of/by’ young people. We want to empower young people and support their voice as valued contributors in the community.

“Community-led initiatives such as this are a critical part of the Perth South Suicide Prevention Trial, to create a sustainable foundation for mental health support, beyond the life of the Trial itself,” Ms Delane said.

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WA Primary Health Alliance Media Contact – Taylor Bartels, 0400 687 208, taylor.bartels@wapha.org.au

About Us: WA Primary Health Alliance shapes, strengthens and sustains a health system that works for people. As the operator of WA’s three Primary Health Networks – part of the Australian Government national PHN program – we plan, guide and direct investment towards important primary healthcare services. Our state-wide structure and strong partnerships give us an opportunity to shape a health system fit for the future. By partnering with GPs, allied health professionals, service providers, government and community, we deliver better health, together. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au

About the Perth South Suicide Prevention Trial: This initiative is part of the Australian Government’s Peel, Rockingham and Kwinana Suicide Prevention Trial, led by WA Primary Health Alliance and Peel and Rockingham Kwinana Community Response Steering Group.

The Peel, Rockingham and Kwinana region is one of 12 sites across Australia selected by the Australian Government to participate in The National Suicide Prevention Trial. The 12 locations chosen for the Trial have a higher than average suicide rate and this major trial aims to find the most effective approaches to suicide prevention for at-risk populations and share this knowledge across Australia.

The Peel, Rockingham and Kwinana Suicide Prevention Trial is focusing on young people between the ages of 16 to 24.

Preventing suicide is a complex problem and a one-size-fits-all strategy for dealing with the challenge may not be the best approach. This is exactly what this prevention trial is all about.

If you or someone you know needs urgent support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14, Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 or Kids Helpline (5 to 25 years) on 1800 55 1800.