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NEWS

Youth mental health bid

BY JAMES TAYLOR

MORE than 10,000 people have signed a petition calling for a centre in Knox to support people aged 12-25 with mental health, drug and alcohol problems.

Aston federal Liberal MP Alan Tudge launched the petition in May, and he plans to table it in parliament late today or tomorrow.

The National Youth Mental Health Foundation, which formally names itself 'headspace', would provide the support centre.

"The sheer quantity of signatures in support of a headspace centre in Knox delivers a big message to the federal government," Mr

Tudge said. Signature collectors Pauline Renzow and Prerna Diksha were instrumental in gathering the support.

Both had family members who committed suicide.

Mrs Renzow, who has lost two of her sons to suicide, said she was humbled to have taken part.

"I just feel it's a bit of a duty and a responsibility for me to make a difference. This petition has restored my faith that we're not all living alone. We are part of the one community."

The Rowville resident said the petition demonstrated the dire need for mental health services everywhere.

Mr Tudge said Knox has one of the highest incidences of youth depression and youth suicide in Melbourne. It was the No. 1 health problem among young people in the community.

He said the Knox City-Ozone precinct was a logical place for a headspace centre because it was the hub for young people in the outer eastern suburbs.

"The size of the petition indicates the enormous public support for it."

Help can also be found at Lifeline 131 114, SuicideLine 1300 651 251, or beyondblue 1300 22 4636.