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MEDIA RELEASE

Young people in Darwin have say on how to look after their health

Two of Darwin's young people will attend the Primary Health Care Research Conference in Darwin today to share their experiences of what it means to be involved in the decision making process around issues that affect their health.

Concerns regarding confidentiality, cost for consultations, embarrassment and medico-legal issues regarding consent are some of the factors deterring young people from taking more control over their own health and accessing primary health care services.

This is the message that will be conveyed by Cassandra Hockey, 22 and Candy Wilson, 23, when they speak at a breakfast session which aims to address the valuable contribution young people can make to shaping the way primary health care is delivered to them.

Thanks to a team of dedicated primary health care practitioners with a strong interest in adolescent health research, Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) funding¹ was secured through University of Sydney to develop an initiative called Youth Health Research Interest Group (YHRIG). Dr Carol Kefford from University of Sydney, is Chair of the YHRIG:

“One in three young people report their health as poor, and the most common complaint suffered by them relate to psycho-social problems. As health care professionals it is our duty to recognise these statistics and to respond to the needs of our young people by encouraging them to look after their own health by making it as easy as possible for them to access primary health care services.

“Through the YHRIG we have learnt of the perceived obstacles young people face when considering seeking medical advice or treatment from their GP. But we have also discovered that GPs themselves can find it difficult to communicate with young people, who can be reticent in admitting their reason for being there, and who may require long and repeated consultations due to a variety of complex issues.”

Supported by primary health care practitioners across the country the YHRIG brings together young people and relevant organisations to help direct the changes that are necessary to overcome these obstacles.

The NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health (CAAH) is one of the organisations interested in improving the way young people access primary health care services. Dr Carmen Jarrett, Project Coordinator in Research and Education for CAAH, will also be speaking at the breakfast, reflecting on research which assesses the obstacles GPs have identified in regard to consultations with young people. Dr Jarrett will highlight how these studies underpin the rationale for the CAAH: to identify resources and mobilize support for implementing training for GPs, which will inform them of best practice approaches for communicating with, and treating, young people.

Anglicare NT is another organisation interested in preserving the health of young people, and Katherine Whitfield, a social worker with Anglicare NT, works closely with Cassandra, Candy and others who live in Darwin to ensure their views are well represented. Katherine will be attending the conference breakfast session and will be available to comment on the services that Anglicare NT provides to young people living in Darwin.

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For more information contact Fae Heaselgrave, media contact, 0432 971291

Dr Kefford, Dr Jarrett, Katherine Whitfield and young people, Cassandra and Candy will all be available for interviews at the end of the breakfast session at 08:45, on Thursday 1st July. Members of the media wishing to lodge a request for interviews must do so by contacting the **media contact, Fae Heaselgrave**, on **0432 971291** by 3pm on Wednesday 30th June. Media are invited to attend the breakfast session, which begins at 07:30 by *prior arrangement only*.

Notes to editors

Dr Carol Kefford

Dr Kefford is a GP and lecturer to medical students in community term for the University of Sydney and a facilitator for 'The Black Dog' Institute. Carol also chairs the Youth Health Research Interest Group. Her main interests are exploring ways for breaking down barriers for young people so they can attain optimum health care.

Dr Carmen Jarrett

Dr Jarrett is the Project Coordinator for Research and Education with NSW Centre for Advancement of Adolescent Health. She recently completed her doctoral research in the area of families with children with severe disability and has extensive experience as a clinical psychologist in community child and family services.

Primary Health Care Research Conference

The Primary Health Care Research Conference (formerly the GP & PHC Research Conference) is convened annually by the Primary Health Care Research and Information Service and run in partnership with the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute, the Australian Association of Academic Primary Care and the Human Resources for Health Knowledge Hub, one of four knowledge hubs funded by AusAID.

The conference is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Primary Health Care Research and Information Service

PHC RIS is a national primary health care organisation based at Flinders University in South Australia in the Discipline of General Practice. PHC RIS is responsible for generating, managing and sharing information and knowledge to inform, influence and enhance primary health care practice, policy and research by working in partnership with its key stakeholders: the Divisions of General Practice Network, primary health care researchers and primary care policy advisors. More information is available at the [PHC RIS website](#) or by calling 1800 025 882.

Anglicare NT

Visit the [Anglicare NT](#) website for more information about the youth services offered by Anglicare in Darwin.

ⁱ Funding through the Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) funding is provided by the Department of Health and Ageing as part of the PHCRED Strategy.