

Open Doors Youth Service

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**MEDIA RELASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**OPEN DOORS TO CLOSE MUCH NEEDED PROGRAM FOR TRANSGENDER YOUTH DUE TO LACK OF FUNDING**

FROM 30 November, Open Doors Youth Service, Queensland’s LGBT support service for young people aged 12 to 24, will be will be closing its program ‘Jelly Beans’ unless ongoing funding can be secured.

Jelly Beans is Open Doors social support group designed for transgender, gender variant and gender queer young people, aged under 24.

Open Doors General Manager Pam Barker said Jelly Beans was established in response to the urgent need to address the unique support needs of young transgender Queenslanders.

“Since the program began in 2010, Open Doors have operated Jelly Beans entirely on the basis of donations provided by the community, and in that time the programme has exploded in popularity,” Ms Barker said.

“When we started we had four people accessing the service, today over 70 young people come to us for support.

“Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, we are unable to cope with growing demand and increasingly unable to meet the specific and complex support needs of transgender young people.

“Therefore we will be forced to close the service, unless ongoing funding can be sourced,” Ms Barker said.

There will be efforts made absorb clients into other funded programs, but some clients will be left without support.

Open Doors Chair Tyrone Shandiman said the Reconnect program funded by the Federal Government provides support to LGBT young people aged 12 to 18 at risk of homelessness.

“However, as this program is operating at capacity already, Open Doors will need to prioritise client intake and support, and consequently will be sadly forced to turn some young people away,” Mr Shandiman said.

“We know that currently more people are identifying as transgender, and at a much earlier age.

“This has a lot to do with social norms changing and better available information for young people who are questioning their gender.

“Unfortunately, many young people who access Jelly Beans still face social exclusion and prejudices which puts them at a higher risk of poor mental health, homelessness, and a higher risk of suicide.

“It would be heartbreaking if we are no longer able to offer a service designed specifically to meet the urgent support needs of transgender young people. However, the economics of the predicament cannot be ignored.

“As our service is at capacity the only options available are to either secure ongoing funding or re-structure our service and remove programs that are unfunded.

“Open Doors relies heavily on volunteers, but the majority of our work requires qualified social workers to assist clients,” Mr Shandiman said.

To operate Jelly Beans in a way that meets demand, Open Doors needs annual funding of $80,000 to properly resource the service.

Urgent meetings with local members Counsellor Vicki Howard, Queensland MP Grace Grace, and Federal MP Trevor Evans have been sought to discuss the closure of our Jelly Beans service and also possible funding opportunities.

**MORE INFORMATION**

The below graph demonstrates the increase in number of clients accessing Jelly Beans in comparison with the number of donations provided to the service.

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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Year | No of Clients | Funding (Donations) | | 2013 | 20 | $2,500 | | 2014 | 21 | $7,650.00 | | 2015 | 80 | $5,628.64 | | 2016 | 76 | $1,500.00 | |  |

Open Doors are also running a Give Now drive to save Jelly Beans for those interested in donating or holding a workplace morning tea to donate and “Save Our Jelly Beans” [www.givenow.com.au/saveourjellybean](http://www.givenow.com.au/saveourjellybean)

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