27 March 2025

To the Chair
Select Committee on Youth Justice
Legislative Council
Parliament of New South Wales

Submitted via Committee website

Dear Committee Chair,

Re: headspace National submission – Inquiry into Youth Justice

headspace National welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry. headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12–25-year-olds. headspace has 175 services across Australia in metropolitan, regional and remote areas, and offers online and phone support services and resources through eheadspace.

headspace can help young people with mental health, physical health (including sexual health), alcohol and other drug services, and work and study support. Our work builds the wellness literacy of young people and reduces stigma associated with mental health problems and the associated barriers to seeking help. Our work also involves supporting schools and their communities with expert advice and guidance on mental health and wellbeing, responding to loss through suicide, and providing support after major disaster events. At the heart of all our services are young people, their needs, and the needs of those who support them.

headspace National's submission to the Committee's inquiry can be found in **Attachment 1.**

Our submission highlights:

- **the need for different responses** – given incarceration does not, and cannot, address the drivers of and factors that contribute to young people's contact with the youth justice system
- **the impact of incarceration of First Nations young people** – both on the individuals concerned and their families and communities, and the need for greater investment in First Nations-led interventions that connect young people to culture, family, and kinship
- **the need for greater investment in prevention and early intervention** – particularly for young people at higher risk of contact with the youth justice system, given the high levels of psychological distress and poor mental health among this cohort of young people.

headspace National would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspects of our submission further.

Yours sincerely

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Attachment 1

Submission to the Inquiry into Youth Justice

1. Introduction

headspace National welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into evidence-based approaches to reducing the number of children in contact with the criminal justice system in New South Wales.

headspace National's submission focuses on the following terms of reference:

a) the underlying drivers of children's contact with the criminal justice system

c) the specific and disproportionate impact of the youth justice system on Aboriginal children, and the adequacy of current strategies to Close the Gap on Aboriginal youth incarceration

j) any other related matters.

Young people's mental health needs

Many young people across Australia are currently experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing. In headspace's 2025 National Youth Mental Health Survey, nearly half of young people indicated they are experiencing high or very high psychological distress (49%). Financial concerns, climate change, the trauma of natural disasters, and worries about the future are all contributing.

Further, the latest release of the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing data shows that two-fifths of Australians aged 16 to 24 years had experienced a mental health disorder in the last 12 months.[1] Half of all mental health issues emerge before the age of 18.[2] Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people, responsible for more than 40 per cent of deaths among 15–24-year-olds.[3]

About headspace

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, providing prevention and early intervention mental health services to 12–25-year-olds. headspace services provide multidisciplinary care for mental health, physical health (including sexual health), alcohol and other drugs, and work and study needs. headspace offers in person, online and phone services, and supports young people in school settings.

Appendix 1 provides more information about the full range of headspace programs and services.

Preparation of this submission

Our submission incorporates views from members of the headspace Youth National Reference Group (hY NRG); the headspace Family Reference Group (hFRG) and the headspace First Nations Youth Advisory Council (FNYAC).

a) The underlying drivers of children's contact with the youth justice system

Key takeaways

→ A complex range of factors contribute to young people finding themselves in contact with the youth justice system, including experiences of trauma and social disadvantage. Incarceration doesn't address these issues, and adds to the trauma and distress of the young people detained.

→ Young people connected to the justice system have a higher prevalence of mental ill health than other young people, but also have less access to mental health services. Specialist mental health treatment is critical for this cohort of young people.

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[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2023). Latest release: National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2023. Retrieved from: National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2020-2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au).

[2] Solmi M, Radua, J., Olivola, M., Croce E., Soardo, L., et al. (2022). Age of onset of mental disorders worldwide: large-scale meta analysis of 192 epidemiological studies, *Molecular Psychiatry*, 27(1):281–95.

[3] Department of Health. (2020). *A report detailing key themes and early findings to support initial advice of the National Suicide Prevention Adviser.*

Young people in detention are disadvantaged and highly vulnerable

While there is limited national data, it's clear from research and surveys that the young people involved in the youth justice system are among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of Australian communities. Many have experienced overlapping adverse experiences, including:

- **poverty, homelessness and unequal access to resources** – national data shows many in the youth justice system are from the lowest socioeconomic areas of Australia.[4]
- **family experiences** of trauma and neglect – many have family members who have experienced mental ill-health, incarceration or social disadvantage.[5]
- **mental ill health** – data show that at least half of all young people under supervision in the community or custody have high levels of psychological distress, and about two-thirds have poor mental health or a behavioural disorder.[6] Rates of self harm and suicide attempts are also higher among young people in contact with the justice system compared to their peers. In particular, young people in detention who had experienced childhood trauma are more likely to attempt suicide.[7]
- **unsupported cognitive and intellectual disabilities** – young people in contact with the justice system experience higher rates of speech and language disorders, as well as cognitive deficits. A 2015 survey of young people in custody found poor literacy skills, and low levels of intellectual ability.[8]
- **neurodiversity** – for example, up to one in five young people in the Queensland youth justice system have been diagnosed with ADHD.[9]

First Nations young people in youth justice also experience an added layer of intergenerational disadvantage and the ongoing impact of colonisation, dispossession of their lands, and ongoing racism.

The National Children's Commissioner noted that while the number of young people in detention may have decreased in recent years, there are indications that the complexity of needs among those incarcerated has increased.[10] Often, their parents also have a forensic history.[11] A hYNRG member noted:

> *Many of the young people I grew up with entered the justice system as early as 13. The common threads were educational disengagement, untreated or unsupported mental health challenges, family stress or breakdown, and limited access to safe, structured opportunities.*

Youth justice is the wrong response to these young people's needs

With such complex and interrelated needs, it is critical that governments prioritise multidisciplinary and holistic prevention and early intervention strategies and policies. These must be evidence-based and target the full range of the social determinants of justice, to minimise the number of young people in contact with the system and divert those who do come in contact with the system away from detention.

The youth justice system cannot meet these complex and interrelated needs.[12] Rather, detention can be traumatising for young people, and further entrenches cycles of disadvantage and compounds experiences of trauma. As a member of the headspace FNYAC noted:

> *Instead of asking why they are (in contact with the system), we say let's just lock them up and eventually they'll get out and hopefully they' be rehabilitated inside – and that just doesn't happen. Governments have the wrong hope about what jail does. It doesn't work.*

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[4] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024) Youth Justice in Australia 2022-23.

[5] Atkinson, B. (2018). *Report on Youth Justice, version 2*. Retrieved from: Atkinson Report on Youth Justice (dcssds.qld.gov.au).

[6] Kinner, S.A., Degenhardt, L., Coffey, C., Sawyer, S., Hearps, S., Patton, G. (2014). Complex health needs in the youth justice system: a survey of community-based and custodial offenders. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 54(5): 521-6; Meurk, C., et al. (2020) Changing Direction: mental health needs of justice-involved young people in Australia.

[7] Shepherd, S., Spivak, B., Borschmann, R., Kinner, S.A., Hachtel, H. (2018). Correlates of self-harm and suicide attempts in justice-involved young people. *PLoS One*, 13(2).

[8] Justice Health and Forensic Health Network, (2015). *2015 young people in custody health survey: full report*.

[9] Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, (2022). *Youth justice census summary*, Queensland Government.

[10] National Children's Commissioner (2024). *'Help way earlier!' How Australia can transform child justice to improve safety and wellbeing,* Australian Human Rights Commission.

[11] Atkinson, B. (2018). *Report on Youth Justice, version 2*. Retrieved from: Atkinson Report on Youth Justice (dcssds.qld.gov.au).

[12] Standing Council of Attorneys-General, Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group Report (Report, September 2023) 25.

Governments must find alternate ways to support this cohort of vulnerable young people, preventing contact with the justice system and diverting young people away from incarceration. A member of hYNRG noted:

> *I have seen how early mentoring, family engagement and culturally safe support could divert young people away from justice involvement. The issue is not a lack of potential or lack of aspiration, it is a lack of coordinated, preventative support across education, mental health and legal systems.*

c) The specific and disproportionate impact of the youth justice system on Aboriginal children

Key takeaways

- → The rates of incarceration of First Nations children and young people are alarming, and call for urgent responses that dismantle current approaches that perpetuate the ongoing impacts of colonialism. Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility is an essential first step. Addressing structural and systemic racism, and investing in programs delivered via community controlled organisations are also critical.
- → The impact of the detention of First Nations young people extends beyond the young people incarcerated: their families and communities are affected, and compounds discrimination of marginalised communities.
- → There are alternatives. These need to address underlying causes and risk factors, incorporate connection to culture, family and kinship, and be owned, self-determined and controlled by First Nations communities.

National data indicates that Indigenous children aged 10 to 17 years are over 20 times more likely to be in youth detention compared to non-Indigenous young people.[13] About two-thirds young people in detention in June 2024 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, despite only 6 per cent young people aged 10 to 17 in Australia identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.[14] This statistic is alarming and calls for urgent culturally safe remedial responses for First Nations children and young people.

The proportion of First Nations young people in detention reflects the ongoing impact of colonisation and the related intergenerational and personal trauma suffered by Australia's First Nations people. Most of these children have experienced abuse, trauma, and neglect; that they have come into contact with criminal justice system often represents a failure to support their needs and recognise the link between their experiences of trauma and their behaviours. [15]

As a member of the headspace FNYAC described:

> *It's not kids being naughty, or kids being kids. This is trauma playing out in action.*
>
> *It's not surprising [that government takes this approach]. Government has never done anything to safeguard mob. Can't be surprised, just disappointed.*

Of all children and young people in youth justice supervision, more than half have also had an interaction with the child protection system – a cohort referred to as 'crossover kids'. This was particularly high for First Nations young people – two in three had also had child protection contact, compared to just under half for non-Indigenous children.[16]

For young people in the child protection system, the impact of incarceration can be even greater. Young people in residential care often experience an over-reliance on punitive approaches, with services calling police to manage behaviours that otherwise may be responded to with additional social supports. Further, these young people are less likely to be granted bail as they don't have suitable alternative accommodation.[17] This can mean young people cycle between residential care and detention centres.

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[13] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024). *Youth detention population in Australia 2024*.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Yoorrook Justice Commission (2023). *Yoorrook for justice: Report into Victoria's child protection and criminal justice system*.

[16] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). *Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with the child protection system 2020–21*.

[17] Queensland Family and Children Commission (2023). *Queensland child rights report*.

The impact of detaining a First Nations young people also stretches beyond the individual to their family and community, as described by a member of FNYAC:

> *When someone is incarcerated, especially youth, it is not only the individual that is affected. Families, communities and personal circles are all included in the impact. It's not just the child that has to wonder why they are in this position but everyone around them. It will be a friend that people will no longer see, and it will be parents wondering where they went wrong, siblings still questioning why their brother/sister cannot be around.*

The focus on youth detention creates an expectation

The attention on current and changing legislation and policies – and the surrounding public discourse – can also create harm. It can be distressing for communities, particularly in remote areas but also more broadly, and can exacerbate tension between young people, communities and police. It can also compound discrimination in marginalised communities, as a member of headspace's FNYAC described:

> *The distinct image media portrays of Indigenous youth being out of control and committing crimes, this hyper-focus on marginalised communities, creates discrimination and prejudice amongst the broader community of Australia and worldwide.*

The media focus on youth crime and incarceration can also influence the self-image of First Nations young people:

> *These assumptions create an automatic image of what a young person committing a crime looks like: Aboriginal. Children are still forming an identity during these young ages, and when the community around you says you are a criminal. Of course, you would be more inclined to follow the narrative of being a criminal or incarcerated when everything around them is telling them that's what they should be.*

There are alternate approaches

This overrepresentation demands specific responses targeting First Nations children and young people. To effectively address this, service delivery needs to inherently recognise and actively work to dismantle the structural, systemic, systematic and sociopolitical racism that exists, while supporting individual agency. This includes recognising the inadequacies of a Western justice system for First Nations young people, as described by a member of the headspace FNYAC:

> *It's not built on what works for mob or for community – it's based on individualistic concepts of what it means to be human, rather than the community collective views that Aboriginal people hold.*

The following elements are key for prevention and early intervention efforts targeting First Nations children and young people:

- **self-determination** – programs and interventions must be owned and controlled by First Nations communities, with a genuine commitment from government to self-determination.[18]
- **underlying risk and causal factors** – interventions must account for trauma exposure of children and young people, including the impact of maltreatment, grief, loss, parental incarceration and other events common in the histories of young people in contact with the justice system.[19]
- **positive relationships and connections to culture, family and kinship** – First Nations children and young people have said that relationships were key to keeping them out of the justice system.[20] Developing positive relationships, particularly with family, can be more important than a narrower focus on crime prevention. Having a trusted, reliable adult relationship is also important for First Nations young people in the justice system.[21]

[18] Stringfellow, R., Tauri, J. & Richards, K. (2022). *Prevention and early intervention programs for Indigenous young people in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, Research brief 32.

[19] Milroy, H., Watson, M., Kashyap, S., & Dudgeon, P. (2021). First Nations peoples and the law. *Australian Bar Review*, 510.

[20] Queensland Family and Children Commission (2022). *Yarning for change*, Retrieved from: Queensland Family and Child Commission // Yarning for Change: Listen to my voice (qfcc.qld.gov.au); Stringfellow, R., Tauri, J. & Richards, K. (2022). *Prevention and early intervention programs for Indigenous young people in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, Research brief 32.

[21] Commission for Children and Young People (2021). *Our youth, our way: inquiry into the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the Victorian youth justice system, Summary and recommendations*. Melbourne.

- **social and emotional wellbeing focus** – interventions must be based on the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations young people, recognising the impact of cultural, social, historical and political factors on First Nations peoples.[22]

There are many examples of effective alternative interventions, designed and delivered by First Nations organisations, such as the Murri Watch program and others recently funded by the Commonwealth Government. These are built on principles of justice reinvestment, and prioritise cultural connection, belonging and kinship.

j) any other related matters

Improving accountability

As a signatory to the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has an obligation to take all possible measures to help all children in Australia realise their rights. However, as noted by the National Children's Commissioner, Australia lacks robust governance and accountability mechanisms to ensure both the Commonwealth and states and territories fully comply with the obligations under this Convention and other international instruments that Australia has ratified. Improved accountability is needed if Australia is to address this.

Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility

headspace recommends all Australian jurisdictions raise the minimum age of criminality to 14 years, consistent with Australia's human rights obligations and current understanding of childhood development. As a member of the headspace FNYAC noted that children and young people can be incarcerated but not considered old enough to perform a range of other activities:

> *We don't take into consideration that we're still developing and growing as young people. We're not considered old enough to vote, consent to sex or drive.*

Another FNYAC member stressed the need for preventative approaches:

> *We need to spend more time focusing on leading these young people in the right direction and not just putting them in detention centres the moment they offend.*

There are many reasons to raise the age of criminality.[23] In particular:

- **neurobiological and medical science shows** children lack the maturity to fully understand their actions – evidence shows children below 14 years of age lack the capacity to form the necessary intent for criminal responsibility. While the principle of *dolci incapax* (that children aged 10 to 14 are 'criminally incapable' unless proven otherwise) can be applied to avoid unnecessary incarceration, evidence indicates this is not used routinely, and most children in detention are on remand.[24]
- **children in the justice system often have complex needs** – these are better addressed outside the justice system. Better investment in other systems (such as housing, health and mental health services and so) is required to better meet the needs of these children and young people.
- **incarceration fails to achieve desistance or rehabilitation** – prison is not a deterrent. Rather, it can undermine the wellbeing of children and young people, and compound and exacerbate the trauma they have experienced. It also removes First Nations young people from their families, communities, country and culture – protective factors that contribute to their social and emotional wellbeing.[25]
- **detention perpetuates the cycle of poverty and other legacies of colonisation** – disadvantage and unequal position in wider society are the most significant factors driving for First Nations people in contact with the justice system. These are often intergenerational and can be traced to the dispossession of land, genocide, disruption to kinship and other impacts of colonisation. Rather than break this cycle, incarceration

[22] Milroy, H., Watson, M., Kashyap, S., & Dudgeon, P. (2021). First Nations peoples and the law. Australian Bar Review, 510.

[23] Australian Human rights Commission (2021). *The minimum age of criminal responsibility*. Retrieved from: PowerPoint Presentation (humanrights.gov.au).

[24] Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, (2020). *Submission to the Council of Attorney Generals (COAG) age of criminal responsibility working group*.

[25] Ibid.

further contributes to disengagement from education, unemployment, poor mental health and social exclusion, entrenching cycles of poverty and institutionalisation.[26]

Greater investment in prevention, early intervention and therapeutic alternatives to detention

As the National Children's Commissioner pointed out, failure to meet children and young people's basic rights often manifests as drivers of their contact with the criminal justice system, including poverty, intergenerational trauma, racism, violence and abuse, and homelessness.[27] While raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility is a critical step, it is not the only change required to uphold the rights of children and young people.

Raising the minimum age also needs to be supported by greater investment in prevention and early intervention programs to address the needs of children and young people before they come in contact with police, and with therapeutic models that meet the needs of young people who do come into contact with the justice system. As noted by a hYNRG member:

> *Diversion must be the default. Police and courts should have greater access to community-led diversion programs that address underlying causes. This may include mentoring, family mediation, education re-engagement and employment pathways. The law should operate as a stabilising mechanism, not a gateway to deeper system involvement.*

As noted earlier, a complex array of factors contribute to potential pathways to offending behaviour, and many young people who find themselves in the youth justice system have a history of domestic and family violence, physical and emotional abuse, and neglect. Their parents also often have a forensic history.[28] As a hFRG member noted:

> *Inadequate housing and limited cost of living relief creates conditions where young people are not able to have their needs met by either the family, or their broader social context. Additionally, rising levels of domestic and family violence create home and living situations that are not safe for many young people…. Governments need to do far more to address domestic and family violence and poverty as drivers of youth offending and associated criminal justice system contact for young people.*

Given this, high quality mental health care for all young people in the youth justice system is essential. This care must be tailored to the needs and experiences of each young person, including catering for their social, cognitive and communication needs and preferences.

Providing mental health and wellbeing early interventions for young people experiencing mild to moderate symptoms at risk of initial or further involvement in the justice system is also important.[29] Intervening and addressing psychological distress and poor mental health can reduce rates of recidivism and help young people to engage in prosocial activities.

Support for services to better meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of at risk young people

To better support the needs of young people at risk of contact with the justice system, community-based mental health services need the capacity and capability to respond to their needs.

The complexity of the system and cultural barriers can make it difficult for young people to access the support they need. And given the high prevalence of neurodiversity and challenges such as speech and language delays, it can be difficult for mainstream services to respond effectively. Young people in contact with the youth justice system need services that:

- provide multidisciplinary, holistic care across their mental health, physical health, alcohol and other drugs and work and study needs
- are tailored to their cognitive, social, language and sensory needs and preferences
- are culturally safe, particularly for First Nations young people

[26] Temple, C., Mercer, P., & Callope, N. (2021). Australia's First Nations incarceration epidemic: Origins of overrepresentation and a pathway forward. Retrieved from: Australia's First Nations incarceration epidemic: origins of overrepresentation and a path forward - UNAA.

[27] National Children's Commissioner (2024). *'Help way earlier!' How Australia can transform child justice to improve safety and wellbeing,* Australian Human Rights Commission.

[28] Atkinson, B. (2018). *Report on Youth Justice, version 2*. Retrieved from: Atkinson Report on Youth Justice (dcssds.qld.gov.au).

[29] Orygen Institute (2017). Double jeopardy: developing specialized mental health care for young people engaging in offending behaviours. Retrieved from: Orygen_Double-Jeopardy_policy_brief.

- have the flexibility to respond appropriately to the complexity and breadth of their needs, including addressing trauma, neurodevelopment challenges and mental health concerns.

Offering holistic care at the right time and with adequate coordination and integration across service providers is crucial to supporting young people not only to refrain from engaging in the criminal justice system but also to lead happy, healthy lives. headspace currently offers a range of services to meet the inter-related needs of young people in a variety of modes such as in person, online and via telephone. headspace also provides work and study support which young people can also access to further support their wellness.

Appendix 1: headspace programs and services

headspace provides early intervention mental health services to 12 to 25 year olds. headspace offers young people integrated and individualised support across mental health, physical and sexual health, alcohol and other drugs, and work and study. Such holistic, multi-faceted support are a vital component of a responsive service system model.

Our integrated service model includes:

- **headspace centres:** the headspace network of services are youth-friendly, integrated service hubs, where multidisciplinary teams provide holistic support across the four core streams.
- **community awareness:** guided by local youth reference groups and centre staff, Community Awareness Officers at each headspace centre work locally to build mental health literacy, reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking, identify local needs and ensure young people know they can access help at headspace.
- **digital mental health programs and resources:** headspace uses its digital platform to make a range of information and supports accessible to young people, parents and carers, professionals and educators.
- **eheadspace:** our virtual service provides safe, secure support to young people and their family and friends from experienced youth mental health professionals via email, webchat or phone. There are also online group sessions led by clinicians or peers, focused on the big issues facing young people and their family and friends.
- **headspace campaigns:** campaigns focus on stigma reduction, building mental health literacy and encouraging help seeking, while ensuring young people know headspace is a safe and trusted place they can turn to in order to support their mental health.
- **headspace in schools and universities:** Through evidence-based mental health promotion, prevention, early intervention and postvention services, headspace delivers key initiatives designed to support the mental health and wellbeing of school communities. This includes:
    - **Be You** – a mental health and wellbeing initiative for learning communities, supporting secondary schools to prepare for, respond to and recover together where there has been a death by suicide.
    - **Mental Health Education Program** – free mental health education workshops for schools
    - **University support program** – training and education opportunities to Australian universities to build their capacity and confidence to engage in conversations about mental health and wellbeing.
- **programs and resources to support priority cohorts of young people**: these include
    - **Visible project –** a community based initiative using artwork as a form of community engagement and awareness.
    - **Yarn Safe –** mental health and wellbeing resources and support for First Nations young people.
- **vocational supports:** headspace centres provide integrated mental health and vocational support to young people to help them remain engaged in work and study, including implementing Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in headspace centres. In addition, headspace provides vocational support via:
    - **headspace Work and Study Online** (hWS) is a national digital program that provides integrated mental health and vocational support via the phone, video conferencing, online messaging and email. hWS works closely with young people across their work/study journey from identifying work/study goals to maintaining a work/study placement, typically for a period of around three months.
    - **headspace Career Mentoring** connects young people aged 18 to 25 years living with mental health challenges with industry professionals to meet fortnightly over a period of six months via video conferencing and/or the phone to enhance a young person's employment and career opportunities.
    - **headspace Individual Placement and Support** is available in-person at 50 services.

Supporting First Nations young people

headspace has strong reach with First Nations people: during 2022-23, headspace provided support for more than 9,500 First Nations young people. This represents relatively high engagement with First Nations young people; while 4.5% of Australians aged 12 to 25 years identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 10% of

headspace clients identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. headspace also has a First Nations staff network, with 80 members as at June 2023.

The First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement Division within headspace National provides a coordinated and resourced approach to ensuring headspace services are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of First Nations young people, their families, communities and First Nations staff.

Last year headspace National released the headspace First Nations Strategy 2023-24, setting clear goals and priority actions for our organisation. The strategy is First Nations led, informed and governed and replaces our previous Reconciliation Action Plan. The strategy is informed by learnings from our independently commissioned Embedding Cultural Practice and Safety Project review and our commitment to the four priority reform areas in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Our strategy goals are set to enhance cultural capability, governance, and leadership at headspace, ensure culturally safe care underpinned by First Nations approaches to social and emotional wellbeing, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and incorporate principles of First Nations data governance, collection and sharing.

To achieve change in these areas, our First Nations Strategy Working Group have developed a range of projects and strategies and track their progress utilizing WEAVR, a First Nations developed tool for managing business strategies or plans related to reconciliation. To support innovation in our service offerings and adopt different outreach approaches, headspace National has recently trialled programs that value First Nations insight, integrity and leadership. This includes:

- **Cultural supervision pilot** – in this initiative, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander supervisors provide cultural supervision for non-Indigenous clinicians, to develop their knowledge, skills, insight and wisdom in how to support and care for both young people, and themselves, in the cultural context of working with community.
- **First Nations Community connection project** – this is designed to support centre connection with local First Nations communities, enhance community engagement, outreach and collaborative activities and increase access by First Nations young people
- **Our Way Our Say** culturally safe social and emotional wellbeing training resources for young people in Darwin schools, developed by an Aboriginal Cultural Advisory Council of key Aboriginal leaders from the Darwin community, in partnership with headspace National.
- **Yulara and Mutitjulu** service expansion from headspace Alice Springs, established by the Central Australian Aboriginal Council in partnership with headspace National, and funded by the Northern Territory PHN. The expansion required innovation of the headspace Model to meet the needs of the young people and families in the remote communities of Yulara and Mutitjulu.
- **Yarnspace** – a safe, anonymous online group for First Nations young people to yarn and connect, moderated by First Nations peer workers.