

## Youth band comp offers exciting prizes

Young musicians can enter a new Hunter region band competition and go in the running to win a three-track recording session and 500 professionally produced CDs among other prizes.

The first *Youth Rockin' the Black Dog* event will be officially launched on 1 February 2010. This event is a partnership between the Hunter Institute of Mental Health, the Black Dog Institute, and the local music industry. It aims to raise awareness of mental health issues amongst young people, while giving local musicians a platform to showcase their talents.

Entry for the inaugural competition is for those aged 15 to 21, and entries close 19 March, 2010. Entrants need to submit two songs (one original) to be judged by a panel of acclaimed local musicians, including award winning singer-songwriter Amy Vee.

"Music means a lot to young people and it is often a way to express everyday feelings, whether playing or listening," Amy said.

"Not only is this a great opportunity for young bands, it's also a way to let young people know more about mental health issues and how to seek help."

Six finalists will then battle it out live during a night of great music at the Loft Youth Venue in Newcastle on 21 May 2010 before a winner is announced. Tickets for this event will go on sale on 1 March 2010, and can be purchased from The Loft Youth Venue.

The event is the brainchild of Newcastle-based music producer and performer Gareth Hudson. Gareth organised the successful 2008 Rockin' the Black Dog concert in Newcastle, which also aimed to raise awareness of mental health issues.

"The competition aims to use music to engage young people and increase their awareness of mental health issues," Gareth said. "While the music does not have to explore these issues, there will be other opportunities through the audition rounds and the grand final for young people to obtain important information"

Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute Professor Gordon Parker said the Institute is delighted to be supporting this initiative and working with the Hunter Institute of Mental Health.

"It is important that young people talk to each other about mental health issues," Professor Parker said. "It is also important that they know where to go if they suspect something is not quite right."

More information about the event and entry forms can be downloaded by visiting [www.himh.org.au/YRBD](http://www.himh.org.au/YRBD) or by becoming a fan of Youth Rockin' the Black Dog on Facebook.

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