

DO WELL. DO GOOD.

Your Annual Social Investment: supporting young Australians' mental health and wellbeing



2024 Impact Update



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Transforming young lives: Our impact on the mental health of young Australians

Since 2022, Future Generation Global has focused its social investment on preventing mental ill-health in young Australians – a goal that is now more urgent than ever.

Despite decades of reform and increases in government funding, mental health conditions in young Australians have increased by nearly 50% in the past 15 years¹, with almost 40% of 16 to 24 year olds – more than 1 million people – experiencing a mental health disorder². No other health condition matches the prevalence, persistence, or harmful impact of mental ill-health on young people's education, relationships, employment, and life outcomes.

While Australia is a global leader in the treatment of youth mental health conditions, prevention has not yet received the urgent attention it requires. Only 1% of the \$10 billion annual public spend on mental health is directed toward prevention. If this does not change, the financial and human cost of mental ill-health on our children will continue to grow.

Future Generation Global's portfolio of 14 non-profit partners and our evidence-based measurement framework offer a practical approach to investing in and measuring prevention. We are dedicated to rigorously tracking outcomes to build the case for greater investment and action in this area.

We're excited to share this impact update, showcasing real stories of young lives transformed through our partners' work – and through your support of Future Generation Global. These stories highlight the powerful difference we're making together in tackling one of Australia's most urgent challenges. We thank the young people who have shared their journeys, and we thank you for making this critical social impact possible.

Impact headlines in 2024

PREVENTION AT WORK – YOUNG PEOPLE'S OUTCOMES

Our non-profit partners have reached more than **4.5 million** young Australians across every state and territory, working to safeguard their wellbeing and prevent mental ill-health.

- 67% of partners who work directly with young people have expanded their reach since our partnership began
- 100% of partners who work with other stakeholders (on system change and capacity building in the sector) have increased their reach
- In our second year of measuring outcomes, our partners reported 64 metrics under 12 short-term outcomes, with 75% of metrics showing positive change for young participants³ and 63% of metrics exceeding or meeting their aim⁴

FUNDING AT WORK – PARTNERS' PROGRESS

Future Generation Global supports strong, effective non-profit organisations with multi-year, untied funding, and additional capacity building support, enabling partners to allocate resources based on their needs and priorities.

 Our partners reported progress on 108 organisational goals, with 73% already achieved, exceeded or on track for achievement within the three-year period.

- 1 Mental health disorders in young Australians surge by 47 per cent over 15 years, new data shows ABC News.
- 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2023.
- 3 Positive change is either 1) Distance travelled among participants improved outcomes between the beginning and end of participation with the partner organisation during 2024 or 2) Improvement on baseline the outcomes for the 2024 participants was an improvement on the results for the 2023 participants.
- 4 Aims were to either improve on or maintain the baseline result.









Our social impact partners

Future Generation Global's portfolio of 14 non-profit partners were selected from a nationwide pool of 175 applicants, based on their proven track record of modifying the risk and protective factors that influence young people's mental health.











PAGE 5 >

PAGE 6 >

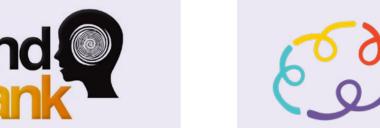
PAGE 7 >

PAGE 8 >













PAGE 12 >

PAGE 13 >



PAGE 4 >













PAGE 17 >



PAGE 15 >

PAGE 16 >







Youth Opportunities • NATIONAL, SA BASED

Emily's Story

Sending stars: How Emily found confidence in herself

"In the end, the one person you'll always have in your life...is yourself." - Emily

Before I joined Youth Opportunities, I was shy, uncertain, and constantly doubting myself. I was too afraid to step out of my comfort zone and always had this feeling that I wasn't good enough. At work, I used to only talk to people I knew. It wasn't that I didn't want to talk to others — I was just too scared. Scared they wouldn't like me or find me annoying. I didn't know where I was heading or what I wanted my future to look like – and that made me feel stuck.

Since joining Youth Opportunities, I've changed in ways I never imagined. I've become a more positive and confident person, not just in how I see the world, but in how I see myself. I no longer doubt my self-worth, and I can now start and hold conversations with new people without feeling scared or small.

Looking back, one of the most helpful habits I've gained through this journey is something simple, but powerful: sending stars, not black holes.

This means choosing kindness – whether that's a smile, compliment, or encouragement.

It's such a small habit, but it's made a big difference to how I connect with others, and how I feel about myself. In the past, I would've never been able to start conversations with people I didn't usually talk to. Now, I've built the confidence to do exactly that.

Youth Opportunities helped me to learn something important: in the end, the one person you'll always have in your life... is yourself. I learned to stop revolving my world around others and start figuring out what I wanted from life. I even started looking into my dream career and setting goals for the future – and that gave me a real sense of direction. My youth worker noticed a change in me too – I'm more independent, motivated, and finally choosing myself.

And that, to me, is what real growth looks like.

About Youth Opportunities

Youth Opportunities is dedicated to empowering young people with the tools they need to overcome adversity and build thriving futures – its vision is a world where all young people have the opportunity to be their best. Through evidence-based personal leadership programs and wraparound services, Youth Opportunities helps young people to gain positive control of their own lives. This involves equipping them with the enterprise skills they need for the future, and developing their wellbeing and resilience to be prepared for any challenges they may face. By becoming a personal leader, young people are given the skills, habits, and confidence to not only cope, but thrive.







WANTA Aboriginal Corporation PREMOTE NT



Rayshaun's Story

From the classroom to community leadership: How WANTA helped Rayshaun turn small steps into big dreams

"I never thought I'd be helping to run a cafe in my own community. Now, I'm mentoring younger kids, learning business skills, and thinking about my own future."

— Rayshaun

In the remote Northern Territory community, Ngukurr, opportunities can feel pretty far away. This all changed when we started making coffees at school through the WANTA Academy program. At first it was just for the teachers, but then we had an idea: what if we opened a real cafe for the whole community? That's how Bagai Barista began.

Now, the cafe runs five days a week. We open at 8:30am, and I'm there early – setting up, checking stock, training the younger ones. We've sold thousands of drinks, from cappuccinos to hot chocolates and chai. I've learned how to use the machines, talk to customers, and even track sales through the student-friendly POS system.

Bagai Barista is more than just coffee. It creates a space for us to develop business skills, employment pathways, and earn our own income. We even hold regular "Coffee with a Cop" mornings, where Ngukurr Police cover the cost of coffee for the community, to encourage conversation, trust and connection.

This year, I got my Certificate I in Hospitality. This was a huge moment. Together with my classmates we are now planning a food menu, with bush foods and local ingredients.

It hasn't always been easy. The water here isn't good for coffee machines, so we rely on bottled water and portable sinks. Deliveries are slow and things don't always arrive on time. Yet despite these challenges, thanks to our community, family and friends, Bagai Barista continues to grow, and so have I. I've even started a permanent part-time job with WANTA to help run the cafe, earning my own income, and showing others what's possible.

I never thought I'd be helping to run a business in my own community. Thanks to WANTA, I'm now dreaming bigger.

Maybe I'll even run my own cafe one day!

About WANTA Aboriginal Corporation

WANTA aims to be a driving force in eradicating the educational disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, ushering in a future where every young individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential. It aims to modify the risk and protective factors that influence the mental wellbeing of young people in remote Indigenous communities, including, but not limited to, school engagement. It delivers culturally appropriate programs elevating school attendance, educational excellence, social enterprise, and providing sport and cultural activities. WANTA is a community-led organisation whose board consists of local Indigenous leaders from the communities in which it operates. It envisions a world where every Indigenous child in remote communities has equal access to quality education and are empowered to break through barriers and embrace their unique talents.







The Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health on National, was based



Anika's Story

Closing the gap: How Jilya helped Anika fulfil her dream of becoming a psychologist

"Jilya took the pressure off so I could focus on becoming the psychologist I always wanted to be." – Anika

I've wanted to be a psychologist since high school.

Growing up Wajak Nyungar, I saw how deeply
mental health affects our community – and how few
Indigenous psychologists there are in schools.
I wanted to help close that gap.

The biggest hurdle was financial. Studying full-time while trying to work casual jobs wasn't sustainable, and the stress started to take a toll. Receiving a scholarship from the Westerman Jilya Institute in 2021 changed everything. The financial support lifted the burden so I could focus on learning. My grades improved, my wellbeing improved, and I felt confident pushing for an Honours and then a Masters degree in psychology.

Equally important was the mentorship. Through Jilya I was matched with a supervisor, Shannon McNeair (another scholarship recipient), who really guided me through my internship year.

Having someone I could call when I wasn't sure what to do made all the difference. Jilya also connected me with a community of people who genuinely care; it feels like family.

Today I'm working as a school psychologist at Christ Church Grammar School in Perth, doing what I've always hoped to do: supporting young people, including Indigenous students, in a way that's culturally informed and safe. My identity keeps me attuned to culture, language and family – things that are central to who we are and must be reflected in how we deliver care.

I'm proud to be part of a growing movement of First Nations psychologists. One day, I'd love to build a service focused on Aboriginal youth.

To anyone considering this path, I'd say: "Give it a go, we need you!"

About The Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health

The Westerman Jilya Institute is an Indigenous-led not-for-profit transforming mental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Jilya builds a national pipeline of First Nations psychologists through scholarships, mentoring, and culturally grounded supervision – removing barriers and fostering leadership. Its treatment arm delivers trauma-informed care to high-risk communities, while its research arm develops validated clinical tools and national data to drive culturally safe, evidence-based interventions. Together, these arms grow the Indigenous psychology workforce, close critical service gaps, and deliver community-led solutions to suicide prevention and mental health.









Smiling Mind • NATIONAL, VIC BASED

Aria's * Story

Finding calm together: How Smiling Mind helped Sal and her daughter build emotional resilience

"When Aria asked, 'What if sad's just your normal?', I didn't have the answers – but together, we found a way forward." – Aria's mum

I love my daughter Aria more than anything in the world. She's bright, curious, creative – but for a while, I could see she was struggling. She'd get anxious, withdrawn, and she couldn't tell me why.

One night at dinner, she looked at me and asked, "What if sad's just your normal?" That broke my heart. What do you say to a nine-year-old who thinks sadness might be their default? Aria couldn't explain what she was feeling. And I couldn't fix it. I'm not a psychologist. I didn't have the tools. I just kept telling her I loved her, hoping it would be enough. But I was scared. I didn't know how to help her – not really.

There aren't many resources to help parents like me. Your instinct kicks in, but that doesn't mean it's the right thing. If a child cuts their knee, you clean the wound, put on a band-aid. But with mental health struggles? Sometimes you don't even know it's there until it's already deep.

Then something changed. At school, Aria's teacher began using Smiling Mind with the class. "The teacher would put on Smiling Mind and we'd all lie down on the ground to make all of us really calm and relaxed, and we'd focus more," she told me.

It was a turning point. I noticed she wasn't just managing better at school – she was more open at home. Talking about her feelings. Engaging with her learning in a way I hadn't seen before. "She has gained a beautiful love of learning because she can focus on the work," I tell people now.

We've started using Smiling Mind together – at bedtime, on stressful mornings, on days when everything feels too much. It's part of our rhythm now a gentle, practical tool we both can rely on. "I think I've become a better person, and I think I've become more open to my emotions because of Smiling Mind," Aria tells me. And she has. I see it every day.

It's still hard sometimes. Watching your child struggle with wellbeing is heartbreaking – but knowing you might not be able to help them, that's the hardest part. Smiling Mind has given me something I didn't know I was missing: a way in. A way to support her without needing to have all the answers. It's taught her selfawareness, and it's given me peace of mind. We're not just reacting anymore, we're building resilience together.

Sometimes I still think about what Aria said – about sadness being her normal. And then I look at her now - grounded, expressive, learning to understand herself and I think: maybe this can be her normal now.



About Smiling Mind

Smiling Mind is a not-for-profit organisation and leader in preventative mental health – helping young people build mental fitness, emotional regulation, and lifelong resilience through accessible, everyday, digital programs. Developed by psychologists and educators, Smiling Mind's evidence-based tools are used in homes, classrooms and communities across Australia. From digital meditations and daily check-ins to school-based mental health curricula, its programs empower children, teachers and parents to better understand, manage and support their mental wellbeing.





ReachOut • NATIONAL, NSW BASED



Isa's Story

Turning pain into purpose: From isolation to advocacy, Isa's story highlights the power of being seen and heard

"ReachOut helped me to heal and gave me the courage to find my voice again." - Isa

I started struggling with my mental health when I was 13. High school felt overwhelming. I went from being confident to feeling invisible. I didn't understand what I was going through, or what my unhealthy coping mechanisms really meant. Mostly, I just felt alone — like no one really understood me.

Over time, I slowly found ways to manage. Creativity became my outlet — baking, drawing, anything that helped me express what I couldn't say out loud. It gave me some relief, but healing wasn't a straight line.

Then COVID hit. Studying through lockdown made me feel even more disconnected and hopeless. I received an ADHD diagnosis that helped make sense of some things but, even then, I still felt stuck in my own head.

I stopped imagining a future for myself. I stopped trying.

Eventually, I reached a breaking point — and asked for help. Therapy helped me start living again, even if it just meant getting out of bed. But what really made a difference was connection: finding people I could relate to and hearing stories of others who'd been through the same.

Reading personal stories on ReachOut made me feel less alone. They reminded me that recovery is possible. That there's hope.

Now, as a ReachOut advocate, I get to use my voice to help others feel heard — to speak up for those who haven't yet found the words. Sharing my story has helped me turn pain into purpose, and be part of the change I once needed.

About ReachOut

ReachOut is Australia's leading online mental health service for young people. Designed to meet young people where they are – in language they understand, on platforms they trust – ReachOut offers free, anonymous support through articles, personal stories, peer support, and self-help tools. Whether someone is facing everyday stress or experiencing more serious mental health challenges, ReachOut gives them space to feel heard, understood, and supported.







PROJECT ROCKIT • NATIONAL, VIC BASED

Theo's Story

The power of being heard: How PROJECT ROCKIT helped Theo to find his purpose

"Engaging with PROJECT ROCKIT helped me to realise that my experiences don't define me – they can empower me." – Theo

When I was first referred to PROJECT ROCKIT, I was only 13 years old and was barely coping.

I was living in an emotionally abusive household and facing serious mental health challenges. As a neurodiverse person, with two siblings also on the spectrum, I often felt invisible – like I had to hold everything together without any support.

My dad left me responsible for caring for my younger sister, who was suffering from an ongoing and severe mental illness. It was incredibly hard, but supporting her gave me something powerful: the desire to help other young people experiencing similar situations.

I began to work with my local council's Youth Centre, and they encouraged me to apply to be a part of the "In Real Life" project with PROJECT ROCKIT. This project was designed to create a digital resource to promote online safety among young people. I really enjoyed this as it gave me a chance to talk to other young people with similar and different experiences.

Now, I am 15 years old, a permanent member of the National Youth Collective, and have been involved with PROJECT ROCKIT ROCKIT for over 2 years. Engaging with PROJECT ROCKIT helped me to realise that my experiences don't define me – they can empower me. I can use them to help educate others and support young people through their times of struggle. Being a part of this organisation has completely changed the way I think about mental health – and myself. It gave me the opportunity to make a real change for young people like me and, without it, I wouldn't be where I am today. Working with this team has given me a purpose in life and a place where I belong.

The support I received from PROJECT ROCKIT inspired me to begin attending school more frequently, and I've even set a goal to pursue social sciences, so I can support other young people the way I was supported. I could not be more grateful to the team for giving me a chance to thrive.

About PROJECT ROCKIT

PROJECT ROCKIT is Australia's youth-driven movement against bullying, hate and prejudice. Since 2006, it has reached more than 750,000 young people through dynamic, youth-led workshops that tackle bullying, build resilience, and spark inclusive leadership – both online and offline. The National Youth Collective is made up of 43 paid lived experience experts aged 12–20, who help shape its direction as advocates, creators and collaborators, ensuring the work really resonates with young people across the country. PROJECT ROCKIT delivers school workshops across Australia, helping young people take real action against bullying, and has delivered fully funded programs to 110,000 young people in 215 schools facing disadvantage – ensuring when it comes to wellbeing, no young person is left behind.





Prevention United ONATIONAL, VIC BASED

Emily & Jasmine's Story

Legacy Builders: How Prevention United empowered Emily and Jasmine to shape the future of youth mental health

"As Prevention United Youth Ambassadors, our voices are finally being heard." – Emily and Jasmine

As young people, our voices are often ignored or overlooked in conversations that directly impact us. We hear phrases like "you're the future", but we rarely get the chance to be involved in the decisions that shape our lives.

Prevention United completely changed this for us!

Being a part of the Prevention United Youth Ambassador Group has been one of the most empowering experiences of our lives. For many of us, this was the first time we felt genuinely listened to - not just as individuals, but as a generation. Prevention United gave us a voice on the real issues that young people are facing. It wasn't just tokenism. Youth perspectives are embedded across all of Prevention United's work, from campaign planning to policy development.

The national conversation around the impact of social media on youth mental health is a great example. As part of our advocacy work, we helped shape Prevention United's

position on this critical issue. Using our own lived experiences in an area that significantly impacts us and our peers, we guided discussions around age restrictions, screen time, and responsible use.

Prevention United gave us the opportunity to lead our own projects in the youth mental health space. Last year, we designed and launched a National Youth Mental Health Survey – aiming to bring even more young voices to the fore. We promoted the survey through media and social channels, analysed the data, and used the results to inform our work. Through this project, we gained experience in media outreach, data collection and policy engagement. Most importantly, we grew our confidence.

The response was overwhelming. The findings of our survey helped fuel new conversations with professionals, policymakers, and the media. We were invited to speak at forums and events and given the chance to advocate for something deeply personal: better mental health outcomes for all young Australians.

About Prevention United

Prevention United focuses on promoting mental wellbeing and preventing mental health conditions across all life stages. Its vision is for everyone in Australia to achieve their highest level of mental wellbeing and live free from preventable mental health issues. It delivers public education, evidence-based programs, workforce training, consultancy, and advocacy. It empowers individuals, communities, and organisations with the knowledge and tools to foster mental wellness and support preventative approaches to mental health. Its message is clear: good mental health policy must go beyond treatment. Backed by science, Prevention United know many mental health conditions are preventable — and prevention is both possible and urgently needed to address the growing mental health crisis in Australia, especially among children and young people.







Mind Blank • NATIONAL, QLD BASED



John's Story

No longer alone: How Mind Blank gave John the courage to ask for help

"I didn't expect to get anything from a school play. But when Mind Blank came to school, everything changed. When the actors told their story, it felt like they were telling mine." – John

Things were really hard at home. I didn't get along with my family after my stepdad moved in and, one day, I got kicked out. I felt sad and angry all the time.

At school, I didn't really talk to anyone. People thought I was being difficult but, really, I was just trying to get through each day.

Then Mind Blank came to our school. I didn't know what it was about at first – just some actors doing a show. But when they started performing, I couldn't believe it. It was like they were acting out my life. Everything they said and did felt like what I had been through.

After the show, I went up to my principal and talked about what was happening to me. It was the first time I had ever really spoken to someone about this.

Mind Blank helped me see that I wasn't the only one who felt this way. They made me feel like I mattered - like I wasn't alone anymore.

Now I'm trying harder at school, and I've started to get help. I'm not all the way there yet, but I know I'm on the right track.

Mind Blank made a big difference for me. They helped me feel safe enough to speak up.

About Mind Blank

Mind Blank is an award-winning mental health organisation delivering early intervention programs through interactive theatre. Designed to spark conversation and reduce the risk of youth suicide, Mind Blank works with schools, communities and workplaces to build mental health awareness and resilience. Mind Blank programs use storytelling and entertainment to teach people how to maintain their mental health, recognise warning signs of trouble and get comfortable having tough conversations. Ally Kelly, Founder and CEO, started Mind Blank because she believes "no one has to suffer in silence". She embodies the Mind Blank vision daily by teaching wellbeing strategies and reiterating to program participants that no one has to face mental health challenges alone.







Live4Life • REGIONAL VIC AND TAS

Laura's Story

Knowing the signs: How mental health education saved Laura's life

"Live4Life saved my life – and in many ways, it still does every day." - Laura

In my early teen years, I really struggled with mental health. I knew I felt sad a lot and I knew I wasn't coping well. What I didn't know was how to ask for help.

Luckily for me, I didn't have to — thanks to the education that Live4Life had provided to my friends. Live4Life taught them how to recognise the signs, understand when someone isn't okay, and speak up. They saw I wasn't in a good place and alerted the school counsellor that they were worried about me.

I'd taken part in the Live4Life program at school and enjoyed it, but that was the moment that I truly understood the impact that Live4Life could have. It wasn't just education — it actually could lead to life-saving intervention.

As I've moved through life, the skills and information I learned through Live4Life have stayed with me. When I moved out of home at 19 and things went downhill again, it was because of that education I had the confidence to reach out and call Lifeline. It's because of Live4Life that I have been able to support my friends when they've gone through hard times, while also protecting myself and maintaining healthy boundaries.

Today, I'm a Crew Champion with Live4Life and I co-host the podcast Growing Up Clueless. I work in the youth sector and continue to advocate for mental health education because I know, first hand, the difference it makes.

Live4Life saved my life — and in many ways, it still does every day.

About Live4Life

Live4Life is the only mental health education and youth suicide prevention model designed specifically for rural and regional communities. Through its unique, wholeof-community approach, Live4Life empowers young people, teachers, parents, and the wider community with the tools and language to recognise the signs of mental health challenges and take early action. The model includes building supportive community networks, Mental Health First Aid training for students and adults, and local 'Crew' groups led by young volunteers — giving young people a voice and a platform to support themselves and each other.







I CAN Network 9 NATIONAL, VIC BASED



I CAN mentee's Story*

Safe space: How I CAN showed this mentee that being different didn't mean being alone

"I CAN helped my son to find a place where he wasn't just included - he was understood." – Parent of an I CAN mentee

For years, I searched for an activity where my autistic son could belong. He's bright, funny, and has an encyclopedic knowledge of dinosaurs – but traditional activities never worked.

We tried everything. Dance group? He couldn't handle the echoes of the screams or the tapping on the floor. Swimming? The smell of chlorine and the splashing water overwhelmed him. Even in a specialised disability class, we were asked to leave as he was simply "too much" for the group. We were always gently nudged out, told one-on-one might be better — as though being alone was the solution to being different.

Then we found the I CAN Online Mentoring Program. He joined at eight, the minimum age, and for the first time in his life, he belonged somewhere. He was never asked to leave, never expected to change for the comfort of others. If he wasn't up to speaking, he could type, use text-to-speech, or just listen. He could even bring our dog along to sessions.

He's been with the program for five years now. Every session, he laughs.

I CAN Online didn't just give my child a social group

– it gave him a place to be himself, unapologetically.

And for me, it's been like exhaling after years of holding my breath. We've finally found somewhere he's not just included; he's understood.

About I CAN Network

I CAN Network is Australia's largest Autistic-led organisation and one of Australia's biggest youth mentoring organisations. Tragically, autistic people are three times more likely than non-autistic people to die by suicide. I CAN delivers autistic-led group mentoring in schools and online, to build the self-esteem and mental wellbeing of autistic young Australians aged 7-22 years old. In 2024, more than 4,300 young autistic people took part in these programs.











Human Nature O NORTHERN RIVERS, NSW

Clara's Story

Natural remedy: How outdoor therapy helped Clara find calm in the chaos

"Human Nature wasn't just therapy – it was a support system that changed my life in ways I can't even explain." – Clara

When I was first referred to Human Nature, I didn't think therapy could work for me. I'd tried it before — the kind where you sit in an office, stare at the floor, and feel like you have to say the "right" thing. I always left feeling worse.

Everything felt like too much. I wasn't sleeping, I was dealing with anxiety, I was self-harming and using anything I could – alcohol, weed, vaping. Things with my mum were really tense, and my dad had just gotten out of jail. Some nights I had somewhere to sleep, some I didn't.

But when I heard Human Nature did sessions outdoors, I agreed to give it a try. That first drive to the beach with my Adventure Therapist felt strange, but not in a bad way. It was the first time a service didn't feel like a service. It felt human.

We'd talk in the car, walk along the beach, just sit and watch the waves. My therapist helped me tell my story in a new way — not just what had happened to me, but who I was underneath it.

Through narrative therapy, mindfulness, and something called acceptance and commitment therapy, I started figuring out what actually mattered to me. Music helped too. I'd make playlists to explain how I was feeling.

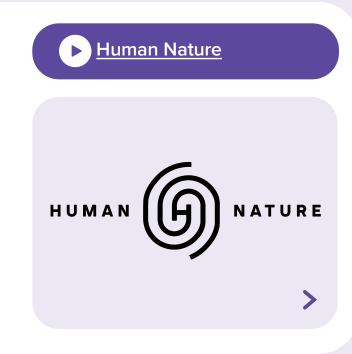
Eventually, my therapist helped me get a spot in youth transitional housing. That changed everything. I started going back to school more, I even agreed to see a counsellor who works with victims of crime – something I never thought I'd be able to face.

Being part of Human Nature over the last few years has changed my life in ways I can't even explain. It's not just therapy — it's a support system. People who show up, who genuinely care. The beach walks, the check-ins, the real conversations, the practical help — even the big adventures, like the trip to Moreton Island — they all helped shape who I am now. Human Nature has given me stability, opportunities, and a sense of belonging that I'll carry with me always.

I'm still figuring things out. But I'm not struggling alone anymore. And that makes all the difference.

About Human Nature

Human Nature is an award-winning, youth-focused mental health organisation based in Northern NSW. It works with young people who are facing serious life challenges, including trauma, homelessness, mental ill-health, and disconnection from school or family. What makes Human Nature different is its unique Adventure Therapy model — taking therapy out of the office and into nature. By combining evidence-based psychological practices with movement, music, and meaningful connection, it creates safe, accessible pathways for young people who don't engage with traditional mental health services. Whether it's a beach walk, a bush hike, or an outdoor adventure with someone who listens, Human Nature meets young people where they are — literally and emotionally — helping them build resilience, self-awareness, and hope for the future.











Happy Paws Happy Hearts • NATIONAL, QLD BASED



Hayden's Story

Finding his way: How Happy Paws Happy Hearts helped Hayden step into the world

"I used to think maybe I just didn't fit anywhere. Then we found Happy Paws Happy Hearts." – Hayden

I've always loved animals. They're calm and don't expect too much. You can just be yourself around them, and that's not something I often felt growing up.

I've had anxiety, OCD, and autism for as long as I can remember. Things like school, meeting new people, or even leaving the house were incredibly hard for me. I used to think maybe I just didn't fit anywhere. Then we found Happy Paws Happy Hearts.

At first, I joined their In-Shelter Program. Right away, it felt different. Small groups, a calm routine, and animals to care for. It helped me feel safe. I wasn't being pushed to be someone I wasn't or to do stuff I wasn't ready for. Slowly, I started to talk more, join in more.

After a while, I was invited to join the Explore Program and that's where things really started to change.

We learned real-life skills like goal-setting, communicating at work, and what to expect in the workplace. I had a Case Manager who supported me every step of the way. It didn't feel scary anymore. It felt doable.

Then came my work placement at a local aquarium. I was nervous – really nervous – but I remembered what I'd learned. I showed up, did my best and slowly settled in. At the end of my ten-week placement, they offered me a permanent position, which I undertook for a while. I now enjoy a casual position while I take on new challenges.

I love doing something that means something to me. Every shift, I get to care for the fish, help visitors who come into the store and be part of a team who are so understanding, welcoming, and supportive. I never thought that this would be my reality, but now, thanks to Happy Paws Happy Hearts it is.

About Happy Paws Happy Hearts

Happy Paws Happy Hearts (HPHH) creates positive connections between young people experiencing social isolation — including those living with disability, mental health challenges, or processing trauma — and rescue animals in safe, supportive environments. HPHH supports participants on their journey of change from social isolation to social inclusion and wellbeing. Through hands-on programs delivered in animal shelters, HPHH helps participants build social confidence, develop realworld skills, and re-engage with education, volunteering, or employment pathways The In-Shelter Program offers a gentle introduction to teamwork and responsibility through animal care, while the Explore Program provides employment readiness training, case management, and structured work placements.



Big hART • NATIONAL, TAS BASED



Fiona's* Story

Big heart, big dreams: How Fiona is using creativity and community to rewrite her story

"Big hART makes me feel happy – like I'm finally getting somewhere in my life." – Fiona

Family is really important to me — my mum, my grandmother, and my hometown, Roebourne. I love being on Country, going fishing, swimming, hanging out with the girls, and looking after my family.

Big hART is like a second family. I've been going there almost my whole life. I wish I could go every day. We make videos, do dance workshops, take photos, cook up a big family feed. We all love each other; I know I'm not alone when I'm there.

This year, I'm working with my mum on a song she has written. It's a tribute to our family and the struggles we've been through together. It means so much to her and my grandmother. It's a big thing for me too – to make them proud and to feel proud of myself.

But it's hard. The people making decisions about my life think I'm a bad person. I'm really not.

I've been going to court since I was 14, on and off, and I'm still in the system. I don't always understand why. Wherever I go, the police say I'm not allowed there. They lock me up and put me in a cell for one or two nights, sometimes longer.

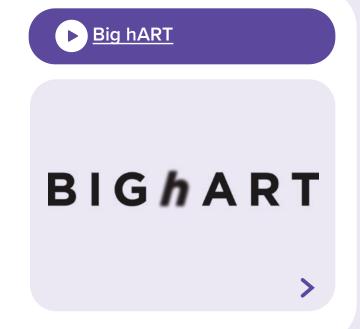
But everyone I work with knows I've got a good heart. I share what I have with others. I'm generous, like my mum.

The world can be a hard place when you're looking for help. When I was only five, I had to take care of my baby brother on my own. Sometimes I feel like giving up. But then I think about the little kids back home. They need someone to keep them safe, help them be good, go to school, get an education. I want what's best for them.

At Big hART, it feels like anything is possible. It helps get my head off things when I'm stressing. It helps me feel excited, proud of myself. It makes me feel happy — like I'm finally getting somewhere in my life.

About Big hART

Big hART is one of Australia's leading arts and social change organisations. For more than 30 years, Big hART has worked alongside communities experiencing complex disadvantage to deliver long-term creative projects that foster connection, build skills, and empower participants to reshape their own narratives. Operating in regional and remote areas, Big hART focuses on amplifying voices that are too often unheard, particularly those of young people, First Nations communities, and women. Through film, music, theatre, photography, storytelling, and mentoring, Big hART creates inclusive environments where individuals can heal, express themselves and feel valued.







BackTrack Youth Works • ARMIDALE, NSW

Jesse's Story

From the streets to the stage: Jesse's journey from at-risk teen to role model and mentor

"When someone's got your back for the long haul – that's when you get to see yourself differently." – Jesse

I was 13 when I first came through the gates at BackTrack. Back then, I didn't have a lot going for me. I was in trouble with the law, out of school, no family around me, and pretty much out of options. I didn't have a plan – just a long list of things that weren't working.

At BackTrack, I had a place I could always come to. I wasn't judged on my past, just supported for where I wanted to go. BackTrack was like a family. I got taught things that gave me a bit of confidence – like how to handle dogs, how to use tools and how to set goals that actually meant something to me. When I needed a place to stay, they found me a spot at Warrah and I learnt how to live with other people, get along and make a home. If I needed someone to talk to, there was always someone there.

It didn't matter what I did, they never gave up on me.

Even when I messed up — and I did, a few times — they were always there for me, waiting. They saw more than just the bad stuff. They saw potential. Now I'm one of the older ones, I have kids of my own and I still work in the social enterprise and get support when I need it.

I also help run the Night Crew program to help younger kids on the street who are where I used to be. I know what they're going through, and I know how easy it is to give up. I want to help them find something to dream about – because that's where things start to change.

When someone's got your back for the long haul – that's when you get to see yourself differently. That's when things change. And that's exactly what BackTrack does – they walk beside you for as long as it takes. Now I get to do the same for others.

About BackTrack Youth Works

BackTrack Youth Works is a nationally recognised youth work organisation based in Armidale, NSW, dedicated to supporting young people who've fallen through the cracks. Founded by Bernie Shakeshaft with just a shed and a simple mission — keeping kids alive, out of jail, and chasing their dreams — BackTrack has grown into a powerful force for change in the lives of vulnerable young Australians. Its holistic model combines accommodation, alternative education, employment, training, a working farm, and a unique dog handling program — all underpinned by the Circle of Courage framework: belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. Most importantly, BackTrack is built on trust, long-term commitment, and an unshakable belief in the potential of every young person. Once you're in, you're family — for life.

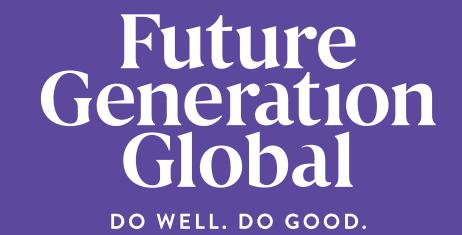












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