



THE
Bridge
Youth
SERVICE

Annual Report

2023-2024

Our mission is to create opportunities that foster safety and security for young people, enhance family harmony and promote supportive communities – enabling all young people to reach their full potential.

Youth workers are often called upon to 'use our powers.' We hear this plea every so often, typically in times of crisis. Once we've intervened, we may be told we are superheroes. I'm not going to argue against this. Why would anyone suggest we are less than super? I'll confess: these powers are just honed youth worker skills, and we can all develop them. To the untrained eye, they look miraculous. For youth workers, it's just Tuesday.



Curiosity and New Ideas



Diversity; Collaboration and Collegiality



Connection and Reach



Flexibility

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CEO and President's Report

“ The Bridge Youth Service has again produced a year of achievements to be proud of.

We would like to recognise the consistent, high quality of services provided to young people by our staff.

Innovation continued to be demonstrated through the design of individualised plans for young people, and responding to housing and homelessness needs in a period of high demand and high costs.

Our staff are incredible under such circumstances.

Thank you to all our staff, their Program Managers and Team Leaders who support their teams so skilfully through these constraints.

The pressure on families continues unabated. Our staff are resourceful, utilising brokerage and networking to alleviate some of the pressures families are feeling.

Their knowledge on recognising and responding to family violence is impressive. Every day, our staff juggle the tension between parents struggling to meet the needs of their children, and the rights of children to be safe and secure.

School disengagement and school attendance issues continued to increase, placing demand on our staff to assist struggling families and schools.

The commencement of our new school-based program “I’m Here” this year was in response to the number of young people struggling to maintain regular attendance. This early intervention approach was made possible by a new philanthropic partnership with the Barr Family Foundation, supported by Mutual Trust.

We are proud of our role delivering recovery services through the Goulburn Flood Recovery Service alongside our partner FamilyCare. This model of utilising local, place-based services who are already connected to their communities was a major contributor to the provision of quality services.

We proudly participated in Orygen’s lab program to enhance the delivery of our Mental Health service alongside five other programs from across Australia, demonstrating effective mental health support for young people can be provided in addition to Headspace’s important role.

Thank you to the members of the Board of Management who demonstrated their confidence in our governance processes through the purchasing of our next office site.

It became apparent in 2019 that we would require a larger office to accommodate our increasing services and staff. Several options presented over this period, culminating with the purchase of 25-27 St Georges Road, Shepparton, in 2023.

The decisions required to purchase a major asset and the cascading effects of this were immense, but the clarity of our intent and belief in our mission made the process positive and exciting.

We look forward to the completion of “The Nest” project with our partners Women’s Property Initiative and the Property Industry Foundation at the end of 2024. This will provide homes and security for young mothers in Mooroopna.

Our new Strategic Plan 2024-2027 is shaping up to be one that demonstrates our effectiveness at supporting young people and ensuring they are involved alongside us. Thank you to our Executive Team, Jenny Cook and Leigh Nash for their input to this process and their leadership of the overall success of our teams in delivering quality services to young people.

Achievements Summary

- ✓ New school-based program 'I'm Here', made possible by a new partnership with the Barr Family Foundation, supported by Mutual Trust
- ✓ Delivering recovery services in partnership with FamilyCare through the Goulburn Valley Flood Recovery Service
- ✓ Participation in Orygen’s lab program to enhance the delivery of our Mental Health service
- ✓ Purchased our next office space to accommodate our growth in services and staff

Melinda Lawley
CEO



Georgia Linton
President



Fostering safety + inclusion

Every day, we strive to create a safe and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued –especially LGBTQIA+ young people.

We're excited to announce that we've secured funding from Rainbow Health Australia to pursue our Rainbow Tick Accreditation, starting in 2025.

Collaborating with local organisations at community events is a highlight for us.

We proudly participated in IDAHOBIT – International Day Against LGBTQIA+ Discrimination – and Wear It Purple Day, reinforcing our commitment to inclusivity.





The Nest

It's almost here!

We anticipate delivering three two-bedroom modular homes for young mothers by the second half of 2024, with residents expected to move in by early 2025.

The Nest is set for rapid completion, with building permits secured in early 2024 and preliminary landscaping finished.

This initiative is a collaboration between The Bridge Youth Service, Property Industry Foundation, and Women's Property Initiatives, creating a supportive sanctuary for young mothers (up to 25 years old) to live independently with their children.

Designed by Schoed Projects and constructed by Modular Spaces, The Nest will feature family-friendly interiors and a central soft play area.



Key funders:



The Jack & Ethel Goldin Foundation



Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Progress

More than 12 months since our Reflect RAP was endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, The Bridge Youth Service is now working towards developing its second, a two-year Innovate RAP.

Our Innovate RAP will build on the commitments and progress we made developing our Reflect RAP.

We look forward to sharing the achievements of that journey with our team and the wider community in the coming year.

Final Reflect RAP commitments actioned:

- ✓ We have drafted a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation
- ✓ We have reviewed our job descriptions, key selection criteria and interview processes to reflect organisational expectations of continued learning about Traditional Owners, the organisations in the areas in which we operate and understanding of our commitment to Reconciliation



'I'm Here' program

In a bustling classroom at Mooroopna Park Primary School, a new journey is taking root – one aimed at keeping students engaged and connected to their education.



"I have so much fun doing what I do. I love seeing the kids grow in confidence."

**Specialist Youth Worker
Kristy Mathewson**

The "I'm Here" Program has its grounding in previous programs at TBYS, such as Step Up and ASP+, which featured emotional regulation and group work.

"I'm Here" is an early intervention measure aimed at years 5 and 6 students.

The essence of "I'm Here" is simple yet profound: by participating in this program, students can begin to understand their emotions and practice regulating them, so they can be more comfortable to learn in the classroom and not avoid school.

Kristy, one of The Bridge Youth Service's dedicated Specialist Youth Workers, drew on her experience in disability and student support to deliver it in a classroom setting.

The program aims to help students become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and actions, especially during life's ups and downs.

Through engaging sessions, participants learn essential skills for emotional identification and regulation, self-care, decision-making, and coping strategies.

Kristy believes that by equipping young people with these tools, they can respond positively to their emotions, enhancing not only their classroom experience, but also their personal lives and relationships.

She has so far delivered it at Mooroopna Park Primary School, St Georges Rd Primary School in Shepparton and Wallan Secondary College.

The program's influence quickly became evident. Students learned to identify their emotions – naming them like colours on a palette – and explored self-soothing techniques.

They engaged in conversations about their strengths and values, planting seeds of awareness that would grow over time.

For Kristy, it was about building their 'tool belt' of skills, preparing them to stay engaged and resilient.

Through patience, persistence, and a little fun – such as introducing African drums to teach about heartbeat regulation – Kristy is planting the seeds of change.

The "I'm Here" Program is funded by the Barr Family Foundation and Mutual Trust.

One student went from 72%

to 100% attendance

Once struggling with attendance, this student made an incredible turnaround.

He became a leader among his peers, taking the initiative to ensure that younger siblings made it to school each day.

Embodying the very principles he had learned, he would tell other students in the program:

"You'll get out of it, but you gotta put in,"

Our Pregnancy & Parenting programs assisted

151 families

with early intervention, placement prevention and reunification.

Pregnancy + Parenting Programs



Family Preservation & Reunification

Family Services

Family Services - 200 hours

Young Parents Group - Shepparton & Wallan

Young Mothers in Mind

Circle of Security

Antenatal Care & Education

Pregnancy Decisions & Options Counselling

Putting Families First



"I am proud of the dedication and passion the YPP team demonstrates, along with excellent cohesion, working collaboratively with other programs at The Bridge as well as with external organisations. Together we are committed to driving positive change and creating lasting outcomes for the families we support. This strong partnership approach enhances our collective ability to support and empower young parents and their children."

Linda King, Program Manager

Accomplishments and milestones

The suite of programs at The Bridge ensures continuity of care through our antenatal program, Young Mothers in Mind group, case management and Young Parents group. Many families were able to flourish, feel empowered, and improve their circumstances by achieving their goals with the assistance of practitioners.

Key partnerships

- ▶ Partnership with GV Health is key to ACEP (ongoing)
- ▶ The Orange Door
- ▶ Child Family Alliance
- ▶ Rumbalara
- ▶ FamilyCare
- ▶ OzChild
- ▶ Marian Community
- ▶ Community Based CP
- ▶ Child Protection
- ▶ Communities for Children

Key objectives

- ✔ Ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young parents.
- ✔ Practical support, information and advice, and opportunities to develop skills in parenting and family functioning to vulnerable families.
- ✔ Safety, stability and development of vulnerable children, young people and their families, with a focus on building capacity and resilience.

Family Foundations

Family Foundations is a new program designed for expecting parents and those with children under 12 months.

Evidence-based and developed by Pennsylvania State University, it has been customised for Australian families by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne.

The program aims to enhance communication, reduce conflict and improve mental health among new parents, whether parents live together or co-parent.

It is inclusive, accommodating parenting teams that may include grandparents or other relatives. Open to parents and caregivers of all ages, Family Foundations extends support beyond the youth demographic we typically serve.

Research shows that when parents cooperate and manage stress effectively, it leads to better outcomes for their babies.

The program equips participants with coping skills to navigate the challenges of parenthood and support each other.

According to the "All-of-family responses to children, mothers and fathers accessing services for domestic and family violence in Victoria, Australia" discussion paper by Safer Families Centre:

*"Two evaluations by SAFER researchers... established the feasibility and acceptability of both home-based and telehealth implementation of Family Foundations in Victoria. Findings suggest that maternal stress and anxiety symptoms decreased, and coparenting support and parenting warmth increased following the program."**

Family Foundations consists of 10 sessions, designed to foster cooperation and communication. Notably, the program is completely free and offers flexible delivery options, including home visits and after-hours or online sessions.

Stephen is Program Lead for Family Foundations, which has received an additional two years of funding from Communities for Children.

*(Kertesz M, Humphreys C, MacMillan H, Brown S, Giallo R, Hooker L, Alisic E, Hegarty K June 2022)

Supported by:



Case Studies

How our Pregnancy and Parenting team delivers holistic support



Empowering mum through crisis to stability

A young mother without Australian citizenship, Kara*, was initially supported by The Bridge Youth Service (TBYS) through the Antenatal Program and later the Young Mothers in Mind (YMIM) Program.

Crisis Intervention

After the birth of her daughter, Kara* revealed severe abuse—physical, emotional, and sexual—by her partner. TBYS, Marian Community, and police acted quickly to ensure her safety, relocating Kara* to emergency accommodation and collaborating to secure a protected Intervention Order (FVIO).

Support & Solutions

- ✓ TBYS and Marian Community worked together to place Kara* in a local refuge and connect her with crucial services, including the Community Legal Centre.
- ✓ Kara* received support from the Daystay Program and in-house psychologist, Cameron McGregor, while TBYS assisted with housing, material aid, and passport application.

Outcome

With stable housing, her child in daycare, and part-time employment secured, Kara* successfully completed legal proceedings and felt safe in her community, thanks to the comprehensive support she received.

Transforming family dynamics and support

A 23-year-old mother, Lisa*, with two children (3-year-old son and a 9-month-old daughter) was referred for support because of complex issues involving mental health, family violence, and parenting challenges. The son's father is cooperative, but the daughter's father was abusive and argumentative, creating a volatile environment. Previous relationships also involved significant family violence.

Intervention & Support

Key risks included Lisa's* difficulty in managing her emotions and recognising how her responses impacted her children's behaviour. She struggled with understanding the link between the child's behaviour and exposure to family violence.

- ✓ Our main goal was to help Lisa* manage her emotions, respond constructively to her children, and understand their developmental needs.
- ✓ She engaged with a Mentalisation-Based Therapy (MBT) group and a psychologist to address her trauma and triggers.

Outcomes

With ongoing support and strategies in place, positive changes were observed:

- ✓ Lisa* began showing increased physical affection, warmth and patience.
- ✓ She secured a 2-year Intervention Order (FVIO) against the daughter's father, providing her with relief and space to focus on parenting.
- ✓ Lisa* initiated and completed NDIS early childhood interventions, securing a plan for speech therapy, occupational therapy and psychology. Play therapy was introduced, and daycare was made aware of the supports and the child's needs.

Referral & Issues

The family was referred for assistance with Lisa's* mental health issues, including Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), Postnatal Depression (PND), and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). The referral also highlighted the need for support with the oldest child's behavioural issues and general parenting.

Current Status

Lisa* continues to engage with support services, demonstrating ongoing improvements in her parenting and emotional management. The family has made significant strides towards stability and well-being.



* Names have been changed

Youth + Family Support

"Everything we do attempts to support those in crisis and reduce risk of harm, and increase young people's safety and wellbeing."

"The housing sector is really tricky, so for the workforce to keep doing what they're doing is what I am most proud of."

"Because of limited options, not every young person will walk away with a housing resource, but they do walk away with other outcomes and it's a testament to the staff and the young people's resilience."

Renae Ford,
Program
Manager



Adolescent Support Program

Finding Solutions

Transitional Youth Support

Family Reconciliation

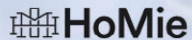
STAR Housing

Supporting Young Parents

Targeted Care Packages

Key Partnerships

- ▶ The Triple H Partnership
- ▶ StreetSmart
- ▶ HoMie
- ▶ Share the Dignity
- ▶ Reflective Practice training with Adela Holmes



Key objectives

- ✔ Provide change for young people, tailored support for them and their families/carers to address issues, including family conflict/relationship breakdown that puts young people at risk of homelessness.
- ✔ We provide intensive support for those in crisis on protective orders or at risk of increased child protection involvement or homelessness.

Accomplishments + milestones

- ✔ Long-term housing outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness and we exceeded all our targets. And in turn, we were provided additional HEF (Housing Establishment Fund).
- ✔ Good outcomes - To support young people into the limited housing options, we do have, such as young people moving into the Education First Youth Foyer, Jacaranda (which is supported accommodation), private rentals, transitional housing, long-term housing.
- ✔ We spent \$21,829 on HEF. Our usual budget is just under \$15,000.





Feedback
Restoring home
and hope

The positive impact of our Youth and Family Support Team's efforts

A young person's perspective

Taylah*, 24, reached out to The Bridge Youth Service (TBYS) for support during a challenging time in her life. Having been caught in a cycle of temporary accommodations and struggling to provide a stable home for her young daughter, Taylah faced numerous hurdles.

The support from TBYS proved transformative. The Specialist Youth Workers quickly helped Taylah secure transitional housing, which allowed her to reunite with her daughter.

TBYS's commitment extended beyond providing immediate accommodation. They advocated for Taylah's transition to a long-term, brand-new property, located near her family and support services.

Additionally, TBYS alleviated the financial burden of setting up a new home by providing food assistance and gift cards for essential items. This practical support significantly reduced the stress and financial strain associated with moving into a new place.

"The Bridge made a difference by listening to my needs and doing whatever they could to make sure those needs were met and made me feel supported every step of the way," Taylah said.

“

You can sit there and have a conversation with your support worker about almost anything and not feel judged, they were also able to relate in some ways, which helps to put you at ease as sometimes it can be a bit overwhelming sharing your experience with strangers.

Taylah found the personalised approach of TBYS particularly impactful. Having never lived independently before, the guidance and consistent check-ins from the staff made her feel supported and understood. Their empathetic, non-judgmental approach was a welcome change from other services she had encountered.

The Bridge's holistic support — covering everything from housing to food assistance — stood out to Taylah, who appreciated their genuine commitment to her well-being.

"The Bridge showed me that as hard as it may seem things are possible, you just have to keep pushing and find a support system that works for you and actually does support you like they have," Taylah said.

Her advice to young people struggling is straightforward: be open about your needs and trust in TBYS's commitment to support you.

Her story is a powerful testament to The Bridge's impact, showcasing how dedicated advocacy, practical assistance, and compassionate care can transform lives, turning instability into hope and renewal.

**Name has been changed.*

Targeted Care Package

Provides vital support

Since 2018, The Bridge Youth Service has been a crucial support system for Kerrie*, a devoted grandmother who has been tasked with raising her three grandsons. Her grandson's parents are unable to care for the boys because of involvement in substance abuse and criminal activities.

Kerrie's* two oldest grandsons have spent periods of time in juvenile justice centres. Kerrie* has been at the centre of their care, striving to provide stability and support in the face of these difficulties.

The Navigator program was the first point of support for Kerrie's* oldest grandson when he was 13.

This program was later complemented by the Adolescent Support Programs as Kerrie's* second grandson, who has experienced considerable trauma and ongoing mental health issues, also engaged with these services from the age of 12. He will transition to Better Futures at Berry Street when he turns 18 and continues to receive valuable guidance from The Bridge's in-house psychologist, Cameron McGregor.

Kerrie's* third grandson has been supported by The Bridge's since he was 10. To provide holistic support for the family, the age of support was adjusted, and he is now 13. The Targeted Care Package (TCP) has also facilitated the boys' connection with their younger brother through prosocial/ positive engagement.

During the past year, the TCP has extended its support to include home repairs and respite for Kerrie*. The key worker assigned to the case has played a vital role by taking the boys out for activities, giving Kerrie* much-needed respite, and assisting with home repairs, particularly following incidents related to the boys' mental health. The worker's support has been invaluable, offering not only practical help but also a compassionate ear for Kerrie*.

Kerrie* has expressed deep gratitude for the support she has received.

Kerrie's* experience underscores the essential role of The Bridge Youth Service in providing comprehensive support to families facing significant challenges, demonstrating the positive impact of our targeted care approach.

**Name has been changed*

Kerrie's* testimonial highlights the profound impact of The Bridge's TCP support:

"The Bridge has been brilliant. The programs have been really good, and the scope of things on offer for the boys has been fantastic."

"It was heaven when The Bridge got involved. It was so much easier to have just one or two people to speak to."

"Another thing The Bridge has been brilliant with is helping me fix the damage done to my home over the past year."

"The activities organised and provided for the kids have been an enormous help. The boys enjoy spending time with their worker, which is a significant relief for me."

"The TCP package through The Bridge has been a godsend."

Targeted Care Package benefits

With ongoing support and strategies in place, positive changes were observed:

- ✓ Minimises the number of professionals involved in the day-to-day life of the child and family.
- ✓ Maximises the expertise and capability our organisation has developed in the provision of casework services to children and families.
- ✓ Maximises the effectiveness of established relationships that the child or family has with us.
- ✓ Preserves and strengthens a relationship that a child or family may have with us other than Child Protection.





The Triplett project

Above photo from left: Lauren Ryan from Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, Stephanie Byrne from Primary Care Connect, Renae Ford from The Bridge Youth Service, Foyer residents Sophie and Christine, Anita McCurdy from Berry Street, Ash Thomas from The Bridge Youth Services, TBYS youth ambassador Lauren, Clark Patching from Berry Street and Amy De Paola from The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project.

In November 2023 The Bridge Youth Service spearheaded the Triple H project, a collaborative initiative dedicated to raising awareness about youth homelessness in our community.



The journey began in May 2022 when ABC Takeover organised Shepparton's first Youth Summit, gathering 42 local young individuals, mainly Year 9 students and older, from secondary schools across the region.

This week-long event allowed participants to voice their concerns on critical local issues, such as gender identity, racism, mental health, alternative education options, and homelessness.

They engaged in workshops to develop actionable community-based solutions.

Securing funding from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, The Bridge Youth Service, along with Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project, Berry Street, and Education First Youth Foyer, applied for and received grants to implement the ideas generated during the summit.



The Triple H project – short for Humanity Helping Homelessness – was conceived as a community movement to raise awareness and support for individuals experiencing homelessness locally.

The Bridge Youth Service played a pivotal role in advancing the project, orchestrating a significant event on November 15 that highlighted the initiative's impact. The evening featured a keynote address by Brea Dorsett, a former Shepparton resident and advocate for homelessness awareness.

Her powerful personal story was followed by a panel discussion aimed at addressing the stigma of homelessness and exploring effective support strategies for young people facing this issue.

Addressing school disengagement



Navigator understands the importance of education and works tirelessly to help young people reengage with learning.

To do this the Navigator Specialist Youth Workers must first understand and be aware of the reasons why young people have stopped attending school.

The factors confronting young people are many and complex:

- ▶ The impacts of COVID-19 are still being felt, with many young people who missed face-to-face attendance at school finding it hard to re-establish regular attendance
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Learning difficulties
- ▶ Mental health issues
- ▶ Family issues, including family violence

Department of Education's Navigator Program

The actions taken to help resolve these issues are:

- ✔ Building a trusting relationship with the young person and family
- ✔ Undertaking comprehensive assessments to identify issues and areas of strength
- ✔ Developing re-engagement plans
- ✔ Working closely with schools to address issues and develop ways to engage young people. This includes modified timetables and extra educational support
- ✔ Referrals to specialist services, including family support services counselling and Alcohol and other Drug (AOD support)
- ✔ Assisting young people with emotional regulation using ERIC, a regulation tool used extensively at TBYS

The Bridge Youth Service acknowledges the many agencies who it works with to achieve positive outcomes for young people.

Feedback

Celebrating the impact of our Navigator team's inspiring work

"Even when I wasn't at school my Navigator worker was still supportive and helped me overcome some of my personal issues."

"She taught me to see the good in life and things. She helped me more than she was meant to and for that I love her. I couldn't have asked for a better worker. You're a blessing Sarah."

"The most valuable things I got out of Navigator was that I got my confidence back and my education improved."

"I wouldn't have been able to do it without your help."

Feedback from various young people

"Keep up the great work that Navigator does."

"Student is very happy to meet up and chat with Hope and has developed a really positive relationship where he feels comfortable and can speak openly."

Various feedback from a school

"Thank you for all your help with my daughter. It is so appreciated"

"Helen was one of my main supports with her work with my daughter."

Feedback from various parents

Early Intervention Program (EIP)

The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is run by The Bridge Youth Service (TBYS) and provides support to Young People who are experiencing distress because of poor mental health (YES stream) or substance use (AOD stream).

The program is staffed by specialist youth workers who can provide comprehensive assessment, goal setting, treatment planning, advocacy, and case management; and psychologists who deliver therapeutic interventions.

Youth worker appointments are available in the community, at home, via telehealth or in centre.

Psychology appointments are only available in-centre, but transport assistance can be provided if needed.

Additional funding approved for Mitchell and Murrindindi shires for 2024-2025.

Working with provisional psychology students from Mental Health in Mind to address gap in finding clinicians.

Challenges:

- ▶ Seeing increasingly more complex and high-risk young people
- ▶ Finding MH clinicians
- ▶ More demand than capacity for mental health supports

Outcomes:

- ✔ Model mapping and evaluation
- ✔ Refined intake and eligibility criteria
- ✔ Further understanding and evaluation of outcomes measurements
- ✔ Refinement of EIP Young Person Survey, which captures outcome measures
- ✔ Development and launch of EIP Young Person Consumer Satisfaction Survey
- ✔ Further understanding of goal setting and further refinement of EIP Action Planning Tool
- ✔ Further education for the EIP Team through YES CoP
- ✔ Development of EIP infographic
- ✔ Relationship building with Murray PHN
- ✔ Relationship building with other YES service providers

Successes:

We got to participate in Orygen YES Implementation Lab.

(See story on pages 32-33)

From isolation to empowerment

The positive impact of our Early Intervention Team's (EIP) efforts

A young person's perspective

I got into The Bridge program by recommendation from my psychologist.

From there I met my youth worker who would become a huge part of my life in just a span of a year.

At the start I was very shy and hesitant about doing the program, but as a few weeks went by I got comfortable, we started to work on my mental health and the goals to better improve my life.

I had bad social anxiety, that was the main reason I got into the program.

My social worker helped me get out in public and enabled me to be alone in public without having an anxiety attack.

"The world is still scary to me, and I've got a little more to work on, but compared to when I started the program, I can do a lot more now than I did before and I'm so grateful."

She also helped me with getting into a Certificate II in Animal Care at TAFE and helped me get my licence.

I'm loving life, whereas a year ago I wanted nothing to do with it.

The best thing about the program was having a youth worker who cared and genuinely listened.

After I left the program I was sad since it felt like a safety blanket had been taken away, but because of the help I received I'm a lot happier.

I no longer need the program, but my youth worker said if I ever need help I can always call or visit.

That puts my mind at ease knowing that that safety blanket is still there, waiting if I need it again in the future.



Orygen YES Implementation Lab

During the 2023-2024 financial year, The Bridge Youth Service's Early Intervention Program (EIP) team embarked on a transformative journey by participating in Orygen's Youth Enhanced Services (YES) Implementation Lab.

This initiative, backed by the Australian Department of Health, aims to bolster the capacity of youth mental health services and refine their service models to better support young individuals with complex mental health needs.

The EIP team, having developed and sustained their program over the years, saw an opportunity for growth and improvement.

Prompted by recommendations from the Orygen Service Implementation & Quality Improvement (SIQI) team and the Murray Primary Health Network (PHN), the EIP applied for the Lab in May 2023.

The Lab's primary goal is to enhance the effectiveness of youth mental health care, while also contributing to the evidence base for service models and quality improvement strategies.

Throughout the Lab, the EIP team focused on refining their service model, improving integration with local health services,

and enhancing outcome and feedback measurement.

Key activities included model mapping, development of an infographic, and refining intake and eligibility criteria.

Challenges encountered included the significant time commitment required and the impact of staff leave on program participation. Despite these challenges, the program saw notable successes, including the development of a Young Person Consumer Satisfaction Survey and strengthened relationships with Orygen and other partners.

The Lab's participation led to valuable insights and improvements in service delivery, such as more precise intake criteria and enhanced understanding of outcome measures. Although some tasks, like the development of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan, remain to be completed, the experience has been instrumental in setting the stage for future enhancements.



The extensive implementation process spanned 12 months, involving several key phases:

- ✓ **May/June 2023**
Application and initial preparations.
- ✓ **June 2023**
Acceptance and preliminary meetings.
- ✓ **July/August 2023**
Needs assessment and initial workshops.
- ✓ **September 2023**
Detailed workshops focusing on service models and action planning.
- ✓ **January 2024**
Intake and eligibility workshops.
- ✓ **Monthly**
Ongoing meetings and consultations with Orygen and other stakeholders.

orygen

U-Krew

U-Krew is an after-school program that works in an early intervention model aimed at at-risk young people, aged 12-17 years in the Mitchell Shire.

Funded through Safer Communities, the program works with young people to further develop their life skills and connection to community and employment. Supported by the ERIC model, young people learn about healthy eating and living, resilience building, and engaging with community mentors. School holiday activities include ice-skating, horse riding, paintball and graffiti art workshops. Groups are delivered in Wallan on a weekly basis with transport provided.



Feedback

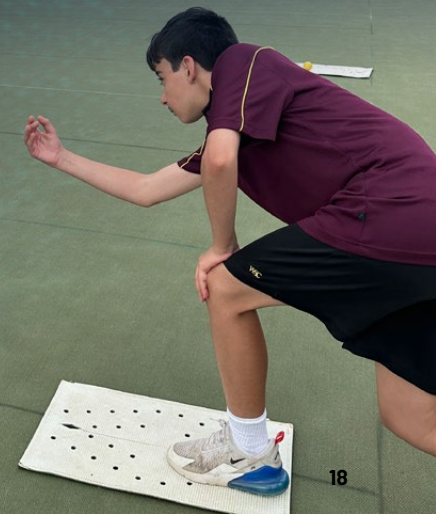
"I've made friends with people I wouldn't have before because of group."

Feedback from a young person

"I'm so glad that TBYS will still be offering the program in Wallan. It has made such an impact on the young people and it's a great space for them to be themselves."

Feedback from Wallan Secondary

College Wellbeing



Statistics

Family Relationships



110 Young People supported by Adolescent Support Program and Finding Solutions Program

8 Targeted Care Packages

Pregnancy, Parenting & Family Services



151 families supported across all DFFH funded programs

87 NEW referrals 2023/2024

12 young women attended Pregnancy Decisions & Options Counselling

32 pregnant young women were supported by ACEP

Young Mothers in Mind program

Young Parents Group program - Wallan

Young Parents Group program - Shepparton

17 referrals

14 new families referred

38 new families referred

11 individual families

13 individual families attended

41 individual families attended

Early Intervention



67 referrals to the U-Krew program

15 Seymour (26 sessions)

52 Wallan (35 sessions)

4 Holiday activities

Clinical support

22 Young people assessed

14 Initial assessments completed

108 Follow-up appointments completed

37 young people supported

26 Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)

11 Mental Health

School and Education Support



97 DET Navigator program new referrals

24 students attended I'm Here Program

Support provided across these 5 regional areas; Greater Shepparton, Moria Shire, Strathbogie Shire, Mitchell Shire and Murrindindi Shire

Housing Assistance



77 young people utilised STAR Housing Assistance

Transitional Youth Support/ Supporting Young Parents

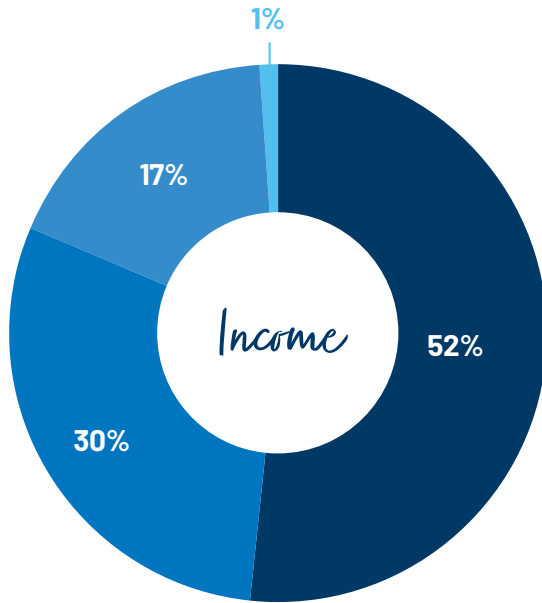
25 young people were supported to reconcile family relationships

\$21,829 HEF spent

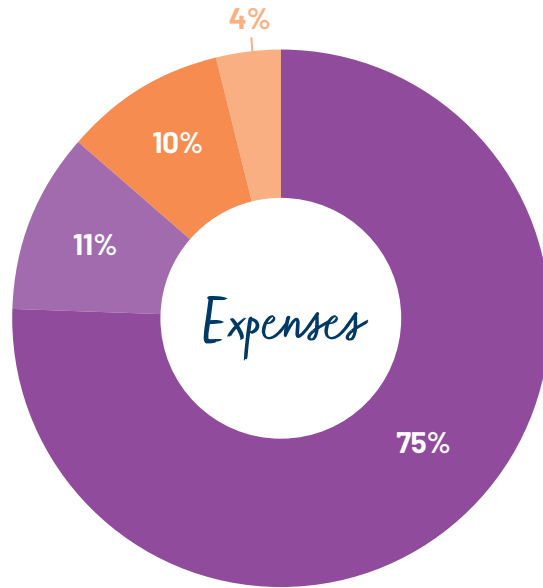
Thank you to our funders!



Income and Expenditure

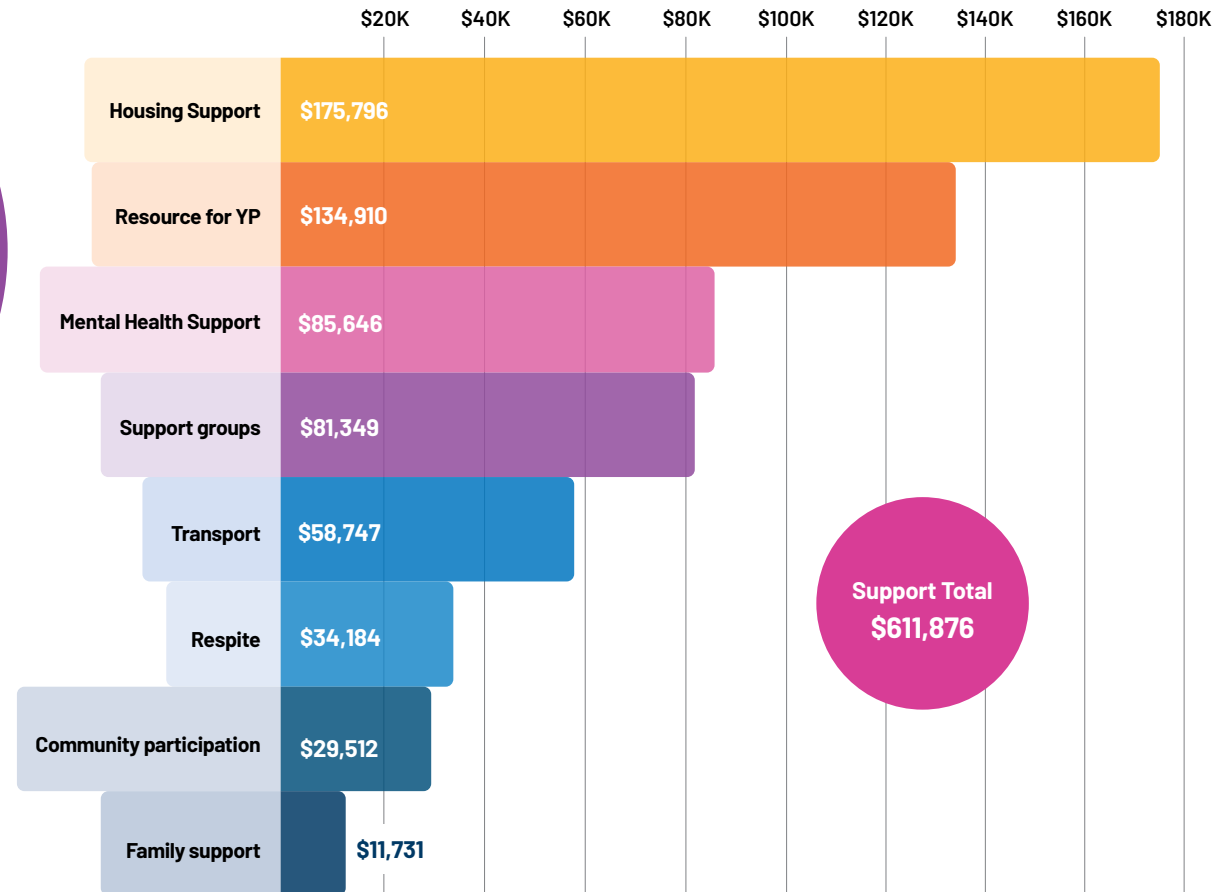


\$2,914,232 DFFH Funding
\$1,665,050 Other Government Funding
\$982,552 Other Non-Government Funding
\$13,205 Other Income
\$5,575,039 **Total**



\$4,268,039 Employee Benefit Expenses
\$611,876 Holistic Support for Young People
\$558,042 Operating Costs
\$204,973 Depreciation & Amortisation
\$5,031,054 **Total Expenses**
\$67,891 **Total Surplus (deficit)**

How holistic support was provided in 2023-24



Options for *young people*



(03) 5831 2390

127 Welsford St, Shepparton

54 Tallarook St, Seymour

119 Wellington St, Wallan

www.thebridge.org.au

