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BRISBANE PARENTS SUPPORT NEW HEALTH INITIATIVE

Almost 300 hundred mothers, fathers and carers turned out to hear one of the world's leading parenting experts at the public launch of a new community health program in Brisbane last week.

Professor Matt Sanders shared tips from his universally acclaimed Triple P – Positive Parenting Program at a free seminar to mark the rollout of Connecting Communities, an ambitious project that aims to promote better mental healthcare.

Connecting Communities is an initiative of the Brisbane South Division (BSD), the local arm of the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN). AGPN is a professional body of GPs, nurses and allied health workers.

Brisbane South Division President Dr Chris McAuliffe said, as part of Connecting Communities, more than 500 local practitioners had been trained in three early intervention programs..

“We’ve chosen Triple P, Mental Health First Aid and the schools-based anti-anxiety program, FRIENDS for Life because of their evidence- base. They’ve been proven to work,”said Dr McAuliffe.

“We’ve trained GPs and nurses, social workers, teachers and guidance counsellors, psychologists, students and family support workers. Many are from non-English speaking and Indigenous backgrounds because Brisbane South is the most culturally-diverse Division in Australia. “

Brisbane South has more than double the national average of Indigenous residents and three times the national average of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Dr McAuliffe said the new practitioners were the professionals, community leaders and cultural elders in direct contact with the children, adults and families most in need of the programs.

“We’re reaching the communities now, but we also have a longer term vision for the project, “ she said.

“We are creating a framework that can be used for similar programs around the country and around the world because we see Connecting Community as being like a platform. It stays in place when the project is officially considered over, but the supports will have been built and will remain there for the community’s ongoing benefit.”

Dr McAuliffe said Triple P was a vital part of the project because of its proven ability to decrease parents’ stress, anxiety and depression.

“Taking parenting problems out of a home can significantly improve mental health and well being,” she said. “The good thing about Triple P is that parents can be confident that if they try something it’s very likely to work. We also know that because Triple P is proven to work across the world, it’s respectful of a wide range of cultures and values.”

Connecting Communities is funded by the Australian Government under the Mental Health Respite Program.

One of the many parents who attended Suze English, said “this seminar made us realise that almost everything we experience as parents is fairly normal, and we can make change as needed to deal with the most difficult behaviours. It was all about empowering parents to feel in control and prepared. There were so many people almost crying with relief that it wasn’t just us who felt we needed help”.

Another parent Domini, said “A refreshing seminar – I gained a clearer perspective on the issues I am facing with my children. I felt I left the seminar with some tools in my pocket to use at home”

The next FREE session for parents will be held on Tuesday the 8th of December, full details available from the “Whats On” section at the Brisbane South division Website home page- www.brisbanesouth.com.au.

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