



MEDIA RELEASE

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Hilltop Hike: community support keeps PCYC youth program alive and growing

The Hilltop Hike committee is proud to announce the Huon Valley PCYC as the official 2026 beneficiary, marking a second year of support for their After-School Drop-In Program.

Running twice weekly, the program provides young people aged 6–18 with a safe space, nutritious food, social connection and activities led by PCYC staff. Average attendance has grown to more than 23 young people per session, with older participants often stepping up as informal mentors and volunteers.

In 2023, funding raised through Hilltop Hike allowed the PCYC to expand the program from one day to two. However, without renewed funding, that progress is at risk. For some participants, the Drop-In program offers their only hot meal of the day or a rare opportunity to be heard, supported and safe.

Hilltop Hike Committee Member Jorinde Tenten said the decision to back PCYC again was about consistency.

“PCYC showed us what’s possible when the community comes together,” Ms Tenten said. “Now, with your help, we can build on that momentum so young people across the Huon Valley can rely on this program for years to come.”

Huon Valley PCYC General Manager Cherie Gould said the ongoing support means more than just funding.

“We have young people who might not have anywhere else to go,” Ms Gould said.

“Some tell us this is their first meal of the day, others open up about their mental health for the first time. That’s the difference this program makes.”

Continued funding in 2026 will:

- Maintain existing Drop-In sessions and add another day
- Launch a weekday Breakfast Club and mental health workshops
- Strengthen outreach to schools and neighbouring towns
- Support long-term sustainability through a three-stage plan focused on access, resilience and wellbeing

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Acting Huon Valley Mayor Toby Thorpe emphasised the importance of initiatives like Hilltop Hike to the region's wellbeing.

"The Hilltop Hike does vital work raising awareness of mental health, suicide prevention, and the factors that contribute to people in regional and rural populations being twice as likely to take their life by suicide," Mr Thorpe said. "Huon Valley Council is proud to support this initiative and thanks everyone who shares in the conversation, walks the walk and donates."

"Even before the official launch, more than \$36,000 has already been pledged by financial partners and community groups including our significant financial partners Frank's Cider House and Café and Huon Aquaculture, and many others," Ms Tenten said.

A huge thank you to all the businesses who came on board early. We hope to see even more support over the coming weeks.

What's next

- Partner with us: donate to our raffle or silent auction, become a financial sponsor, or support in-kind
- Get organised: register a team or yourself for the Hilltop Hike and start Fundraising
- Save the dates: Sunday 1 March for the Hike, and Saturday 14 March for the Gala at Wrest Point (2026)
- Learn more at www.hilltophike.org or email admin@hilltophike.org. Follow the journey on Facebook and Instagram @huonhilltophike.

About the Hilltop Hike

The Hilltop Hike is a community-led event in the Huon Valley that raises awareness and vital funds for mental health and suicide prevention. Born from tragedy and driven by hope, it unites individuals, businesses and organisations in a shared two-kilometre journey up Scenic Hill in Huonville, at your own pace. Since 2022, Hilltop Hike has raised more than \$150,000 for local initiatives. Event day features activities, food, music and entertainment, celebrating community spirit as much as taking a stand for mental health.

The Hilltop Hike is a project by the Rotary Club of the Huon Valley, in partnership with Harcourts Huon Valley and RAW Rural Alive and Well.

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