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Health hackathon empowers western Sydney high school students to create a healthier future

19 Jun, 2025, 4:54 pm

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The annual award-winning Health Hackathon was held at Westmead Hospital on June 18 and 19, bringing together young minds from schools across western Sydney to create a healthier future for their school communities.

This innovative two-day event is a collaboration between the Prevention Education and Research Unit (PERU), the Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) program, the NSW

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Department of Education, and Workforce Planning, the NSW Ministry of Health.

As Western Sydney grows, projected to exceed six million people by 2041, initiatives like the Health Hackathon help to prepare the next generation to address the regions' evolving health challenges whilst inspiring them to consider a career in health.

Professor Smita Shah OAM is the Director of PERU, says giving young students the chance to discuss and address their health concerns is crucial.

“

“This initiative is just one way we engage high school students for positive, meaningful change,” Smita said.

By providing students with a platform to be heard, they can develop health solutions which resonate with young people,” Smita said.

Students from diverse schools across the region worked in teams to design a health promotion campaign addressing a topic that matters to them.

This provided students with the opportunity to sharpen their skills including critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork and get insights into the varied careers within their local health district.

The Health Hackathon included keynote speakers, many from Westmead Hospital who shared their experience on topics like the health workforce, the importance of public health, and co-designing health campaigns with and for young people.

Students leveraged these presentations to develop and pitch their own health campaigns for their school community.

This year featured a new and well-received Speed Networking session, giving students the chance to interact directly with a diverse range of health professionals, including doctors, nurses, allied health, public health, and digital health leaders.

Christine Assanti, a Senior Project Officer for RIEP, attended the two-day workshop.

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Auburn Hospital's Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) has been featured on page 2 in the Sydney Morning Herald. Thank you to journalist Kate Aubusson for sharing this story. Congratulations to everyone at the MGP for what you do day in and out. #WSLHD #AuburnHospital

With Amar by her side, Hamna had a safe place to have her baby



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“This initiative is an engaging way to allow students to develop professional skills and tools by creating a peer-led health promotion campaign,” Christine said.

Celebrating WSLHD Nurses and Midwives - the heart of healthcare

It also provides opportunities for students to gain career awareness within the broad employment opportunities in health and further expand their local professional networks within Western Sydney,” Christine said.

The Health Hackathon empowers students not only to take control of their health but also to realise their potential as changemakers in their communities, inspiring them to be the future health leaders.

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