



headspace year in review



2023-2024



acknowledgement of Country

headspace would like to acknowledge First Nations people as this continent's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.

The mind body spirit culture country artwork was created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist Riki Salam of We Are 27 Creative after consultation with key members of the headspace network and cultural advisors.



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a message from the board chair



Ben Shields
Board Chair, headspace

As we reflect on another year at headspace, I wish to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the many different lands upon which headspace operates, and pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

After a challenging year dominated by the Voice to Parliament campaign, it is more important than ever that headspace stands in solidarity with First Nations young people and their communities. While there's still a way to go at headspace, I am proud of the steps we're taking to ensure the needs and perspectives of First Nations people are included at all levels of the organisation. This year, we established the Board's First Nations Cultural Governance Committee headed up by Board Director Donna Burns – a significant milestone that strengthens First Nations representation and decision-making on the Board. This initiative aligns with our broader First Nations Strategy, which continues to guide headspace in becoming a more culturally safe and responsive organisation. I'm grateful to our First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement division led by Daniel Knapp and our First Nations Youth Advisory Council for their invaluable work in the interests of First Nations communities this year.



The work we do together is making a profound impact, and I look forward to the year ahead as we continue to support the mental health and wellbeing of Australia's young people.

There continues to be increased need in the community for mental health services and I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone across the headspace network who is responding to that need from young people. From our centres to the national team, the headspace staff makes a tangible difference to the lives of young people and their families every day. This year, we ushered in a new enterprise agreement for national staff, which enshrined improved workplace conditions for our most valuable asset – our people. I also want to thank CEO Jason Trethowan and the headspace National Executive team for their leadership and for continuing to steward headspace through new challenges and opportunities.



As needs for mental health services continues to grow, so too does the importance of equitable access. A key area of focus this year has been expanding our online services to ensure young people can access the support they need, when they need it. Our review of digital mental health programs has provided us with clear directions for future growth, allowing us to refine and innovate how we deliver these services to continue growing our reach and accessibility. We also were pleased to launch our first multicultural practice strategy setting the direction in which we collaborate across headspace with multicultural communities. The implementation of the strategy has been resourced by our fundraising efforts and the wonderful support we receive from our corporate partners.

Critical gaps in the mental health workforce, particularly in rural and remote areas, is an ongoing concern. Our Early Career Program is one way we are addressing this issue, placing allied health graduates and student clinicians into headspace centres across the country to build a pipeline of new professionals while also getting support to young people sooner. We are very pleased that the program received a \$27 million boost in this year's Federal Budget, which will allow us to expand to 85 participating centres and bring more than 40 new graduates on board. We thank the Department of Health and Aged Care for their continued support of this program and headspace more broadly.

We also welcome the government's \$3.5 million investment to undertake a review of headspace's funding model and governance. I extend my sincere thanks to Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP, for his commitment to strengthening the sustainability and effectiveness of our organisation.

Finally, thank you to my fellow Board members – our Directors and Youth Advisors – for guiding and governing the organisation through another year. It's a privilege to serve as Board Chair alongside such a talented and experienced group of people who each bring invaluable expertise to our collective decision-making. A special thanks to headspace co-founder Professor Patrick McGorry AO for his strategic insights and counsel this year as our inaugural Patron.

I'm incredibly proud of all that headspace has achieved this year and feel optimistic for what the future holds. The work we do together is making a profound impact, and I look forward to the year ahead as we continue to support the mental health and wellbeing of Australia's young people.

Ben Shields

Board Chair, headspace



a message from the CEO



Jason Trethowan
Chief Executive Officer
headspace

As Australia's flagship national youth mental health initiative, I am incredibly thankful to the federal government, young people and the broader community for their commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Young people in larger numbers continue to choose headspace as a safe place to come for a yarn and talk through issues when experiencing a difficult time. In response, our teams across headspace National and our growing network of centres continue to provide impactful and cost-effective care and supports.

If the past few years have shown us anything, it's the importance of agility in addressing the evolving needs of young people, their families and communities. I'm immensely proud of the way headspace has risen to this challenge and continued to adapt in response to a changing environment. This occurs despite the many systemic, structural, workforce and funding challenges the headspace network experiences.

In the face of these challenges, we've maintained our focus on delivering quality care and our commitment to meeting young people where they're at. Thank you to the staff at headspace National and everyone working at headspace locations around the country for your unwavering passion and dedication. Your commitment ensures young people continue to receive vital support when they need it most.

While I reflect on headspace's achievements with pride, I also acknowledge the heaviness of this moment in time. While still emerging from the pandemic, young people are now navigating new stressors such as climate change, cost of living pressures, and rising rate of school refusal. Many communities are responding to the sudden loss of young people who've died by suicide or in other traumatic circumstances. Devastating conflicts are taking place around the world that are causing deep distress for many of the young people, families, and communities we work with, as well as the colleagues we work alongside.

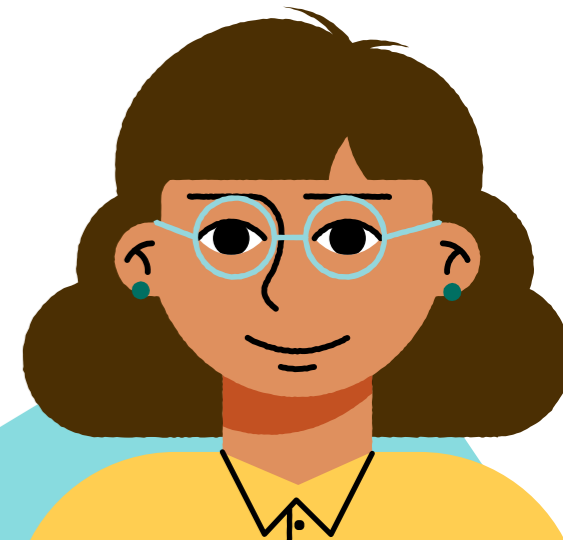
Against this backdrop, increasing needs for headspace services, programs and resources continues to grow. This year we supported more than 96,000 young people, including 23,000 who accessed online services like eheadspace, peer group chats, Telepsychiatry, and work and study support. We are privileged that so many young Australians trusted headspace to help them through a tough time this year.

To reach more young people in need, we established new centres and relocated others to improve accessibility. A highlight was celebrating the upgrade of our Lake Haven site from a satellite to a centre, alongside Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, the Hon Emma McBride MP. I thank Assistant Minister McBride for her continued support of our work and her commitment to the wellbeing of young people, particularly those in rural and regional communities.

Another key achievement this year was establishing outreach services with a First Nations focus in the remote communities of Yulara and Mutitjulu in the Northern Territory. This initiative reflects our ongoing commitment to providing culturally safe and accessible support for all young people, no matter where they live.

As always, we are indebted to the young people and families who inform our work. I thank the headspace Youth National Reference Group (hY NRG), First Nations Youth Advisory Council, and the National Family Reference Group for generously sharing their expertise and experiences to ensure headspace remains responsive to the needs of young people and their families. This year, we were pleased to introduce specialised 'streams' with hY NRG, such as governance and multicultural practice, to strengthen the group's connection with the organisation and enhance the professional development of members.

hY NRG members and other young people have also featured in community awareness campaigns and media opportunities this year, highlighting issues important to young Australians, such as the Voice to Parliament Referendum, anxiety about climate change, and online safety. These initiatives are just some of the ways we're amplifying the voices and needs of young people on a national scale.



**163**sites operating
across Australia

Through headspace Schools and Communities, we're helping to lower the risk and impact of suicide across Australia. Our major focus is on supporting school communities, through which we reach almost three-quarters of Australian schools. We thank Beyond Blue for continuing to contract headspace to deliver this vital service.

Our organisation exists within a broader mental health system that is stretched to its limits. I'm incredibly proud of the work we're doing to make this system better, whether that's through advocacy and policy submissions, initiatives to create a more sustainable mental health workforce, or research to build the evidence base for best practice in youth mental health.

We are also doing critical work internally to ensure headspace continues to improve the support it offers. This year we were pleased to launch the Multicultural Practice Strategy, a key step to enhance our services for multicultural young people. In partnership with the InsideOut Institute, we also developed new resources to help clinicians better support young people with disordered eating. Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of our programs and services is key to our quality improvement, allowing us to keep evolving and adapting our practice.

The 2024 headspace Forum was an opportunity for our 1200-strong network to come together over three days, learn from each other and celebrate what we're achieving together. After a challenging few years, there was a renewed optimism for the work we do and the difference we're making, and I was reminded what a privilege it is to work at headspace.



This year we were pleased to launch the Multicultural Practice Strategy, a key step to enhance our services for multicultural young people.

Through our state forums, we continued to solidify the relationship between headspace National and our state and territory stakeholders to deliver best practice care to young people. The robust discussions that arise in these meetings are invaluable to our service improvement, with key themes emerging around the need for integrated care and enhanced access, as well as cultural capability and safety. We also thank state and territory governments for their support of headspace through various state-funded initiatives. Collaboration with states and territories remains a key focus. Our partnerships with QLD Health are a noteworthy example from this year.

Of course, our achievements aren't ours alone. Our work is made possible through collaboration with countless stakeholders including our lead agencies, Primary Health Partnerships (PHNs), sector partners, governments, universities and international collaborators like Jigsaw and Foundry. In particular, our relationship with eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant has been invaluable in helping us address rising concerns about the online safety of young people. I'm grateful for all these partnerships and our work together to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young Australians.

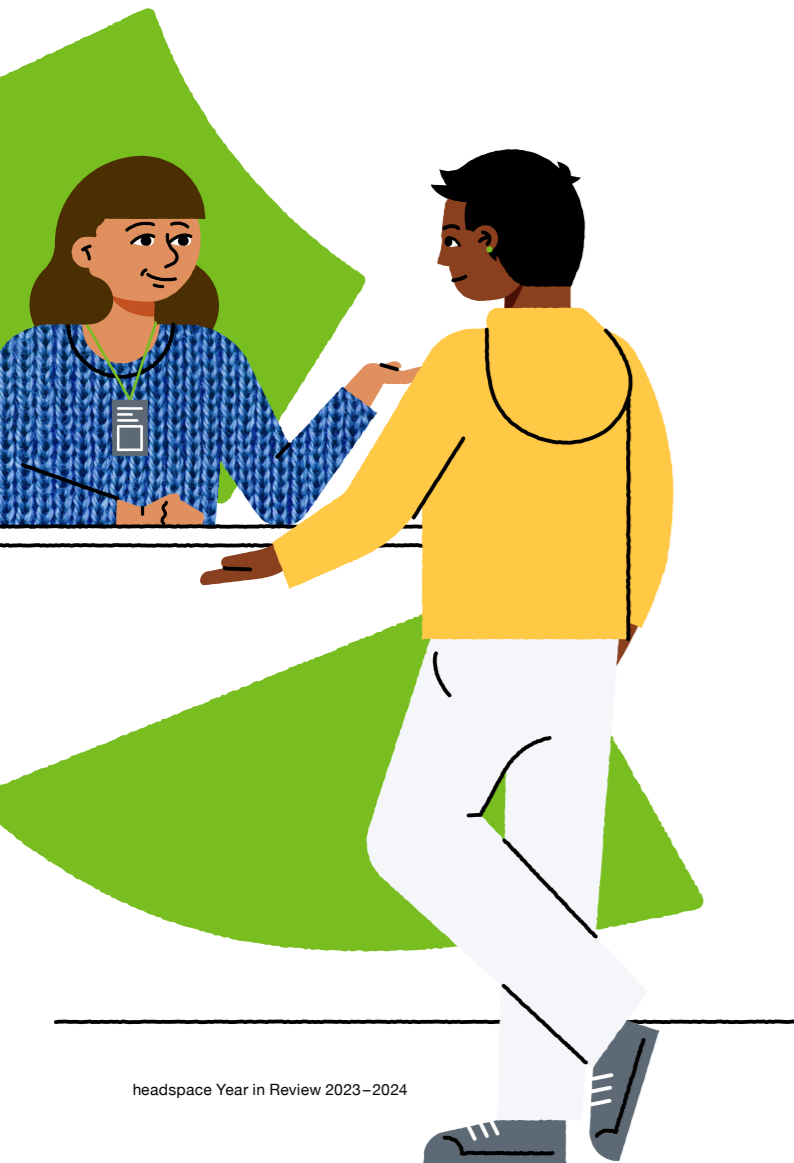
While the cost of living crisis dominated the national conversation this year, we recognise that the cost of doing business has also significantly increased. Our organisation is not immune to these impacts and this year we've needed to service a greater need with tighter resources. I wish to thank the Department of Health and Aged Care, as well as our many corporate partners and philanthropic donors, for enabling us to continue to grow our reach and impact in a challenging economic climate.

My deep thanks goes to the executive of headspace National for their leadership and oversight of a rapidly changing environment within headspace. Thank you also to Board Chair Ben Shields, Board Directors, Youth Advisors to the Board, and Patron Professor Patrick McGorry AO for their guidance and stewardship.

This year marks 18 years since headspace was created and we've seen incredible progress in that time. We look forward to celebrating the anniversary of the first headspace centre next year with our network, supporters and community.

Together, we will continue to adapt and evolve to meet the challenges that lie ahead, with one clear goal: ensuring every young Australian is supported to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities. Thank you to everyone who is joining us on this journey.

our vision is that all young people are supported to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities



Research shows that vulnerability to mental ill-health peaks in adolescence and early adulthood. More than one-third of young people experience a mental health disorder before the age of 14, and by age 25, 65% of people have experienced mental ill-health.

headspace provides early intervention mental health services to support people aged 12–25, and their family, through this critical time in their lives.

Our work also focuses on supporting young people to maintain good mental health through connection and purpose. We strive to reduce stigma and provide a safe space for all young people to seek help and access the right supports.

Over the past 18 years, headspace has provided 7.5 million services to more than 939,000 young Australians, helping them to strengthen their wellbeing, navigate life's challenges and maintain their mental health.

In 2023–24, our work continued to make a difference by reaching 96,240 young people and providing 513,742 services through our headspace centres.



our holistic approach

Recognising that there are many factors that affect health and wellbeing, we support young people across four core areas: mental health, physical and sexual health, alcohol and other drugs, and work and study. We provide a range of support pathways so that young people can get the help they need, when they need it, and in the way that works best for them.

Two in five

young people have experienced mental ill-health in the past 12 months



headspace centres

Young people can access a range of in-person support options through a national network of 160 headspace sites across metropolitan, regional and rural Australia. This includes satellites and outreach services, each tailored to the needs of the local community.

headspace online services

eheadspace is our national online and phone counselling service available seven days a week, every day of the year. eheadspace supports young people who might not be able to access a headspace centre, or prefer to get help online. Providing a secure and anonymous place to talk to a professional or peer means many young people who wouldn't ordinarily seek help in person are getting access to support and tools to manage their mental health when they need it.

headspace Telepsychiatry

headspace Telepsychiatry provides people aged 12-25, in eligible regional and rural areas, with access to highly skilled psychiatrists via video consultations. These psychiatrists are experts in youth mental health and have experience working with young people from various backgrounds.

513,742

occasions of service via headspace centres in 2023-24

headspace Work and Study

headspace Work and Study supports people aged 15-25 to plan a career, find employment or work towards further education. This is done in a highly accessible, confidential and youth-friendly environment. headspace Work and Study includes one-on-one support with a career specialist and programs include Career Mentoring, Work and Study online and Work and Study support delivered through 50 headspace centres based on the international, evidence-based Individual Placement Support model.

headspace Schools and Communities

headspace Schools and Communities supports and partners with Australian schools, communities, government agencies, universities, sports clubs and other organisations to build the mental health literacy and capacity of professionals working with children, young people and families. headspace Schools and Communities also responds when Australian communities experience disasters or crises. headspace Schools and Communities is the service delivery partner for Be You for all primary and secondary schools nationally.

headspace Early Psychosis

The headspace Early Psychosis program supports young people experiencing, or at risk of developing, psychosis. The program is delivered at 14 headspace centres and focuses on early intervention and providing young people and their families with timely access to specialist support.

participation is at the heart of our work

Young people and their families are experts in their own lives and have the right to be actively involved in decisions that impact them. That's why participation is core to everything we do.

By safely and meaningfully incorporating the lived experience and expertise of young people and their families into our governance, strategy, and the design and delivery of programs and services, we ensure that headspace stays relevant, delivers appropriate services, remains a trusted and respected provider, and continually improves the quality of support we provide.

headspace Youth National Reference Group

The headspace Youth National Reference Group, or hY NRG (pronounced 'high energy'), is made up of people from varying ages, genders and backgrounds across Australia who are passionate about making a difference to the lives of other young people. In 2023–24, hY NRG has continued to play a critical role at headspace National, ensuring we incorporate the views and experiences of young people at all levels of the organisation.

hY NRG members have been involved in 89 opportunities over the past 12 months, including advising the headspace Executive team and other governance committees, informing headspace resources and content, and co-creating a series of workshops for schools. hY NRG members have shared their lived experience in media campaigns, at Parliament House and in project working groups.

This year, we implemented a new way of working with this reference group – the participation stream model. Through this model, hY NRG members can choose to work more closely with areas of the business they're most passionate about, like media and marketing, governance or multicultural practice. This has built closer connections between hY NRG and a range of teams within headspace National, and has enabled us to provide greater professional development and advocacy opportunities to hY NRG members.

Visible

The Australian Youth Advocates for Mental Health (AYAMH) are a group of young people from across Australia who have co-designed and now deliver Visible – a creative process and national online platform, bringing together artists and young people from diverse backgrounds to share powerful lived experience stories through art. Phase Two of Visible has engaged with communities, including young carers in Melbourne and young people with migrant and refugee backgrounds in Western Sydney. The next engagement is in development and will work with a regional First Nations community.



Annie Hong
(she/her)
Gadigal Lands NSW

When Annie came to headspace seeking support for her mental health, she realised how important low-cost, early intervention services are for young people.

She joined hY NRG to advocate for improved access to services and resources, so that all young people can receive appropriate, responsive, and high-quality care.

Annie has completed her Honours in Psychology and is now wrapping up a Bachelor of Laws. She is eager to use her legal and psychology skills to shape policies and programs in the mental health sector. She is passionate about fostering mentally healthy workplaces and ensuring young people entering the workforce are supported.

Her advice for young people having a tough time is: "Take your journey at your own pace and celebrate the small and big wins."

National Family Reference Group

Family and other caregivers play an important role in a young person's journey to better wellbeing. This year, the headspace National Family Reference Group continued advocating for family inclusion across headspace services.

The group is made up of family members – defined uniquely by each young person – who have lived experience supporting young people through their mental health journey. The 12 active members have thrived working in tandem with hY NRG and other advisory groups.

The National Family Reference Group members actively participate in governance committees, provide input into project working groups, and review content. They have also shared their lived experience as panel members at the headspace Forum, informed policy submissions, contributed to the creation of a National Family Survey and had representatives speak at Federal Parliament. The group were able to meet in-person twice over the past year to network, collaborate, reflect and plan for continued family engagement and inclusion at headspace.

First Nations Youth Advisory Council

The First Nations Youth Advisory Council (FNYAC) was established in 2023. Members work across different projects and divisions at headspace National to offer support, guidance and advice on culturally responsive and appropriate ways of working with First Nations young people and families.

This year, the FNYAC spent time establishing and connecting to purpose. The group met in-person and online to offer valuable support and explore ways of doing, being and creating with stakeholders such as First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement, clinical practice, hY NRG, and other advisory groups.

building stronger care with family involvement

headspace recognises that family, whether biological or chosen, plays a key role in a young person's life, and can be a significant resource in supporting their mental health and wellbeing. Integrating family into the clinical care of young people is an integral part of good care, and essential to providing comprehensive and effective support.

Enhancements in family inclusive practice

Over the past year, the Family Inclusive Practice team has made notable strides in advancing family inclusion across headspace. Key initiatives include:

- **New resources:** Development of website resources tailored for the families of young people.
- **Support and integration:** Assisting teams across headspace National to adopt a family inclusive approach.
- **Training and consultation:** Offering consultations, training and resources to elevate family inclusive practices at headspace centres.

Training and workshops

In response to Clinical Leads highlighting a need for enhanced training, the Family Inclusive Practice team introduced the 'Working with Family' workshops. These workshops aimed to boost confidence and skills in therapeutic work involving both young people and their families. Run in-person over two days, they provided interactive, skills-focused training, and were delivered in five capital cities between August 2023 and April 2024.

96 participants were recorded from 84 different headspace services during this time, and the feedback was exceptional:

97% of participants left feeling more confident and skilled in working with families.

Sessions were described as "energising" and worked to "challenge [our] pre-existing beliefs".

Those who participated were excited to "replicate" these workshops and share what they learned with their teams.

Future directions

The next phase for the 'Working with Family' workshops involves collaboration with First Nations colleagues and community in the Northern Territory. This initiative aims to incorporate culturally appropriate practices for working with First Nations young people, their families and communities.

Promoting family inclusive practice

The headspace Forum served as a wonderful opportunity to advocate for family inclusive practice. Highlights from the Forum included:

- **Panel discussion:** 'The Power and Potential of Family Inclusion', featuring professionals and individuals with lived experience discussing the value of professional care that meaningfully included family.
- **Lightning round event:** Showcasing the creative and meaningful methods centres are using to welcome and include family.
- **Workshop:** The Family Reference Group and headspace centre staff shared practical examples of how to foster a welcoming, family-friendly culture.

Feedback from the Forum indicated that a significant number of participants planned to implement their learnings about family inclusive practice at their centres.



Ash Wylie
(he/they)
Meanjin Land QLD

Ash discovered the power of sharing his lived experience while he was part of the youth reference group at headspace Caboolture.

As a young carer living with a disability, Ash recognises the importance of reaching out for support and advocating for oneself when experiencing a tough time.

Ash is a member of the LGBTIQ+ community and knows that discovering your identity can be an exciting and important part of young people's lives.

He is passionate about advocating for governments to listen to young people's perspectives on the issues that impact them, and one day wants to work in the community engagement space.

Ash says he is grateful for the connections he has made at headspace and that he feels happy each time he walks through the big green doors.

He loves his dog, Maya, and takes her on walks as one way of maintaining a healthy headspace.

supporting the needs of multicultural communities

Multicultural young people are underrepresented in Australia's youth mental health services, despite facing increased risk factors that can undermine mental health and wellbeing. Intersecting experiences such as pre-migration history, intergenerational trauma, racism and discrimination, social and economic exclusion, stigma, and visa status can all impact on multicultural young people's mental health and ability to access support.

The Multicultural Practice team at headspace National works to better meet the needs of multicultural staff, young people, families and communities by driving culturally responsive practice across the organisation.



Launch of the Multicultural Practice Strategy

In 2023 the Multicultural Practice team developed the headspace National Multicultural Practice Strategy, which will guide the organisation on addressing challenges and embracing opportunities to enhance services for multicultural young people.

The strategy was informed by key pieces of research including:

- a review of the barriers and facilitators affecting access to mental health services for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- consultations with 40 headspace centres
- data analysis on the engagement of multicultural young people in headspace services.

An advisory group of multicultural sector experts, headspace network representatives and young people provided guidance and feedback throughout the development process to ensure the strategy reflects the priorities and needs of multicultural communities across Australia.

The strategy was launched at the 2024 headspace Forum alongside a panel discussion on engaging with multicultural young people and their communities.

New programs to support multicultural young people

headspace National is partnering with the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) to deliver Reverb 2.0 – a program that addresses mental health in culturally diverse communities through workshops delivered by multicultural young people with lived experience of seeking mental health support. The Reverb workshops have been co-designed by a group of youth advocates and are set to be delivered in schools and headspace centres across Australia from October 2024.

A funding grant from Grant Thornton Foundation is supporting a new internship program for international students. Student interns will work with the Multicultural Practice team to consult with international students about the mental health and wellbeing information they need, and then create resources to support them.

Embedding culturally responsive practice

Over the past year, the Multicultural Practice team has provided guidance and advice to teams across the organisation on incorporating culturally responsive approaches into clinical practice, resources, engagement with communities and work practices. This included working with the First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement team to develop a cultural safety plan for the headspace Forum and supporting the first headspace Youth National Reference Group multicultural stream by providing reflective sessions and support to reference group members from multicultural backgrounds.

Devin Crowhurst (they/them) Erawirung Land SA

As a non-binary person with a talent for public speaking, Devin is a powerful voice for LGBTIQ+ youth. In fact, Devin emceed the first ever Riverland Pride March in 2021, leading almost 200 people from across the region through Berri.

It was through their experience seeking support at their local headspace centre that Devin first discovered their passion for representing queer people from rural backgrounds.

Since then, Devin has lent this perspective to the youth reference group at headspace Berri, and now as a member of hY NRG.

Devin has lived experience of mental health challenges and ADHD, but they are eager to show young people that getting through these tough times – and thriving – is possible. Devin says that finding their identity and community has been a really important part of their journey.

Outside of their mental health advocacy work, Devin is a creative who loves drawing and painting.

headspace centres support their communities

Network expansion and new initiatives

The financial year 2023–2024 marked a significant period of growth for headspace, with the establishment of three new centres and the upgrading of two satellite services to full centre status. The newly opened centres are located in Box Hill (VIC), Shellharbour (NSW), and Hawkesbury (NSW), enhancing access to vital mental health services for young people in these regions.

In a notable achievement, the satellites in Esperance (WA) and Armidale (NSW) have transitioned into fully operational headspace centres, broadening their service capabilities and community impact. Additionally, 10 services have relocated, enabling expanded service delivery and allowing headspace to reach more young people in need.

New initiatives in First Nations services

A key initiative this year was the expansion of culturally appropriate mental health services to remote First Nations communities. headspace established outreach services in Alice Springs, serving Yulara and Mutitjulu. These services offer a physical, branded presence, focusing on culturally relevant support. headspace Mutitjulu operates from a dedicated space behind the local clinic, providing social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) support through group activities and community awareness initiatives. Meanwhile, headspace Yulara, based at the Yulara clinic, focuses on one-on-one interactions, primarily for Aboriginal trainees living in the area.

These initiatives align with the national commitment to Closing the Gap and the Embedding Cultural Practice and Safety Model Review Report, emphasising the importance of promoting mental health in culturally appropriate ways, connecting with Country and culture, and integrating care with local clinics for a holistic approach. The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, as the lead agency, plays a crucial role in ensuring culturally safe and effective service delivery in these communities.

Community awareness and engagement

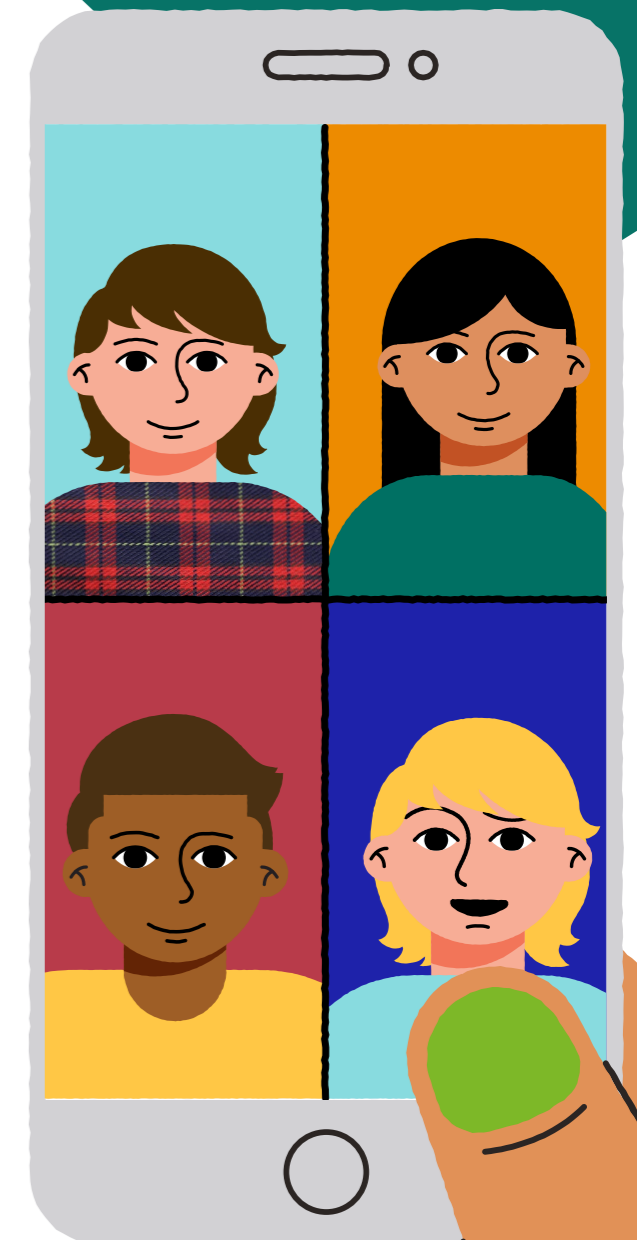
Community awareness and engagement continues to be a key enabler in the role of early intervention and stigma reduction of mental health in the community, including hard-to-reach priority groups. We continued to work with our Community Engagement Advisory Group to enhance this function in headspace centres, including launching a new crowd-sourced resource library to address the gaps in existing headspace National resources.

State meetings

headspace National facilitated meetings with PHNs, lead agencies, Centre Managers and Clinical Leads around Australia. The meetings provided an opportunity for the network to connect with each other and with headspace National. Each meeting focused on supporting multicultural communities and the integration between headspace and state-funded services.

Bilateral implementation

headspace National continues to support National Partnership commitments to increase integration between headspace and state-funded services. As the named delivery partner for youth mental health, we have partnered with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and state and territory governments to develop models of care that will enable young people accessing headspace services to get the level of support they need, when they need it. We appreciate the young person-centred collaboration with health departments, tertiary services and lead agencies to implement clinical in-reach initiatives and we look forward to work in other jurisdictions over the term of the agreements. Ultimately, this complex and important work has the potential to create more seamless and timely care for young people across Australia.



sharing best practice, strengthening our network



Every two years, more than 1,200 people from the organisations that make up the headspace network come together for the headspace Forum. With a workforce spread across the country, the Forum is an important opportunity to build relationships, share knowledge and ideas, and deepen learning to improve how headspace supports young people and their families.

The Forum, held in May 2024 and hosted in Meanjin (Brisbane) for the first time, centred around the theme One headspace – Many Communities. This speaks to the value that the full suite of headspace programs and services provide to communities across Australia, enabling them to access the right support, when and how they need it.

The three-day event comprised a plenary program facilitated by global youth affairs leader and advocate Angelica Ojinnaka-Psillakis, along with 24 breakout sessions that combined insights from industry-leading experts with best practice examples of delivery within the headspace context. In response to feedback from the 2022 Forum, a sharpened focus on education was implemented and new formats like peer-to-peer learning through lightning round sessions, tabletop discussions and a day of role-specific workshops were added.



Event highlights:

- A key focus of the Forum was sharing knowledge and best practice to better support priority groups. Dr Judy Tang from Invictus Health gave a keynote address on 'Power, Privilege and Perspective' and the importance of applying an intersectional lens in our work, while Daniel Knapp (Executive Director of First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement) and Bimba Chaven (Inclusion Lead – Multicultural Practice) moderated a panel discussion with headspace workforce and community partners on working with multicultural communities.
- A keynote presentation from Dr Steve Mathias, co-Executive Director of Canadian partner organisation Foundry, shared what the headspace model looks like on the global stage and the synergies between headspace and Foundry's community-based integrated health and social service network for young people in British Columbia.
- Through a comprehensive breakout program that included workshops, panels and presentations, the workforce deepened their understanding of key issues affecting the health and wellbeing of young people, and the practice initiatives from across the network that are improving how they are supported. Topics included cultural safety, neurodivergence, eating disorder support and gender affirming care.
- The Forum closed with insights from a youth panel on living in regional and remote Australia, moderated by hY NRG's Sereena Zanuso and headspace CEO Jason Trethowan.



Fiona
(she/they)
Gadigal Land NSW

Fiona is proud of her identity but says that growing up as a young person in a multicultural migrant family came with unique challenges.

While attempting to seek support for her mental ill-health, Fiona felt that the mental health system was not always accessible for multicultural young people like her. At the same time, they were facing other barriers, including stigma – both from herself and those around her.

It was because of their help-seeking experience that Fiona decided to join hY NRG. She is determined to ensure that voices like hers are represented and the challenges she faced in seeking support are addressed. Fiona is also passionate about advocating for mental health practitioners to take a strengths-based, intersectional approach to care.

Fiona is a volunteer at a headspace centre and in their spare time, flexes their creative muscles through poetry, music and art.

They are excited to use their lived experience to raise awareness about mental health issues and empower young people to get the support they need.

increasing equitable access through online support

There are many reasons why someone may not access in-person support at their local headspace centre. Geographical barriers, such as living in rural or remote areas, or the need for support outside centre hours, can be significant obstacles. Many young people find it more comfortable to seek support online, or may prefer to manage their mental health through self-help resources or by connecting with peers experiencing similar challenges.

headspace online services and supports are designed to meet these needs, ensuring all young people and their families can access the help they need, whenever they need it. The headspace website serves as the main portal, offering resources, services, and a way to connect care experiences all in one place.

more than

97,000

services delivered online

eheadspace

Since 2010, eheadspace has been the foundational online service at headspace, providing youth-friendly, holistic care via web-chat, email, and telephone. Available from 9am to 1am AEST, 365 days a year, eheadspace supported 14,087 young people and families in 2023–24, delivering 39,084 occasions of service.

eheadspace offers crucial support after hours, on weekends, or during centre closures. More than half (56%) of eheadspace services are provided outside business hours, with 21% of users also accessing headspace centres. eheadspace complements in-person care, offering a safety net during transitions between services, which is a high-risk period for disengagement. It also serves those unsure about needing in-person services or those not near a headspace centre.

A highlight this year was the launch of the Partners in Parenting program in partnership with Monash University. This evidence-based online program helps parents and carers support their high school-aged children's mental health and wellbeing through 10 interactive, self-paced modules covering communication, managing emotions, setting boundaries, resolving conflicts, and maintaining involvement as their children navigate independence.

Other significant program development milestones this year include:

- eheadspace was one of the first services in Australia to reach full accreditation under the National Safety and Quality of Digital Mental Health Standards, ensuring all systems are in place to deliver the highest quality of care to young people and families.
- Guided by headspace's commitment to providing culturally appropriate and responsive care, eheadspace continued to expand its ability to deliver services in languages other than English.

the headspace account

By creating an online profile, young people and their families can access services such as counselling, and work and study support, and view all their interactions with headspace. The headspace account also provides 24/7 access to tailored resources like articles, group chat transcripts, and interactive activities, along with service suggestions based on user preferences.

In 2023–24, 48,293 new headspace accounts were created, with many of these users accessing additional digital services like MyToolKit, Online Communities, Group Chat, and Interactive Decks, on top of the standard direct services. headspace continually adds new features to enhance coordination between online and in-person services, offering more control, flexibility, and choice. In 2023–24, headspace launched a booking system for Work and Study Online, allowing young people to independently schedule their initial appointments, enhancing autonomy and seamless access to support. Future enhancements will include expanding the online booking system and peer support.

Regional Phone Counselling Service

The Regional Phone Counselling Service provides phone and video counselling to secondary school aged young people in Victoria and NSW, especially those in regional and rural areas more than 50 km from a headspace centre, and school communities affected by natural disasters in Northern Rivers and Western NSW.

Embedded within regional schools, counsellors support students during school hours. Ninety secondary schools in Victoria and NSW are eligible for the service, allowing young people to receive weekly counselling from the same mental health counsellor for up to eight sessions. The service also guides school staff and parents and carers on supporting young people with mental health challenges.

Over the past year, the Regional Phone Counselling Service provided support to 263 service users in Victoria and 192 in NSW. This program plays a critical role in addressing the shortages of mental health professionals in many parts of rural, regional and remote Australia, connecting schools with expert, youth-friendly counsellors, and providing essential care to communities that might otherwise go without.

Program evaluation has confirmed how valuable this service is to regional schools and young people:

- 94% of those surveyed reported that without this program, the young people at their school would not have been able to access support.
- 100% of school respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the service to other schools.
- 92% of students who accessed the service agreed or strongly agreed that using the service gave them knowledge and/or skills to better manage or cope with their situation.

455

the number of service users supported by the Regional Phone Counselling Service in 2023–24

headspace Connect

Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and delivered by headspace National, headspace Connect provides free online telephone or video support and counselling to young people aged 16-25 years presenting to eligible headspace centres.

Launched in 2020 as a proof-of-concept program, headspace Connect aimed to integrate online and in-person services to reduce wait times and improve access to mental health care. The trial was highly successful, with high satisfaction and engagement, especially among young men and First Nations young people, demonstrating outcomes equivalent to or better than in-person services.

The service has since expanded to support rural, regional, and remote locations, improving equitable access to care in communities that have a limited mental health workforce. By delivering expert, evidence-based youth mental health care online, headspace Connect supplements local headspace services, helping young people get care as quick as possible while staying connected to additional local supports.

During 2023–24, headspace Connect provided services to 201 young people. Evaluation data shows that lower wait times and a preference for telehealth over in-person services were the primary reasons for choosing this support.

For those that received care within the program, more than 90% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the service met their expectations in relation to:

- speed of referral to appointment time
- level of involvement in decision making
- improvement in their understanding of their experiences.

more than 90% of headspace Connect participants would recommend the service to a friend needing support



**Joey Dijkstra
(they/them)
Noongar Land WA**

Joey is a queer, disabled young person hailing from rural Western Australia.

Although Joey experienced tough times growing up, they found support at headspace Albany, where they were equipped with skills, tools and connections that helped them to look after their mental health.

Growing up in a religious community, Joey says that the topic of mental health was sometimes regarded as taboo. Joey is determined to use their platform with hY NRG to continue dismantling stigma, and ultimately inspire others to seek help.

Making a positive difference in people's lives is important to Joey, who has completed their studies in Community Services.

In their spare time, they love to crochet, write poetry and read.

Their message to young people is: "You are important. Your struggles are real, but they aren't forever."

Online Communities

headspace's Online Communities continue to provide young people and their families with safe opportunities for meaningful connection, peer support and real-time discussion about topics that are important to them.

Since 2019, Peer Group Chats have provided a platform for sharing information and resources on mental health and wellbeing in a supportive group setting. Peer moderators, recruited and trained by headspace, facilitate these chats from Monday to Thursday evenings, offering non-judgmental support and helping users navigate their situations by creating an inclusive space for sharing lived experiences.

A recent evaluation of Online Communities showed that participants found listening to others' experiences particularly helpful and valued the connection and relatability of shared personal experiences. This underscores the need for online spaces where young people feel safe, included, heard, and understood.

"I have so much enjoyment talking to people who understand, which is why to me, after a long day's work, talking to people who are much like me is comforting and it really boosts my mood."

- Peer Chat participant November 2023

headspace Telepsychiatry

In rural and remote areas of Australia, accessing a psychiatrist can be challenging and costly. headspace Telepsychiatry addresses these barriers by offering free video consultations with skilled psychiatrists to young people attending headspace centres in these regions.

This year, headspace Telepsychiatry expanded its reach to 73 centres, providing primary and/or secondary consultations with centre clinicians. To compensate for reduced professional development and clinical support in these areas, headspace Telepsychiatry now offers monthly clinical case reviews with psychiatrists to 40 centres, including eheadspace and the GP Program. This has significantly increased clinicians' confidence in supporting young people with complex mental health needs. Additionally, 10 webinars were delivered to further support and up-skill clinicians in rural and remote headspace centres.

With centre engagement being a large component of our work, this year we produced a [video for Primary Health Networks and lead agencies](#) on how we can best support their headspace centre. We've also created a [short video aimed at young people](#) that demystifies what will happen in the consultation to reduce their anxiety prior to seeing the psychiatrist.

- **Primary consultations – 1,309**

where a young person and a psychiatrist meet via a secure telehealth link for an assessment and management plan

- **Secondary consultations – 223**

where the headspace multidisciplinary team at a rural or remote headspace centre meet with a psychiatrist once a month for clinical case reviews and support

- **Webinars – 10**

themed topics where headspace centre teams join for a one-hour webinar

208

**Online Peer Group Chats
in 2023–24**

4223

**attendances at Online
Community events
in 2023–24**

helping young people reach their work and study goals

Work and Study services at headspace have continued to experience a significant increase in demand across both online and in-person services. Cost of living pressures and the ongoing effects of school and employment disruption due to the pandemic have highlighted headspace's crucial role in providing employment and educational support to young people. The success of headspace's integrated service model lies in combining clinical support with employment and education services, ensuring young people are at the centre of their own decision-making while being guided by skilled specialists and clinicians. The trusted headspace brand and its network of centres, online services, and partners effectively reach those who benefit most from these supports.

A significant achievement this year was the recognition of headspace Work and Study in the 2023 Parliament of Australia's final report on Workforce Australia's Employment Services. The report recommended that the current Employment Services system be informed by the headspace Work and Study services model. This recognition is a crucial step in ensuring the continuation of services like Work and Study in the future.

Work and Study Online

headspace Work and Study Online supports young people aged 15–25 to achieve their work and study goals. Integrating work, study, and mental health support, it helps young people overcome barriers, build confidence and resilience, and improve their mental health and wellbeing. This year, 2,790 young people engaged with the service, with 80% feeling confident they could reach their work and study goals and 92% reporting satisfaction with the support received. Support is voluntary and tailored to each individual's goals, and for those without existing mental health support, it is available through Work and Study Online, benefiting 637 young people this past year.

Work and Study Online complements headspace centres by enhancing their work and study support delivery. In the past year, 139 centres referred young people to the service. Being online, it can support young people from any community across Australia. The website and headspace account provide excellent resources, including interactive activities, mock interviews, and peer group chats, all contributing to successful outcomes.

This year, the user experience was enhanced with a new online booking system, allowing young people to book their first appointment directly with a Work and Study Specialist. This system increased accessibility and autonomy, with 1,760 appointments booked between December 2023 and August 2024.

Work and Study centre support

In-person Work and Study support is available to young people aged 12–25 at 50 headspace centres nationally. Using the evidence-based Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, over 100 Work and Study Specialists provide integrated clinical and vocational support to young people whose mental health impacts their employment or education. This support is individualised, time-unlimited, and tailored to the preferences of each young person. Vocational Peer Workers work alongside Work and Study Specialists in a select number of headspace centres, providing vocational support to young people through the lens of lived experience.

headspace National has been engaged by the Department of Social Services as the Program Management provider, supporting centres to deliver consistent and quality work and study services. The Program Management team also coordinates an IPS enhancement trial in eight centres, where Work and Study Specialists offer cognitive enhancement coaching to help young people overcome cognitive challenges that affect their employment pursuits. Professor Susan McGurk, co-developer of the cognitive coaching curriculum, consults with the team.

In the past year, 3,174 young people received work and study support through headspace centres, with 71% indicating a positive work or study outcome when they exited the program. Of these, more than half indicated that obtaining new employment was their main takeaway from the program.

Mentoring

headspace Career Mentoring is an evidence-based, online service that matches young people aged 18–25 with working professionals for up to six months. This program helps young people develop career knowledge and confidence, navigate the job market, and achieve their employment goals.

The service enables young people who are geographically or socially isolated to virtually connect with a skilled working professional who shares their career interest. The use of a digital approach enables connection with an otherwise hard to reach cohort, where in-person services may be restricted, and provides access to highly skilled mentors unlimited by location. A mentor becomes a trusted ally, supporting the young person to build resilience, confidence, and momentum within their career.

headspace Career Mentoring leverages industry partnerships to train working professionals across Australia as volunteer mentors and mental health champions within their communities and workplaces. In the past year, 118 mentors volunteered, adding up over 631 hours of work, with 51 new mentors trained in mental health literacy and mentoring skills. Almost all mentors (97%) reported personal benefits, and all increased their understanding of young people's challenges in finding and maintaining work.

In 2023–24, 170 young people were supported over 765 sessions, with 39% securing new employment, 94% feeling more optimistic about their career future, and 95% feeling more confident to apply for jobs. Of the young people involved, 98% reported they would recommend the service to others, and 100% of participants reported that they were satisfied with their experience.

The service also introduced an online booking portal and e-mentoring platform, enhancing user experiences and providing better visibility of mentoring relationships, goals, and achievements.



strengthening the support network around young people

Rates of loneliness and mental health complexity are increasing among young people. Overall, young Australians are experiencing mental health challenges more strongly, and earlier, than ever before.

headspace Schools and Communities strengthens the support network around young people to optimise opportunities for connectedness and care. Our holistic and collaborative approaches can help to lower the risk and impact of suicide in communities across Australia.

Our work focuses on four key areas: building mental health literacy and resilience, fostering confidence and ability to seek help, supporting response and recovery from critical events, and working in partnership to create a more effective system.

72%

of all Australian schools are registered with Be You

169

critical incidents responded to by Be You in 2023–24

Be You

Be You continues to support educators to create positive, inclusive and responsive learning communities. Currently, 72% (7,574) of all Australian schools are registered with Be You, giving them access to free and evidence-informed tools, resources, events and support from a Be You Consultant to implement a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

In the first half of 2024, Be You Consultants delivered more than 100 sessions, reaching 3,300 educators across Australia. These sessions address key challenges in the education sector, offering practical tools, classroom resources, and insights from the latest research. Be You Consultants also provide tailored advice to help school staff implement the Be You framework effectively, ensuring their approaches are sustainable.

In the past year, Be You has responded to 169 critical incidents within school communities, including suicides and attempted suicides. Be You's immediate and ongoing support helps learning communities safely navigate these incidents, mitigate further risks and guide recovery. This work can include attending Emergency Response Team meetings, guiding staff on how to talk to students and families, and managing the impact of any media coverage.

A key aspect of Be You's work is supporting the development of postvention plans, which ensure schools have processes in place in the event of a critical incident. Since the start of this calendar year, 56 postvention planning workshops have been facilitated to more than 500 attendees. We're especially proud of our strategic partnership with the Northern Territory Department of Education to develop postvention plans for all secondary schools across the Territory.

Be You state and territory teams closely monitor the needs of educators and learning communities to ensure they remain responsive to emerging challenges like increased student anxiety, early presentations of risk and self-harm (particularly in primary schools), higher frequency of school refusal and increased reports of gender-based violence and family breakdown.

Mental Health Education Program

In 2023–24, the Mental Health Education Program delivered 1,661 mental health education workshops to 498 school communities across Australia. The workshops reached 66,839 school students and 6,520 parents and carers.

This year we celebrated a significant milestone, reaching 300,000 students since the project commenced. More than 17% of the Australian school-aged population has now taken part in our Mental Health Education Program.



**Fox Williams
(they/them)
Taungurung and
Dhudhuroa Land VIC**

An aspiring filmmaker, Fox is using the power of art to inspire young people to take care of their mental health.

Using their lived experience as an inspiration for their work, Fox has exhibited work that explores what it's like growing up as a non-binary person in a rural community.

They are determined to use their time as a hY NRG member to remind young people that they aren't alone. Fox encourages young people experiencing a tough time to not be afraid to ask for help.

Fox thinks there is great benefit to peer support and believes that talking to someone your own age, who relates to your story, is a simple and effective way to maintain good mental health.

Fox enjoys swimming in the river during summer and hitting the ski slopes in winter.



NSW community suicide postvention

Funded by the NSW Ministry of Health, the NSW Community Collaborative initiative brought together headspace National and Lifeline Australia to assist communities to plan for, respond to and recover from suicide events.

The initiative delivered an all-ages, all stages rapid response postvention impact model in communities across NSW that had a significant increase in local deaths by suicide, or a heightened risk of death by suicide that could lead to high levels of community exposure and impact.

An evaluation was conducted during 2023–2024 to assess how the program met its objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs).

Key findings:

- The initiative achieved its KPIs for reach, engaging with approximately 300 stakeholders across 15 community collaboratives and 10 additional communities in need of postvention planning support.
- Between 1 July 2023 and 31 May 2024, 113 notifications of deaths by suicide and other critical incidents were responded to in a coordinated and strategic manner within a best practice timeframe of 48 hours.
- 22 capacity building sessions were delivered to parents and carers who had been impacted or were at high risk of being impacted by a critical incident, exceeding the target of 15 sessions.
- Feedback indicates that the NSW Community Collaborative team supported most of the collaboratives to embed postvention principles into policies and procedures, strengthen connections between members and improve communication and use of safe language.

NSW natural disaster recovery

The headspace NSW Recovery to Resilience (R2R) program is funded by the NSW Ministry of Health to support the recovery of communities in the northern NSW region who were severely impacted by the 2022 floods. In 2023–24, the program supported local stakeholders with tailored activities and practical, reliable, evidence-based tools and strategies to promote individual and community wellbeing.

An evaluation of the program showed that stakeholders felt positive and appreciative towards the program and the headspace R2R team who worked with local stakeholders to plan, coordinate and deliver recovery and resilience activities within communities in need. The program activities prompted increases in help-seeking, wellbeing, social connection and capacity building among community members and stakeholders, supporting recovery from a natural disaster.

headspace University Support Program

University students face unique stressors that can affect their mental health, including academic demands, living away from home and support networks, and financial pressures. International students may also face language and cultural challenges.

In partnership with Australian universities, headspace aims to build the capacity of the higher education sector to strengthen mental health and wellbeing outcomes for staff and students. The University Support Program offers education and training sessions, policy and framework reviews, and postvention response and support.

In 2023–24, the program delivered 150 sessions to 1,493 university staff members, with 94% of evaluation respondents highly satisfied with the sessions they attended.

Evaluation findings showed that the Real Talk workshops improved understanding of mental health and wellbeing for 96% of respondents. The Toolkit sessions improved or reinforced understanding of suicide postvention for 91% of respondents and 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the session increased their confidence to have safe conversations about suicide with students.

Importantly, 55% of university staff who responded to the follow-up survey, sent six to nine months later, indicated that they had applied the safe language guide in a real-world situation and 32% had referred more students to recommended resources or support services.



Jamil Nabolé
(they/she/he)

Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung
Country VIC

Jamil Nabolé is a multidisciplinary creative, influencer and educator who shares their lived experience of mental health and wellbeing through various projects, with the aim of connecting with change makers and other young people to break down stigmas.

Being a young, neurodiverse, queer, Muslim person, from the afro diaspora and a migrant and refugee family, Jamil is passionate about intersectional and holistic approaches to care that move towards making support more accessible, self-empowering and culturally sensitive for people from diverse backgrounds. Their identity and experiences of seeking support inspired them to address disparities in the mental health space.

Jamil is also a young carer and acknowledges that balancing support for loved ones with their own mental health can be challenging.

Outside of hY NRG, Jamil is involved in a range of community projects as a consultant, facilitator, MC, and speaker.

broadening access to early psychosis services

As part of the headspace Early Psychosis (hEP) program, young people and their families and friends receive information and support in dealing with psychosis. This year has seen a number of significant events for the program, as well as strides towards improving and expanding the support available.

Australian Early Psychosis Program forum 2023

In October 2023, the headspace National Early Psychosis team participated in Orygen's Australian Early Psychosis Program (AEPP) forum in Darwin. This annual two-day event gathers clinical staff from the six hEP clusters, lead agencies, Primary Health Networks (PHNs), headspace National, Orygen, and the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC). The forum provided a platform to discuss and present on various activities within the hEP network. The second day focused on meetings with lead agencies and PHNs. At this year's forum, Vikki Ryall, Greg Young, Vanessa Skellern, and Vidhi Oberoi represented headspace. Vanessa and Vidhi gave a presentation on 'Understanding the hEP Cohort Data Nationally', marking the first opportunity in two years for hEP clusters to compare their data with both other clusters and national benchmarks.

headspace Forum 2024 Celebrating 10 years of headspace Early Psychosis

At the headspace Forum 2024, 40 representatives from the hEP network, including clinical staff, peer workers, lead agencies, PHNs, Orygen, and DoHAC, gathered for a day of celebration marking 10 years of hEP service delivery. Day one featured a stakeholder session where each hEP site showcased an initiative or innovation aimed at enhancing support for young people in their recovery. The session was co-facilitated by Orygen, who collaborate closely with headspace National to support the hEP network.

Development and release of new dashboards and reports in Tableau

The Data and Reporting team has been exceptionally busy developing and launching new reports and dashboards for the hEP network. Through close collaboration with the network and the Data System Program Managers, they have rolled out 17 new reports, enhancing the network's ability to monitor and evaluate service delivery.

A report titled 'The Value of Integrating the headspace Early Psychosis Program on a Primary Care Platform' has been finalised and published for both the network and DoHAC. This report, based on consultations with headspace centres providing hEP services, offers insights into how integration is achieved across the 13 centres where hEP is implemented.



Establishment of headspace Early Psychosis services in the ACT and Tasmania

Following the government's announcement of new hEP sites in the ACT and Tasmania, the Early Psychosis Services Manager and members of the Centre Services team have been engaged in the tender and procurement process for these services.

The establishment of hEP Tasmania, which includes a new headspace centre on Hobart's Eastern Shore, and hEP Canberra, is underway. Service delivery is anticipated to begin in late 2024 for Tasmania and mid-2025 for Canberra. Once operational, these new services will ensure that hEP support is available in every state and territory across Australia.



Jayden Delbridge (he/him) Darkinjung Land NSW

Jayden comes to hY NRG following several years of service at headspace centres on the Central Coast.

Jayden sought help for his mental health through headspace after a family member died by suicide. It was this experience that has inspired him to become a mental health advocate.

He is particularly passionate about championing the importance of early intervention, which he pursues as the Founder of UrVoice Australia, a not-for-profit aiming to ensure every student feels empowered to reach out and use their voice to seek support.

An accomplished leader and advocate, Jayden has also been a member of the NSW Youth Advisory Council and Central Coast Y4Y.

For his outstanding contributions to the community, Jayden was the 2022 recipient of the Central Coast Youth Leadership of the Year Award.

Jayden is currently completing a Bachelor of Social Science at Macquarie University to continue to advocate for social policy reform to benefit young people on a systemic level.

In his spare time, you'll find Jayden enjoying the Central Coast's beautiful beaches.

building a lasting workforce

About the Early Career Program

The Early Career Program aims to develop and grow the pipeline for a sustainable Allied Health headspace workforce, whilst also boosting current workforce capacity. By funding a Clinical Educator (0.4 FTE) in each participating centre, the program expands clinical student placement programs in psychology, occupational therapy, and social work. This initiative provides students with valuable experience working in youth mental health and helps to boost service capacity. Additionally, the program recruits recent graduates in social work, occupational therapy, and psychology for a two-year graduate program. This includes two twelve-month placements in headspace services, along with supervision and a professional education program.

Funded by the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care, the program received an additional \$27.13 million in the May Federal Budget. This will support the participation of 29 more centres, bringing the total to 85 participating centres, and the recruitment of at least 42 graduates starting in February 2025.

Program achievements and improvements

During this financial year, the first intake of graduates (2022) completed the program while the second intake (2023) neared its conclusion. Working closely with the Evaluation team over this period, the program has developed many insights and initiatives for improvement. Enhancements made in 2023–24 include:

- **Restructure of the education curriculum** to better meet the evolving needs of graduates as they develop their skills.
- **Redesign of the graduate recruitment, onboarding and probation** processes to strengthen future cohorts.
- **Enhanced relocation and transition processes** to improve graduates' experiences when moving for rotations and engaging with new workplaces.
- **Introduction of cultural supervision for First Nations graduates** to better support them in navigating the mainstream system.

Some of the program's achievements in 2023–24 include:

- 79 graduates worked with headspace across Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania.
- 261 clinical student placements across Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania.
- Clinical educators employed across 52 headspace services.
- More than 50,000 services delivered by graduates and students, supporting headspace services' capacity.

What people are saying

Students tell us that they are motivated to consider careers in youth mental health:

“Being at headspace was the first exposure I had to working in a mental health setting, and with young people. I loved every part of it and am motivated and willing to continue my education and work in this area.”

Graduates tell us about the support they’ve received:

“The warmth and support from the Early Career Program team has, to me, always felt so genuine and sincere. And that has really been backed up by the response to any concerns or issues that are raised. That support is too often one of those things that people miss out on at work.”

Clinical educators tell us about a boost to clinical capacity:

“Now, with two students commencing (a paid placement student, general psychologist, and a 5+1 psychology student) the ‘problem’ now is to find enough clients for their caseloads.”

NSW Recovery Program

The NSW COVID-19 Recovery (NSWR) program was announced in November 2021 as a rapid response measure to provide additional mental health support to young people who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Program aims to improve workforce capacity, sustainability, and integration within headspace centres to support timely access to mental health care for young people across NSW. These aims are being achieved through clinical student placements (psychologists, social workers, and occupational therapists), as well as GP and psychiatrist recruitment and retention initiatives.

In addition to these activities, headspace National has implemented a two-year Pilot Graduate Program, placing graduates in two NSW headspace centres.

A total of 39 centres across NSW have been funded to provide tailored and holistic mental health support to young people aged 12-25. The funding has supported three interlinked packages of support being rolled out between January 2022 and June 2025:

- Student placement program
- GP capacity boost
- Introduction of sessional psychiatrists into NSW headspace centres.

In the past 27 months (April 2022 to June 2024) the program’s success has included:

356 staff and students engaged

- 13.1 FTE clinical educators employed, working across 34 centres
- 11.6 GPs and related service providers (e.g. practice nurses, registered nurses, practice managers) either recruited or participating in the program with increased hours, working across 26 centres
- Six psychiatrists engaged, increasing access to psychiatrists in 13 centres
- 323 students placed across NSW headspace centres
- Three graduates placed across NSW headspace centres.

45,729 total occasions of service delivered

- 27,427 delivered by students and graduates
- 15,741 delivered by GPs and related service providers (e.g. practice nurses, registered nurses, practice managers)
- 2,588 delivered by psychiatrists.



Jhalak Arora (she/her) Meanjin Land QLD

Jhalak – who was born in India, grew up in Africa, and is now studying in Australia – believes that real change can only occur in the mental health field when the voices of diverse advocates are heard.

A Bachelor of Science (Honours) student at the University of Queensland, Jhalak is dedicated to pursuing her goal of becoming a clinical psychologist. As part of her studies, Jhalak is working on two research projects: one exploring South Asian women's lived experience of mental wellbeing, and another on frailty education.

Outside of studies and hY NRG, Jhalak works as a medical receptionist and is also a crisis support volunteer at Arafmi – a not-for-profit organisation that provides supports to mental health carers. She is also a youth reference group member at headspace Capalaba.

Jhalak enjoys reading books and going for long walks. This year, she wants to travel more and see the Southern Lights.

Psychiatry workforce

NSW Recovery Program funding has enabled the ongoing development and implementation of new psychiatry workforce models for headspace centres in NSW. An online Community of Practice provides peer support for the psychiatrists who work in person and/or via telehealth with young people and headspace teams.

This work was presented at the RANZCP NSW Branch Conference (November 2023) and to a national audience at the annual RANZCP Congress (May 2024), providing insights into creative workforce solutions to increase access to psychiatry.

A panel presentation at headspace Forum ‘Supporting Neurodivergent Young People’ (May 2024) included a psychiatrist working in regional centres, highlighting the value of multidisciplinary collaboration in neuro-affirming care.

GP Program

The GP Program supports headspace centres to attract and build the GP workforce in addition to supporting our amazing network of more than 90 GPs that work across the country. The GP Program team has undertaken work on multiple projects over the past 12 months including:

- conducting a survey of the headspace GP network to understand their needs and our advocacy priorities in April 2024
- delivery of two day training event to 35 headspace GPs from across the network at the Brisbane headspace Forum in May 2024
- implementation of the sub-section 19(2) exemption for GPs in eligible headspace centres
- continuing to support General Practitioner Registrars to train at headspace to build the GP workforce through the GP Registrar Program
- content review and updates to our existing GP and Allied Health Professional (AHP) online training modules and hosting on the headspace National LMS
- supporting headspace GPs Dr Chris and Dr Sonya to give a presentation at WONCA October 2023. conference on 'Youth mental health; exploring what works: engagement, shared formulation, and effective risk assessment and management.'

Over the past year, the headspace National GP Program team has also continued its business-as-usual activities, including:

- providing a platform for headspace GPs to connect through the monthly GP Community of Practice
- consulting the monthly GP Voice group with five GPs from across the network to provide an up-to-date understanding of GP activities in centres and inform the work of the GP Program
- consulting with the GP Workforce Working Group (which includes GPs, Centre Managers, Practice Managers, lead agency representatives and PHN representatives) to discuss GP concerns and set the direction of GP program activities
- providing three monthly online group secondary consultations with psychiatrists from headspace Telepsychiatry to headspace GPs
- pairing new headspace GPs with experienced headspace GPs through the GP peer mentoring program
- continuing to support GP recruitment and retention across the network
- ongoing advocacy to improve conditions for GPs in headspace centres:
 - Improving remuneration for GPs at headspace
 - Improving practice management and clinical supports at headspace
 - Improving GP integration with the headspace team
 - Advocating for further GP Lead roles in centres.



Peer Support Program

The peer workforce at headspace is made up of people who are employed specifically to share their lived experience to support others navigating similar situations. The Peer Work Program exists to support headspace services to plan for, implement, and support a growing peer workforce.

There are approximately 90-100 peer workers in the network across the following focus areas: youth peer work, vocational peer work, family peer work, First Nations peer work, multicultural peer work, LGBTIQ+ peer work and online peer work.

Over the past year, the program team has undertaken the following activities:

- Forum 2024 – The 'Peer Worker Stakeholder Workshop' brought together peer workers from across the network for skill development and networking; breakout session 'Supporting an Integrated Peer Workforce at headspace.'
- Launch of the program's suite of resources to support the implementation of the peer workforce at headspace:
 - 'Essentials in Peer Work', comprising 13 online modules on foundational topics for peer work. Modules are designed to provide peer workers with the skills to deliver peer work safely and effectively for themselves and the young people they are working with.

- The headspace 'Essentials in Peer Work Training Handbook', intended to provide practical support, recommendations and guidance on how to support peer workers through the Essentials in Peer Work training.
- The 'headspace Peer Work Guidelines', intended to provide the headspace workforce with a shared understanding of the benefits, principles and challenges of peer work. In addition, it presents a high-level overview of what peer work looks like in practice and what is needed to successfully integrate peer workers into the headspace service team.
- The headspace 'Peer Work Support and Supervision Guidelines', outlining the Peer Work Support and Supervision Framework at headspace and how supervision can be specifically operationalised for peer workers. This Guideline also details the additional supports available to peer workers, including line management and peer-to-peer support.
- Understanding 'Peer Work at headspace' online module which outlines the purpose and value of peer work ensuring all staff have a shared understanding. This explains how staff can support the integration of peer work at their service.

Peer Work Community of Practice continues to be offered as a platform for headspace peer workers.

building a culturally safe headspace

Our First Nations Strategy: A holistic approach to wellbeing and engagement

The 2023–2024 First Nations Strategy marks the first year of implementation after a lengthy period of development and consultation. Moving away from traditional reconciliation and action plans, the team has embraced a more holistic organisational vision that aims to embed cultural understanding and support throughout headspace.

The overarching commitment of the Strategy is for every First Nations young person to have access to quality mental health care.

The Strategy details six goals that will enable us to achieve that vision:

1. Build the cultural capability of headspace staff and embed cultural safety in the way we do things
2. Embed robust and appropriate cultural governance
3. Value and grow cultural leadership and guidance
4. Meet First Nations young people where they are at through care underpinned by First Nations approaches to social and emotional wellbeing
5. Foster and maintain key stakeholder relationships
6. Incorporate principles of First Nations data governance, collection and sharing.

These goals also align with the four priority reforms laid out in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

While there is still much work to be done, there is a strong commitment across the headspace network to enhance the cultural capabilities of our non-Indigenous workforce.

For instance, in 2023–24, headspace successfully implemented AITSAS CORE training for all National staff. Uptake was outstanding, with almost 90% of staff completing the training within three months of its introduction.

Overseeing our commitment: The First Nations Cultural Governance Committee

The First Nations Cultural Governance Committee, a subcommittee of the board, was established this year. This marks a significant milestone in our cultural governance journey and a commitment to delivering the headspace First Nations Strategy. The committee held its inaugural meeting in Townsville, bringing together representatives from across the country. Its primary role is to ensure adherence to the strategy and its goals and priority orientated workplans, fostering a unified approach towards improving First Nations wellbeing and engagement within headspace.

Embedding cultural practice and safety in the headspace model

The working group on 'Embedding Cultural Practice and Safety in the headspace Model' has been instrumental in shaping the approach towards better serving First Nations young people. This group was tasked with compiling a comprehensive report that surveyed centres, young people, and families, seeking feedback on why First Nations young people may or may not be accessing headspace centres.

Focusing on nine key areas – Access, Outreach and Community, Knowledge Gaps, Trust and Reputation, Employment, Model of Care, Partnerships, Identity and Belonging, and Racism – the group aimed to develop guidance for centres on engaging and delivering integrated care.

Some key takeaways from the report included:

- A demand from staff for greater training in culturally safe and specific practices
- The need for headspace to build trust and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve its reputation among First Nations people
- The necessity for headspace to develop an advocacy role against racism in the broader community
- A call to change headspace's approach to access offerings
- A reevaluation of the current KPI system.

The insights from this report have laid the foundation for the goals outlined in the First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement (FNWE) 2023–24 strategy, ensuring a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to mental health care.

Find a more detailed look at the report [here](#).

First Nations Community Connections

The First Nations Community Connections project is currently nearing the end of its pilot phase, with plans to establish it as an ongoing program. This initiative, overseen by the FNWE team, involved three centres in an intensive two-day training and support program designed for working with First Nations communities.

The project provided in-depth training, equipping participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively engage with and support First Nations young people.

To ensure the continuity and impact of this valuable work, seed funding will be provided through the working group overseeing the project, allowing trainees to continue their efforts and foster stronger community connections.





Cultural Supervision Pilot Program

Developed in partnership with Cox Inall Ridgeway, the Cultural Supervision Pilot project has been instrumental in deepening our understanding and refining our approach to working with First Nations communities by embracing a holistic and culturally informed model of mental health care that encompasses social and emotional wellbeing.

Targeted at headspace centres and clinicians, the program aims to enhance the cultural competence and safety within the organisation. The project saw the recruitment, induction and training of 10 First Nations supervisors and 20 non-Indigenous supervisees, who collectively shared in 120 cultural supervision sessions.

The program is currently in the evaluation stage with the final report due in early 2025.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network provides support and opportunities for First Nations staff within the national and centre network. Membership is voluntary, with 80 employees currently participating – the highest number ever.

The network meets face-to-face annually or biennially, and holds monthly digital meetings. It offers informal support for First Nations staff, creating a space to reflect on their work, discuss barriers and issues, and focus on upskilling. Last year, two different providers were invited to share insights about their programs, further enhancing the knowledge and skills of network members.

Invasion Day Healing and Wellbeing Grants

To support communities in the lead up to Invasion Day, headspace again made available to centres an Invasion Day Healing and Wellbeing Grant. This year, 130 centres received grants for projects that connected them to community or enhanced staff cultural capability. For example, one centre used their grant to commission a First Nations mural, fostering a more culturally safe environment and ensuring representation and inclusion for the entire community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainee Program

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainee Program aims to provide practical, paid experience while participants complete a relevant Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification. This initiative seeks to improve employment and educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples while also enhancing the cultural capability of headspace centres. Currently, five centres are hosting trainees, with several graduates expected to complete the program this year.

First Nations Visibility Project

To build trust, gain credibility and create partnerships within the First Nations community, headspace made a commitment to be present at events and activities where First Nations people gather. We targeted four important events on the calendar: the Barunga Festival, the Statewide Victorian Treaty Gathering, Treaty Day Out and the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Forum. Visibility of headspace included information stands, a branded coffee cart, headspace branded collateral and the distribution of flyers promoting services like YarnSpace and Take a Step. Six local centres were also engaged to attend these events in partnership with headspace National. These were significant opportunities to connect with young people, Elders, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and sector partners.



Isaiah Janiak (he/him) Ngarrindjeri Land SA

Isaiah's headspace journey began when he joined the headspace Murray Bridge Youth Reference Group.

Identifying that his musical talents were a way to engage young people having a tough time with their mental health, he also volunteered at organisations Moorundi and The Station, and ran his own youth music workshop on Kangaroo Island facilitated by headspace Murray Bridge.

It was for this incredible work that Isaiah was awarded the Local Young Person of the Year at the 2022 NAIDOC Week Awards.

He has also worked as an Aboriginal Youth Worker at headspace Murray Bridge, where he helped ensure that the care young people receive is culturally appropriate.

His number one tip for maintaining a healthy headspace is keeping active which helps him to feel balanced.

driving the future of youth mental health

Advocacy and Government Relations

During 2023–24, headspace National made more than 20 submissions to national and state-level inquiries and policy reviews, advocating for the needs and aspirations of young people across Australia. Topics included responding to climate change, e-cigarette regulation, social media use, meeting the needs of neurodiverse young people, student mental health and wellbeing, cost of living, and mental health system reviews. These submissions included direct input from hY NRG, responses from the 2022 National Youth Mental Health Survey, and the experiences of headspace clinicians and staff.

Over the last 12 months, headspace National has continued advocating to the government for a stronger mental health system to better meet young Australians' needs. In particular, headspace National has highlighted the need to work closely with First Nations and multicultural communities to ensure the youth mental health system is providing culturally safe, appropriate and accessible support.

headspace National has also secured government support for our unique Early Career Program to grow the specialist youth mental health workforce. We have also worked with federal and state governments to support National Partnership commitments to better integrate mental health service supports and make it easier for young people to receive the care and support they need.

headspace Strategy

The current headspace Strategy has been guiding the work of headspace National since 2021. The priorities, principles and enablers in the strategy make it possible for the organisation to:

- support young people to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities
- actively contribute to and shape the mental health system reforms needed to achieve better outcomes for young people.

With this strategy ending in 2024, we've taken the opportunity to review our strategic priorities to ensure we continue to meet the changing needs of young people, families and communities. Following extensive stakeholder engagement in 2023–24, a new draft strategy is in development and will continue to evolve before it's embedded in the organisation, guiding our work in 2025 and beyond.

understanding our reach, quality and impact

Through research, evaluation, monitoring, and knowledge transfer, headspace contributes to improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people and their families by understanding their needs and examining the reach, quality and impact of our services.

headspace prioritises evaluation across all our programs and services as a critical part of evidence building, continuous quality improvement, and knowledge translation.

The following are key evaluation projects undertaken in 2023–24.

Exploring satisfaction with headspace web chat

Analysing results from more than 2,200 service users demonstrated that eheadspace users are very positive about their experiences. Key findings include:

- Young people would recommend eheadspace to a friend (89%).
- eheadspace is easy to use (85%).
- eheadspace is meeting young people's expectations (84%).
- Young people feel comfortable sharing information with eheadspace clinicians (88%).
- Young people feel listened to and understood at eheadspace (89%), and feel that the session focused on their main concern (90%).
- eheadspace is helping young people with resources or skills to manage their situation in the future (84%).
- Young people feel more hopeful or optimistic after their session (74%).
- Young people report that eheadspace has given them the skills and knowledge to cope better (71%) and feel better day to day (65%).

Engagement, experience and impact of headspace Work and Study Online

An evaluation of headspace Work and Study Online examined young people's engagement and experience with the service, its impact on their work and/or study goals, and their mental health and wellbeing. Findings indicate the program effectively equips young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to find, obtain and maintain work and study, while fostering confidence and resilience. Additionally, the evaluation highlighted that young people felt supported in managing their mental health and wellbeing through the assistance offered by the service.



Justin Nguyen (he/him) Dharug Land NSW

Justin's journey to hY NRG began while studying medicine at Western Sydney University. It was during his clinical mental health rotation that he met young people who were experiencing mental ill-health and who were directed to headspace for support.

Meeting the many young people accessing headspace and gaining an understanding of their needs inspired Justin to join hY NRG, to ultimately ensure the organisation is fit for purpose.

Having experienced ill-mental health himself and as a tutor to school-aged students, Justin knows that it isn't always easy being a young person. Social media, uncertainty about the future, and academic stress are only some of the pressures young people face.

But he also knows that with the right support, young people are very capable of overcoming tough times. That's why he is determined to normalise help-seeking and reduce stigma around mental health.

In his spare time, Justin loves watching reality TV shows (particularly Love Island) and baking.

My youth mental health Session Experience (MySE) measure – validation and outcomes

The MySE measure was developed by headspace in collaboration with young people as a routine session-by-session experience scale that explores how willing young people were to attend, whether they felt listened to and understood, whether they were working on issues important to them, and whether they felt hopeful and that things were improving in their lives.

Read the validation of the measure here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.2147/PRBM.S440083> and explore the outcomes here: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/eip.13600?af=R>

Other evaluation and monitoring activities

Alongside these key projects, we're continuing to evaluate all our programs and services. Some recent highlights include:

- Evaluating three postvention disaster and suicide recovery projects being implemented across NSW: NSW Recovery to Resilience Program, NSW Community Collaborative Initiative, NSW Schools Resilience Project.
- Evaluating new pilot programs underway, including Thinking Skills for Work, Vocational Peer Worker Pilot, and First Nations Community Connections.
- Supporting external evaluations commissioned by program funders, including for the Early Career Program, the Victorian Enhancing Mental Health Support in Schools Program (EMHSS), and the headspace Vocational Programs (online and in centres).

building the evidence base on youth mental health

Our research partnerships with leading universities drive innovation in youth mental health, enabling us to contribute groundbreaking knowledge to the broader sector. These collaborations not only enhance our understanding but also help us uncover more effective ways to meet the evolving support needs of young people.

New research partnership grants

Grant	Description	Lead Chief Investigator	Value
NHMRC Partnership Grant (2024-2029)	Novel outcome measures for online youth mental health services.	Debra Rickwood, University of Canberra	\$1.27 million
MRFF Models of Care for Sexuality and Gender Diverse People and People with Innate Variations of Sex Characteristics Streams 1-2 (2024-2027)	Defining and measuring 'whole-of-self' affirming care to evaluate a multidisciplinary patient-centred and sustainable model of care for trans young people experiencing intersectional disadvantage.	Magenta Simmons, Orygen	\$999,516
AUDMRFF 2023 National Critical Research Infrastructure Initiative (2024-2029)	Youth AI: Infrastructure for the Next Generation of Youth Mental Healthcare.	Dom Dwyer, University of Melbourne	\$3 million
AUDMRFF 2023 Maternal Health and Healthy Lifestyles Grant Opportunity (2031507) (2024-2027)	Co-designing an evidence-informed, scalable school-based program to promote help-seeking for substance use problems.	Dan Lubman, Monash University	Undisclosed

Ongoing research partnership grants

Grant	Description	Lead Chief Investigator	Value
NHMRC Partnership Grant (2022-2026)	Bipolar early intervention using new digital technologies: a hybrid effectiveness-implementation trial of a multi-component model of evidence-based care.	Aswin Ratheesh, University of Melbourne	\$1,423,795
MRFF Cardiovascular Health Mission (2022-2025)	Enhancing engagement with eHealth approaches to prevent cardiovascular disease among adolescents: The Triple E Project.	Louise Thornton, University of Sydney	\$993,682
NHMRC Partnership Grant (2020-2025)	The who, why, what, where and when of primary youth mental health care: The 5W research program.	Sue Cotton, University of Melbourne/ Monash University	\$857,288
Wellcome Trust UK (2020-2025)	Australian Early Psychosis Collaborative Consortium Clinical – Wellcome Trust Psychosis Flagship Award Registry (CR) and Clinical Trial and Translation Network (CTTN).	Andrew Thompson, University of Melbourne	\$2,775,191
MRFF Indigenous Health Research Grant (2021-2025)	Ngalaiya Boorai Gabara Budbut – supporting the heads and hearts of children: Responsive mental health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents.	Ngair Brown, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute Limited	\$1,997,344

knowledge sharing and collaboration across borders

Peer-reviewed publications

We have continued to contribute to the evidence base in youth mental health by publishing findings from our grant partnerships and our own work in the research literature, including:

- [Young people's participation in their own mental health care: Session-by-session feedback in youth mental health services \(headspace\).](#)
- [Inequitable access to mental healthcare for socially excluded adolescents.](#)
- [Integrated care models for youth mental health: A systematic review and meta-analysis.](#)
- [Climate change concerns impact on young Australians' psychological distress and outlook for the future.](#)
- [Capturing the clinical complexity in young people presenting to primary mental health services: A data-driven approach.](#)
- [Development and validation of a routine session-by-session experience measure for youth mental health services: My youth mental health Session Experience \(MySE\).](#)
- [Help-seeking experiences and barriers to mental health support for adolescents experiencing mental ill-health and social exclusion.](#)
- [Social disadvantage in early psychosis and its effect on clinical presentation and service access, engagement and use.](#)
- [The Australian Early Psychosis Collaborative Consortium \(AEPCC\): Improving clinical care in early psychosis.](#)
- [Climate change concerns impact on young Australians' psychological distress and outlook for the future.](#)
- [Accelerating youth mental health services research.](#)
- [Sixteen years of innovation in youth mental healthcare in Australia: Outcomes for young people attending headspace centre services.](#)
- [Understanding the complexity, patterns, and correlates of alcohol and other substance use among young people seeking help for mental ill-health.](#)
- [Correlates of substance use in a large naturalistic cohort of young people with early and emerging psychosis.](#)
- [Responding early to support the mental health and well-being of young people.](#)

International partnership

Our collaboration with international partners Foundry (British Columbia, Canada) and Jigsaw (Ireland) allows us to explore common challenges facing young people and gather new ideas and knowledge to guide our work.

In 2023–24, we continued to connect, share and learn, with topics like model fidelity, expansion and cultural considerations key areas of focus. Our ability to collaborate across the partnership was enhanced this year through a shared online platform established by headspace.

In 2024 we were also fortunate to have Foundry co-director Dr Steve Mathias visit Australia to deliver a thought-provoking keynote session at the headspace Forum.

Sharing our experience on a global scale

In 2023–24 we continued to provide expertise and insights in response to international interest in our work.

This year we hosted a number of international delegations with specific interest in youth mental health and how we do things in Australia, and we also connected with people as widespread as the UK, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Palau.

headspace was also grateful to be invited to speak at the allcove (California, USA) statewide virtual conference 'Reimagining youth mental health'. Much like headspace, allcove runs a network of integrated youth mental health centres and focuses on meeting the evolving and unique needs of young people and those who support them. headspace was represented on both the subject matter expertise and youth panels, with incredible contributions from our hY NRG member, Sereena Zanusso.

building better practice

The Clinical Leadership team supports the service's clinical leaders to ensure their staff provide holistic, strengths based, relational care that is culturally safe, family inclusive and trauma informed. Our work draws heavily on implementation science to develop and deliver high-quality, evidence-based training, information and resources to time-poor clinical leaders.

The 2024 headspace Forum provided an important platform for us to share the culmination of core work undertaken across 2023–24 and highlight two new initiatives: the headspace Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) strategy and a project to help clinicians identify and respond to disordered eating. These were developed in response to feedback gathered through interviews with teams across the headspace network, which indicated that many staff wanted to increase their confidence and skills in these areas to best meet the needs of young people and their families.

headspace AOD strategy

The AOD strategy was developed following multiple rounds of consultations and evidence reviews and was launched at the 2024 Forum. The AOD strategy outlines four core priorities that will ensure headspace offers evidenced, integrated, proactive and robust AOD services by confident and supportive clinicians and staff.

1. Provide holistic care – integrate AOD, mental health, physical and sexual health care, and work and study support, to ensure young people receive holistic care.
2. Support workforce development – strengthen the skills, knowledge, confidence and competence of the headspace workforce to enhance AOD care.
3. Contribute to stigma and discrimination reduction – raise awareness and increase understanding about young peoples' AOD use to reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking.
4. Strengthen data and research – improve AOD knowledge translation from evidence to practice.

The AOD strategy helps to articulate the role of headspace in providing care to young people who use AOD, as well as outline how headspace National will work with the centre network and key stakeholders to best support headspace staff in delivering support.

Support for disordered eating

Our conversations with headspace centre staff identified that they wanted to support young people to improve their relationships with eating and food, but needed guidance and advice to approach this space in an informed, evidenced-based way.

To increase clinician confidence to screen for disordered eating and provide support to young people, headspace is partnering on a project with InsideOut Institute, Australia's national eating disorder research and clinical excellence institute. Led by a National Advisor, this work provides training, guidance, implementation support, resources and supervision to enable headspace workers to use supported self-help programs with young people at risk of, or who are experiencing, eating disorders.



Mike Chitnis
(he/him)
Wurundjeri Land VIC

Mike joined the Youth Advisory Group at headspace Hawthorn and Malvern because he enjoyed being among his peers in an exciting, friendly, and hopeful space. In this role, he created and facilitated different groups for young people, and promoted mental health literacy through workshops at schools.

Outside of hY NRG, Mike is also a youth peer worker in the headspace Early Psychosis program, where he supports young people going through a tough time.

Mike has also graduated with his Bachelor's in Psychological Science at Swinburne University.

He wants to remind young people that reaching out when times are tough is a sign of strength, and that the experiences we go through help to shape the people we are.

Mike loves spending time with his dog, Sunny, listening to hip-hop and R&B music and going hiking.

raising awareness and encouraging help-seeking

Our community awareness campaigns allow us to extend our reach beyond what's possible through one-on-one or group support. By sharing the voices and stories of young people, we aim to raise awareness of the experiences and the challenges they face and help others in the community feel seen and understood. Our content and campaigns also promote the tools, resources and support pathways headspace offers to strengthen mental health and wellbeing.

Our 2023–24 campaigns focused on supporting young people through challenges like the rising cost of living, the aftermath of the Victoria and NSW floods and The Voice to Parliament Referendum, while also highlighting key headspace programs and services.

Mind and Money

The rising cost of living continues to take a significant toll on young people, affecting not only their mental health but also their confidence in achieving future goals. headspace developed the Mind and Money series in January 2024 to address the mounting pressures young people are facing, offering practical strategies to manage money stress and improve financial wellbeing.

The series facilitated a wide range of conversations between young people and headspace Work and Study Specialists, covering crucial topics such as maintaining mental health during financial hardship, setting financial boundaries with friends and family, and tips for balancing work with study.



After the Floods

Experiencing a natural disaster can profoundly affect young people's lives, leaving lasting impacts that extend far beyond physical recovery. The emotional and mental health challenges can linger long after the event, requiring ongoing support and resilience.

Launched in September 2023, After the Floods captured the personal stories of young people, families and communities affected by the 2022 floods in NSW and Victoria. Their experiences highlighted the importance of self-care and the strength that can be found in community and cultural connections during difficult times.

Voice to Parliament Referendum

October 2023 marked an important event in Australia's history – The Voice to Parliament Referendum. headspace played a role in providing young Australians with educational resources and videos designed to ensure they were well-informed and empowered ahead of the vote.

The campaign also reflected headspace's commitment to the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations young people and communities, who were profoundly impacted by the national conversation. The resources and tools developed were an initiative to foster informed and compassionate engagement during this important time.



Reede Adams-Beckett (he/him) Tyerrernotepanner Land TAS

Hailing from Tasmania, Reede is passionate about using his platform to give young Tasmanians a voice on the topics that matter to them on the national stage.

He firmly believes young people can change the world for the better.

Growing up, Reede felt he was often searching for direction and a purpose. He understands that for many young people, these are important parts of a happy, meaningful life. He is using his lived experience of overcoming uncertainty and hopelessness to help others.

Outside of hY NRG, Reede volunteers at St Vincent de Paul and his local headspace centre in Launceston. He also runs The Bright Project – a community-focused group where he shares his adventures checking off bucket list items, showing young people who relate to him how he is creating a fulfilling life.

In his spare time, Reede is a soccer coach.

His motto for life is 'be yourself' and 'do cool stuff'.

headspace day 2023

This headspace day, the message to young people was to “ditch unrealistic expectations and keep focusing on you”. We launched a new campaign, The Unachievs, on headspace day which was live throughout October 2023, with videos of a faux community awards night with unrealistic awards, and a hero to remind viewers that headspace can support young people and family with mental health and wellbeing.

This year also marked the biggest ever headspace day celebration, with more than 150 headspace locations taking part. From lit-up public monuments, to art exhibitions and skate park barbecues, the headspace network found creative ways to engage with young people, family and local communities across Australia.

headspace Work and Study Month

Following the success of our inaugural headspace Work and Study Month in 2023, headspace proudly continued the campaign in March 2024. This year’s content was designed to enhance awareness of headspace Work and Study programs, and the crucial role that engagement in work and/or study plays in supporting young people’s mental health and overall wellbeing.

The campaign featured testimonials from members of the headspace Youth National Reference Group, who shared their personal experiences and the positive impact the program has had on their professional development.



Sarthak Gandhi
(he/him)
Wurundjeri Land VIC

As a young person, Sarthak found navigating the mental health system challenging. Now that he is working and studying in the field, he is determined to create change from within.

Sarthak is currently studying medicine at Monash University and working as a research assistant at Murdoch Children’s Research Institute. He recently concluded his time as the co-chair of the Teddy Bear Hospital – a student-led, student-run initiative that aims to provide children with positive health care experiences.

An aspiring paediatrician, Sarthak is eager to use his platform in hY NRG to share how important early intervention and prevention is for the mental health of young people. He also wants to advocate for improving the way we talk about mental health.

In his spare time, he barracks for the Geelong Cats and enjoys watching cricket and tennis. Sarthak finds fulfilment by exploring the food options at a night market and admiring a sunset.

headspace in the media

headspace continued to shape and lead conversations on youth mental health across the Australian media landscape. We championed lived experience stories and provided expert insights on a range of issues in the news that impact young people, including social media and increasing age restrictions, the Voice to Parliament, the rise and prevalence of sextortion, the cost of living crisis, and anxiety relating to extreme weather events. Additionally, various campaigns, initiatives, and partnerships – such as the Push Up Challenge and The Unachievs – achieved widespread news coverage, allowing for increased engagement and awareness.

Flood-impacted young people show resilience in the face of eco-anxiety

headspace Youth National Reference Group member and Lismore local Sereena Zanuso appeared via a live cross on ABC News Breakfast, where she gave insights into data from the headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey, which found over half of young people are fearful about the future due to climate change. In a powerful interview, she shared with viewers her experience during and after the 2022 floods in her hometown of Lismore, and called on governments and corporations to listen to young people and do more to prevent climate change.

2023 was tough for many young people, but headspace research shows they are resilient

To conclude the 2023 calendar year, headspace reminded young people of their enormous capacity for resilience, releasing data from its National Youth Mental Health Survey that found three in five young people feel they tend to bounce back quickly after hard times. headspace Youth National Reference Group member Jamil Nabolé and headspace National Clinical Advisor Rupert Saunders featured on ABC News Breakfast to discuss the concept of resilience. Jamil and Rupert also appeared in youth-focused news outlet Junkee.

headspace stands against sextortion, online abuse

On the eve of World Internet Safety Day, headspace published a media release that aimed to dismantle the stigma surrounding sextortion and online abuse, by reminding young people they are not to blame, and support for their mental health is available. The release was covered by leading Australian media outlets such as the Herald Sun and AAP, and headspace Head of Clinical Leadership Nicola Palfrey spoke with ABC Radio Hobart about how parents can help their young people.



our supporters help make our work possible

We are incredibly grateful for our generous community of supporters, who play a critical role in making the work we do to reach young people possible. Over the past year, support from individuals, groups and organisations has allowed us to connect with young people who may face additional barriers to help-seeking and ensure we are a culturally safe, accessible and responsive service for all young people and their families.

Funds donated to headspace contribute to piloting and scaling our programs, increase our service delivery, provide enhanced support for families, and ensure that young people can access the right support, when they need it and how they want it.

With the help of our supporters, we're getting closer to achieving our vision that all young Australians are supported to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.

2023–24 highlights

- We were proud to welcome Domino's Minds and Meals Foundation as a new Strategic Corporate Partner this year. Funds donated through the Foundation will support the headspace Digital Mental Health Program's Online Communities.
- This year, headspace was one of the beneficiaries of The Push-Up Challenge, Australia's largest mental health and fitness event. Participants were challenged to complete 3,249 push-ups over three weeks, which represented the number of people who died by suicide in the past year. More than 40,000 people chose to support headspace or one of our centres, and collectively raised more than \$2.5 million.
- headspace was chosen as the 2024 charity for Triple J's hottest 100 countdown, an annual celebration of the past year in music. The charity is selected based on an issue that resonates with triple j's audience, highlighting the importance young Australians place on mental health. Money was raised for headspace Online Communities through the sale of hottest 100 t-shirts and was a great opportunity for headspace to reach even more young people and their families.
- This year, our Strategic Corporate Partner Funlab ran their seventh annual Day of Fun to raise funds for headspace. This event sees Funlab donating proceeds from ticket sales across all of its venues on the day, which has raised more than a million dollars since 2016.
- headspace was once again an Australian charity partner for Darkness into Light, an annual walk held in over 200 countries to raise funds and awareness for suicide prevention. Participants in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth set off before dawn and walked five kilometres as the darkness transitioned into sunrise.

Our major donors

- Anton Gaudry
- APS Foundation
- Australian Community Foundation
- Davies Family Foundation
- Eugene Smarrelli
- Henry and Aida Ang Charitable Trust
- Sirius Foundation
- The Leg-up Foundation
- Tribuo Foundation
- Wheatley Family Foundation

Some of our major donors choose to remain anonymous and we recognise and appreciate their contribution as well.



Sereena Zanuso
(she/her)
Bundjalung Land NSW

Throughout her high school years, Sereena discovered that she was a reliable source of support for her friends and loved ones when they were experiencing tough times.

It was this natural tendency that led her to pursue a Bachelor of Counselling. Sereena now works as a Student Wellbeing Officer in primary schools, where she helps to create mentally well communities by supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of students.

A dedicated mental health advocate, Sereena first came to headspace through her local centre, where she has volunteered in their Young Peoples Advisory Committee since 2019. There she discovered the power of working alongside peers equally determined to create positive change.

A Lismore local, Sereena is eager to use her time in hY NRG to advocate for increased access to mental health support in regional communities.

the partnerships making a difference to youth mental health

Our Strategic Corporate Partners



Our Business Supporters



partnership highlights



Welcoming Domino's Minds and Meals

This year, we welcomed our newest Strategic Corporate Partner – Domino's Minds and Meals. Domino's Minds and Meals Foundation is dedicated to supporting two key pillars: youth mental health and disaster relief. Funds from Minds and Meals go towards supporting headspace online group chats, which provide free, accessible spaces for young people and families to connect. Domino's is one of the largest employers of young people in Australia and we are deeply grateful for their commitment to supporting youth mental health.



Sportsgirl supports First Nations Youth Model Gathering

Sportsgirl has been supporting the headspace First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement division since 2021. Thanks to their continued support, headspace was able to launch the inaugural and highly successful Social and Emotional Wellbeing Youth Model Gathering in July 2023. This represents a foundational moment in headspace's journey to build stronger connections and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations and communities. We are incredibly grateful for Sportsgirl's support and commitment to the social and emotional wellbeing of our First Nations young people and families.



Greening up headspace centres thanks to Yates

We know that spending time in nature is good for mental health. In partnership with headspace, Yates provided grants for headspace centres to introduce sustainable green spaces and gardening-related wellbeing initiatives for their communities. headspace centres in Bankstown, Roma, Broome, Karratha, Mildura and Murray Bridge received grants and have been making great progress with their gardens.



Grant Thornton Foundation supports international students

International students studying in Australia can experience particular vulnerabilities when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing. Thanks to the Grant Thornton Foundation, the headspace Multicultural Practice team has been able to undertake research with international students and develop a dedicated resource to support their needs.

headspace heroes

By taking part in community fundraising events and challenges, our #headspaceheroes not only raise vital funds for headspace but they also help us raise awareness of our work supporting young people.

Here are a few of the amazing groups and individuals that supported headspace this year.



Otto completed 3,249 push-ups to support youth mental health

“I’m taking The Push-up Challenge to support headspace and their amazing work for youth mental health. I believe in empowering young people to live their best lives. Mental health is just as important as physical health. Let’s lift each other up, one push-up at a time!”

Law WellBeing supports headspace at their annual charity ball

“Law WellBeing held their annual Law Mental Health Charity Ball on 4 May 2024. The event is an opportunity for our wider legal community to come together and acknowledge the challenges of our individual mental health journeys. Importantly, we don’t focus on the career roles of our guests, but who we are as people – we are more than just the law! Law WellBeing supports headspace for all the work they do to support the mental health of young people. Many of us have worked with young people who have benefited personally from the services provided by headspace, and we can see the positive impact it has on their lives. We are so pleased to have had headspace as our charity partner!”

Jimi and Simon take on the Sydney Marathon for headspace

In May 2024, Jimi and Simon undertook the epic 42km Sydney Marathon to support the mental health of young Australians. Jimi and Simon’s passion for youth mental health helped raise more than \$8,000 for headspace.

Audrey’s second Greatest Shave

Audrey demonstrated her passion for headspace in a remarkable way by shaving off all her hair! Her bold move helped to raise more than \$3,000 for headspace. Thank you, Audrey, for your incredible support and dedication!

Puzzling for headspace

headspace was proud to be the beneficiary of the Melbourne Jigsaw Puzzle Competition for a Cause in 2024 in collaboration with Mind Games and The Australian Jigsaw Association. Louise from the Victorian Chapter of the Jigsaw Puzzle Association says:

“The Australian Jigsaw Puzzle Association is a not-for-profit association whose mission is to bring the jigsaw puzzling community together. Through feedback from our community, we know that puzzling can sometimes be a helpful tool in a young person’s mental fitness journey. We have also learned that participants in our puzzling competitions find a shared experience of achievement and camaraderie that is highly valued. Raising funds for headspace is a natural fit for our community.”



growing our reach and impact

Fundraising helps headspace to reach more young people by supporting projects that promote accessibility, innovation and cultural responsiveness. Here are just some of the programs our fundraising community continued to make possible this year.

Online Communities and peer support

headspace Online Communities are a powerful platform for young people and their families to connect and share experiences in a safe, supportive and moderated space. It represents the only 'real time' peer-led group chat service in Australia and provides free, low barrier and supportive services to those accessing the chats. All chats draw on a peer support model of care that aims to harness peer workers' lived experience to provide connection, sharing, learning and support.

Working with multicultural communities

The headspace Multicultural Practice team drives culturally responsive approaches across headspace National and the headspace network. Their work centres around exploring ways we can better support multicultural young people and their communities, and embedding culturally responsive practice into headspace services. In 2023, the team developed the headspace National Multicultural Practice Strategy, which will guide headspace to address challenges and embrace opportunities to enhance services for multicultural young people.

Family inclusive practice

Family inclusive practice at headspace is a way of working that values the significance of family in a young person's life. A family inclusive approach actively supports a young person's family and facilitates their involvement in the professional care and support of the young person experiencing mental health challenges.

First Nations Community Connection

Our First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement division kicked off their Community Connections pilot in 2023–24. This initiative is focused on meaningful relationship building with First Nations groups, central to building the trust needed to provide culturally safe services for our First Nations young people and their families.

Our Way Our Say

headspace Schools and Communities developed Our Way Our Say through consultation and co-design with First Nations peoples living in the Darwin region. This unique mental health literacy and suicide prevention education program is for middle and senior school-aged young people and uses an evidence-informed, youth-led approach to explore holistic social and emotional wellbeing.



Victoria Marchiori
(she/her)
Bundjalung Land NSW

Victoria is eager to use her platform to advocate for the needs of young people living with mental ill-health.

As someone who is both autistic and has ADHD, Victoria is determined to be a voice for neurodiverse young people. She is particularly passionate about advocating for greater awareness of how autism can present differently in women.

Victoria also has lived experience as a young carer, as she supports her father who is a paraplegic.

She says she is extremely lucky to have a caring and supportive family, who were able to help her navigate tough times.

Victoria first came to headspace through her local reference group at Tweed Heads, where she is now also a youth project worker.

She is also studying a Bachelor of Law, and in her spare time enjoys swimming in the ocean.

Victoria's best piece of advice for people going through a tough time is something her mum told her: "It's okay not to be okay."





headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.



headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and emerging and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.



headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care