



headspace early career program

year one in review



headspace

National Youth Mental Health Foundation

headspace early career program

The headspace early career program (ECP) places allied health students and graduates in headspace services and supports them to boost service capacity whilst building their skills for long term careers in youth mental health. It is currently operating in Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland.

Students undertake short (2-4 month) clinical placements according to their discipline and course structure and deliver services under the supervision of their centre.

Graduates are employed by headspace National for two years, and complete two twelve-month secondments at headspace services with discipline-specific clinical supervision and 40 days equivalent of professional education over the two years.

The program also funds a Clinical Educator in each headspace service at 0.4 FTE to provide day to day field supervision and regular clinical supervision, undertake local program implementation activities and generally boost the senior clinical capacity of services.

From January to December 2022, the ECP team and 55 headspace Services and their lead agencies have worked in partnership to launch and deliver the Program. We've made a great start. Let's take a look at our key evaluation findings so far.



key findings so far...

This summary presents a snapshot of early findings from the evaluation of the Program during the first year of implementation (January to 31 December 2022).

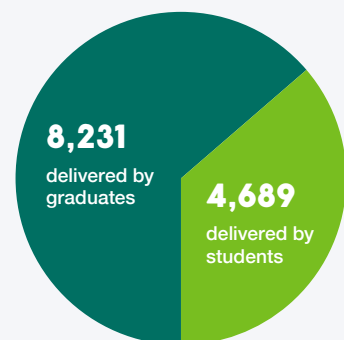
Graduates and students have boosted capacity

by delivering

12,920

occasions of service to young people attending headspace services

Occasions of service¹



Students and graduates have been engaged in the Program

headspace National has employed and placed

54

allied health graduates in headspace Services, and headspace Services have hosted

320

allied health student placements

Graduates and students are reporting positive experiences in the program



96%

of ECP end of student placement survey respondents (n=76) were satisfied with their headspace placement



My placement...has consolidated my desire to work in youth mental health in the future, and has reinforced how much my values align with the headspace model for future employment.²



96%

of graduate survey respondents (n=43) were satisfied with program recruitment and orientation



77%

were satisfied with their experience at the end of the first year

The support provided by the ECP staff is extraordinary, and I sincerely have not felt more valued and guided in a job. Overall, what I believe worked well was the care, time and support the ECP staff show each and every graduate.³



¹An occasion of service refers to any direct contact: e.g. phone intake, intake assessment, 'meet and greet' engagement sessions, any ongoing work)

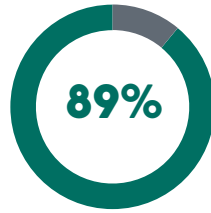
² Student End of Placement survey, S31

³ Graduate 5 day intensive survey, G18

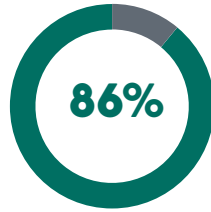
The education program is providing relevant and engaging content to support the growth of graduates' capabilities



Graduates have also indicated high levels of satisfaction with the online learning content



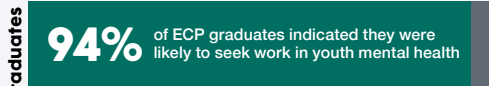
agreed that course content was relevant for their practice



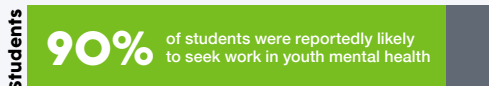
expected to apply the learning in their work

Graduates and students are reporting strong intentions to work in youth mental health

After the first year:



89% with headspace



86% with headspace

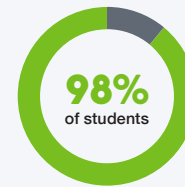
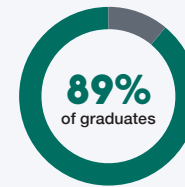
I changed from a corporate career into social work because I wanted to use my lived experience to help young people. It was a bit daunting not knowing whether it was the right decision, especially after being shot down from a lot of entry level mental health job I tried to apply for while completing my master's. Being in this role and the program in the last 6-7 months strengthens my passion to work in youth mental health.⁴



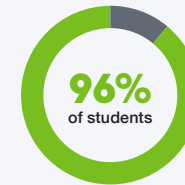
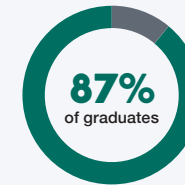
ECP graduates, students and Clinical Educators report key capability improvements

Graduates and students agreed that their time at headspace has helped them to:

Gain valuable skills and experience



Feel better prepared for their future professional practice



Clinical educators survey respondents (n=53) agreed that the program increased their Centre's clinical leadership capacity (81%), and the capability of the early career youth mental health workforce (76%).



⁴ Graduate end of year survey

impact story: I love using “my clinical judgement”



Jas (she/her)

Graduate, Early Career Program
headspace Greensborough

I finished my Masters in Social Work last year and while I was on my last placement I was looking at job opportunities. It was funny because I saw the Early Career program near the close of applications, and I looked at it and was like, “ooo that sounds interesting – what an awesome opportunity!”

So, I rushed to get my application through just to see, who knows? I didn't have many expectations but thought I should try. Then I got a call, my application needed some additional details, but they were interested! I didn't initially know much about headspace, to be completely honest, but the more I looked into it, the more I was like “oh yeah this sounds like something I'd definitely be interested in”.

Thinking about the last year, the most significant impact resulting from the Early Career program was when a young person came through walk in intake.

Sometimes walk ins present distressed, sometimes they just want to talk to someone immediately. It doesn't always have to be someone in crisis. I was still learning and getting comfortable with everything, and while I wasn't on intake that day, I was keen to better understand that process. So, I volunteered, and I was excited. I went to reception and the young person was with their partner, slouched over and not communicating. They had their hoodie over their eyes. They were very much like “oh why am I here I don't want to be here, it's not gonna help”. So, I was like “oh, okay”. I wasn't expecting them to be shut down like that, so I did feel a bit stressed – but I said to myself, “alright, it's fine, let's go”. I think my customer service skills came up then – you have this tendency to put up that little front to be like “okay don't need to panic yet!”



We went inside the room, and I started speaking to him and he was talking a bit more. You could tell he was very upset and distressed about something. So, I was just trying to engage him and try to validate that he made a step by coming here and how important that was. I think that encouragement was something he really needed to hear. I think that helped him open up to me a bit, knowing that I was listening to him. We discussed the risk aspect of things and how he was feeling, and I did ask “do you feel you need to go to the hospital?” He wasn't sure but he was open to the idea.

I knew the process of calling triage but hadn't done it before – so I went to our office and asked for help. Luckily my team leader was there, and she was really good. She came with me, and I was able to shadow her in that moment and learn the process to assess immediate risk. My team leader called triage and while she did that, I was in the room alone with them for a little while. I gave him the space to vent – which is what it sounded like he needed to do – letting him speak about what he was feeling. He was just feeling hopeless about the mental health system, I guess. I was just trying to explain to him that sometimes mental health is like when you shop for a pair of jeans. You don't just buy the first ones; you try on different ones to see which one is right, and that's what it's like with mental health. It's like seeing what's the right fit for you. He liked that analogy and mentioned it was helpful talking to me. He likes coming to headspace because he can tell that people there care about him, and he could tell that I care about him. So that was nice and that validated me.

The outcome from triage was for him to go home and to wait for the CAT (Crisis Assessment Treatment) team to come to his home. By the time he left, he was smiling, without his hoody over his eyes and was a little more alert. As he left, he smiled at me a little bit as well, which was validating for me.

I had a lot of follow up support – everyone in the team checked in. My clinical educator was really good. We spoke about it then and there, and we also discussed it in supervision. The team leader and my service manager also came up to me and asked how I was going. That's been a common thing, checking in.

Following experiences like this, the most significant impact the Early Career program has had on me would have to be amount I value myself - I feel like I value myself more now.

Like, I have this confidence that's come with this program, that's come with being part of doing this work. It's something that I feel has been the most significant change in me – my value of myself has just changed.

I definitely came from a space where I didn't have much confidence or belief in myself about being a social worker. I had imposter syndrome – all those self-doubts. However, as I progressed, I got encouragement from the team, I became confident and now love using the words “my clinical judgement” and feeling like I have some value in the team. I don't have that imposter syndrome anymore, if I'm a good social worker, if I should be here – I know now that I am, and that I should.



**If you would
like further
information
about the
headspace Early
Career Program,
please contact**

earlycareer@headspace.org.au

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

