

STRIDE For better
mental health

Annual Report 2022



Menu

FROM THE CHAIR

FROM THE CEO

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

OUR STRATEGY

OUR PRIORITIES

SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

Safe Spaces

Residential Services

NDIS Services

Integrated Services

STRIDE WITH THE BEST PEOPLE

STRIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT US



FROM THE CHAIR:

The year in review

The past year continued to present one of the most difficult economic and operating environments for Stride in living memory. To meet these challenges, and keep those who use our services in the centre of all we do, was truly a remarkable achievement. There are so many individual achievements this year, but what stands out above all is how well Stride responded and how it changed how it operates.

The Stride ongoing successes and leadership in the sector is continuing to evolve, having already established a solid foundation for strong future growth.

I would like to thank the Board for their continued support and foresight, the trust they put in our Executive team to meet the challenges and lead Stride into its future. I would also like to thank Drikus and the Executive team for their focus, perseverance and leadership through this incredibly challenging time and congratulate Drikus on his appointment as CEO.



John (JT) Thomas, Chair Stride Mental Health Board

Chair John (JT) Thomas





CEO Drikus van der Merwe

FROM THE CEO:

Looking forward

I am humbled to have been appointed CEO of Stride in March 2022. It is with a deep sense of gratitude for the trust the Board has placed in me to lead Stride into a new future.

Stride went through a significant period of change this year. We have navigated new bilateral agreements, gained more funding towards integrated models of care and hubs, and experienced significant workforce challenges for all. With commitment to our purpose, the Stride team responded in an agile and creative way to meet these challenges.

We opened several new services;

- Our Launceston Head to Health is our first and bold step into Tasmania
- headspace Geelong and Beaudesert joining Stride now means we are the biggest headspace provider in the country
- Three Safe Havens/Spaces in Belconnen, Wollongong and Caboolture

COVID-19 also created challenges for Stride that no one could imagine and the impact that it had on our community and workforce will be felt for years to come. I am genuinely inspired by the way that the Stride team managed this period with infrastructure that enabled initiatives such as telehealth and remote working.

All of these changes were the key to preparing Stride for a new future. I would like to thank our partners, staff and funders for their ongoing support throughout the past year. Our organisation is more agile, flexible and sustainable and able to react to changes to ensure that we always meet our principle goal; to help people have a better day today and tomorrow.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Drikus van der Merwe', written over a horizontal line.

Drikus van der Merwe, CEO, Stride Mental Health

A vision for the future

We're here for kids, young people, adults, families and carers

Stride is a specialist mental health organisation, 100% dedicated to providing recovery-oriented services which improve lifelong mental health and help people with complex needs live better.

We support you to find your motivation, resilience, and ultimately, your strength.

What happens after hospital care ends?

In 1907, our founder, Emily Paterson, decided to answer this question.

Aftercare was an association born to help people find

“a safe place to live, a place to work, and friendship.”

More than a century later, Aftercare, now known as Stride, provides more than 50 services across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Last year, we helped over 17,000 people access the support they needed for their mental wellbeing.

Our mission is simple - we provide services to support people at all stages of their mental health journey, from early intervention supports for children, young people and adults, to services for people with ongoing and complex needs.

Like our founder Emily, we work to make every today a little easier, and every tomorrow a little brighter.

Our strategy

The rapidly evolving nature of the mental health sector along with increasing demand for a greater breadth of innovative services in the community has meant Stride has had to carefully consider the role we play.

In 2018, we launched our strategy that articulated two major decisions about our role in mental health.

The first is that we are a specialist mental health organisation – since we were established in 1907, we have focused on supporting people with mental health concerns. We are dedicated to continuing this work.

The second is to build high quality recovery-oriented services for two primary cohorts:

People with persistent mental illness and complex needs
to help them lead fulfilling lives each day

At-risk children, young people and families
to reduce the lifelong impact of mental illness for the next generation

In this, we remain true to our founding principles and aligned to meeting Australia's growing mental health needs.

We focus on four priorities



- Intervene Early**
- Support Wellbeing**
- Best People**
- Learn & Influence**

Our priorities for the next year

Intervene early:

We will innovate and expand our work with children, young people and families to become a leading provider for this cohort.

Need is endless, resources are finite.

Stride has carefully selected a role to be present where we can have the most positive impact on our clients and their communities. We explore community need, sustainable resourcing, what we do best and what we want to do better.

Support wellbeing:

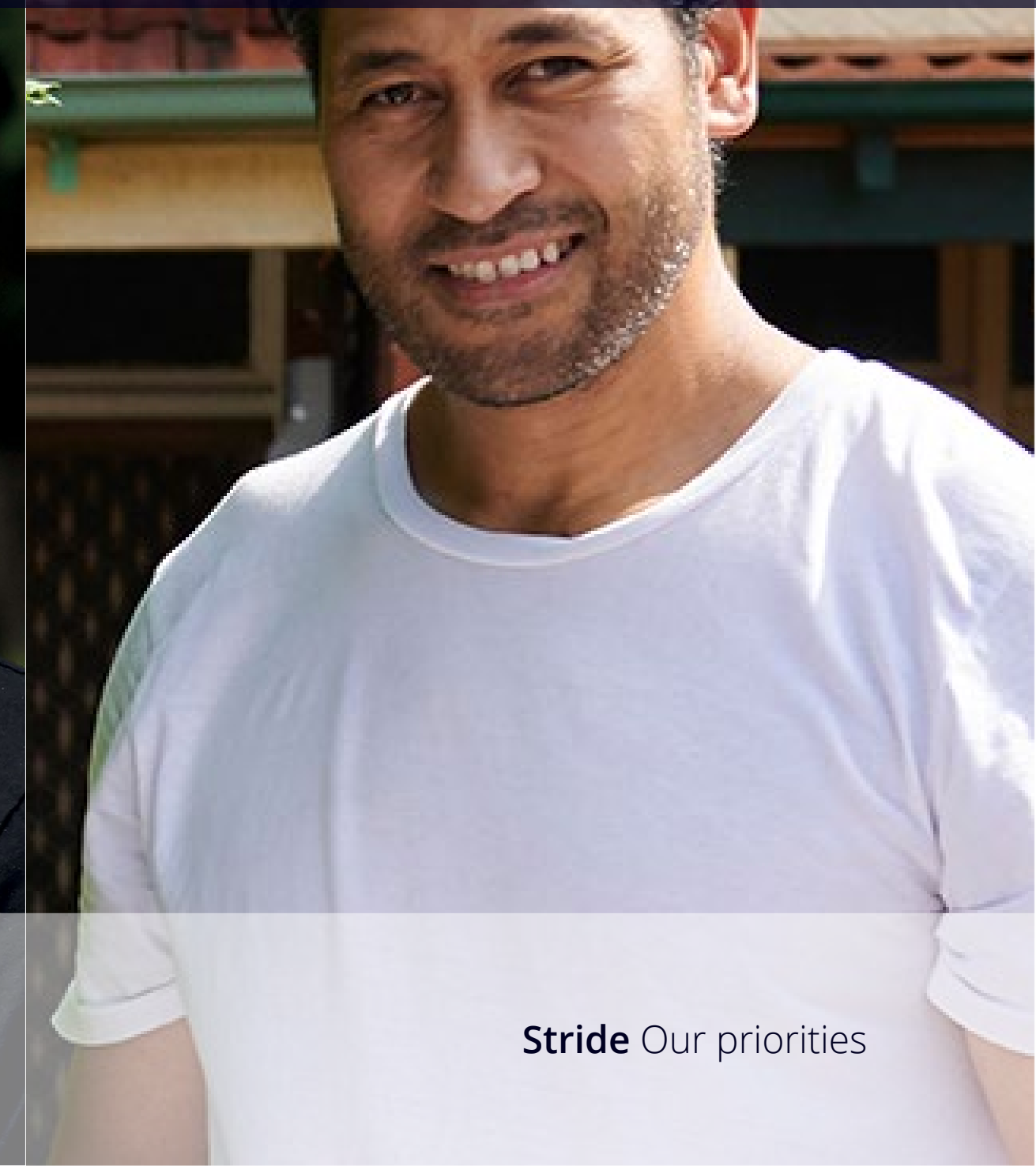
We ensure our support for people with persistent mental illness & complex needs is best practice, locally seamless and utilises the right mix of capabilities.

Best people:

We attract, build and support our sector-leading specialist mental health workforce and become an employer of choice.

Learn and influence:

We continue to build our evidence base, learning systems and influence so that we can improve our services, prove our impact and share it



EXPANDING OUR SERVICES:

Safe Space & Safe Haven

We opened three Safe Haven / Safe Spaces during the past 12 months, bringing the total to four services:

- Safe Haven **Wollongong (NSW)**
- Safe Haven **Belconnen (ACT)**
- Safe Space **Blacktown (NSW)**
- Safe Space **Caboolture (QLD)**

Safe Spaces provide warm, welcoming environments for adults to walk in and talk with specialist mental health staff about safety, distress and thoughts of suicide. Counselling and emotional support is offered together with various sensory activities to assist individuals to develop distress tolerance skills.

Safe Spaces allow people experiencing psychological distress to identify alternatives to hospital emergency department admissions. The pilot was successful in demonstrating the benefits offered by the Safe Spaces model to people in distress and to communities they live in.



SERVICES:

Residential

Stride **Residential Services** provide 24/7 supported accommodation for adults and young people.

For 115 years, residential services have been our cornerstone. We provide adults with a diagnosed mental health condition a safe space to live. These services have evolved to cater for the various needs of adults and young people requiring both short and long-term stays.

Residential Services include supported group accommodation, day to day living skills, NDIS supported independent living (SIL) and specialist disability accommodation (SDA).

Recognising the importance of high-quality residential services, Stride has expanded its network of NDIS Supported Independent Living (SIL) properties with eight new homes.

Locations include Casula, Ingleburn, Dulwich Hill, Sadlier, Northmead, Marrickville, Hornsby, Marayong, Bardwell Park, Prestons, Newcastle and Orange in New South Wales, and Cleveland, Fitzgibbon and Kallangur in Queensland.

As of November 2021, Townview in Mt Isa is supporting youth in residential services.

We support over 100 people in our residential services and our goal is to continue to grow this footprint in 2023/24.



SERVICES:

NDIS

The NDIS provides long-term funding to people with mental health concerns – helping individuals work towards their recovery goals and live with hope and optimism.

Stride provides a suite of NDIS services significantly growing our support across New South Wales, Queensland and regional Victoria throughout the year. We are committed to continuing this growth and the support of NDIS participants.

Our approach focuses on psychosocial activities to foster social connections. Studies show that people who feel more connected to others have lower rates of anxiety and depression and have higher self-esteem, are more empathic to others, more trusting and cooperative – generating a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical wellbeing. These are vital elements in a person's recovery journey.

Many of our consumers are socially isolated with little disposable income to spend on activities that lead to making friendships and being social. Group activities offer people a chance to develop friendships and social interactions while building their capacity to use these skills in more unfamiliar environments.

Support Coordination

Helping you get to grips with your NDIS plan – working with you to help you better understand and implement your plan.

Therapeutic Services

Services from a range of professionals including psychologists and social workers offering supports in the community or via telehealth, to suit consumers' needs.

Residential Services

Supported independent living to improve daily living skills within the home.

Core Support Services

Practical activities that help you live your everyday life. Whether it be cooking a meal, going to a social activity or purchasing everyday support consumables.

Integrated Services

Integrated services are a holistic approach to mental health that support an individual's mental, physical and social needs. Through one-stop-shop Hubs we work with individuals and their families and carers to support them to access a range of community mental health support.

Through **Stride Hubs**, we work with our clients in the home and in the community, through group support, mutual and personalised support, to provide tailored and holistic programs to enable them to lead functional and fulfilling lives.

Stride Hubs support adults, young people and children. Adults are supported through our Stride Hubs and LikeMind centres in Orange and Wagga Wagga, NSW.

As one of the largest operators of headspace centres in Australia, Stride works closely with young people meeting their unique and evolving needs. This year we supported around 6500 young people with almost 26,000 occasions of service across our seven centres in QLD and NSW. We expanded our coverage by opening a new centre in Beaudesert, QLD.

Each headspace centre is designed together with young people to ensure they are relevant, accessible and highly effective. As a result each headspace centre reflects the needs of its local community. We're an active part of the community we support.

In January of 2022 we also opened Launceston Head to Health which offers adults an immediate entry point for mental health support in their local community. This is our first expansion into Tasmania and we are very pleased to operate in this area.

Opening of our new headspace centre in Beaudesert which provides a vital service to a semi-regional community.

headspace Beaudesert



“I love working with you all”

“I am so impressed with the work that you all do, the dedication, passion, energy and effort you and your teams bring to your work. The YRRS model is a really successful model within a challenging (and increasingly complex) cohort. You all just continue to raise the bar in how you tackle not just the COVID challenges of the past (nearly) two years, but the increasingly complex, distressed and vulnerable young people who attend the YRRS. I love working with you all and really enjoy your humour and good-will at our panels.”

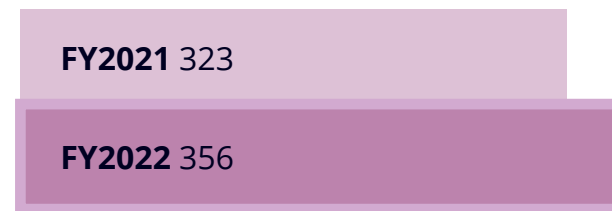
Partner at Queensland Health

Students and volunteers
By the numbers

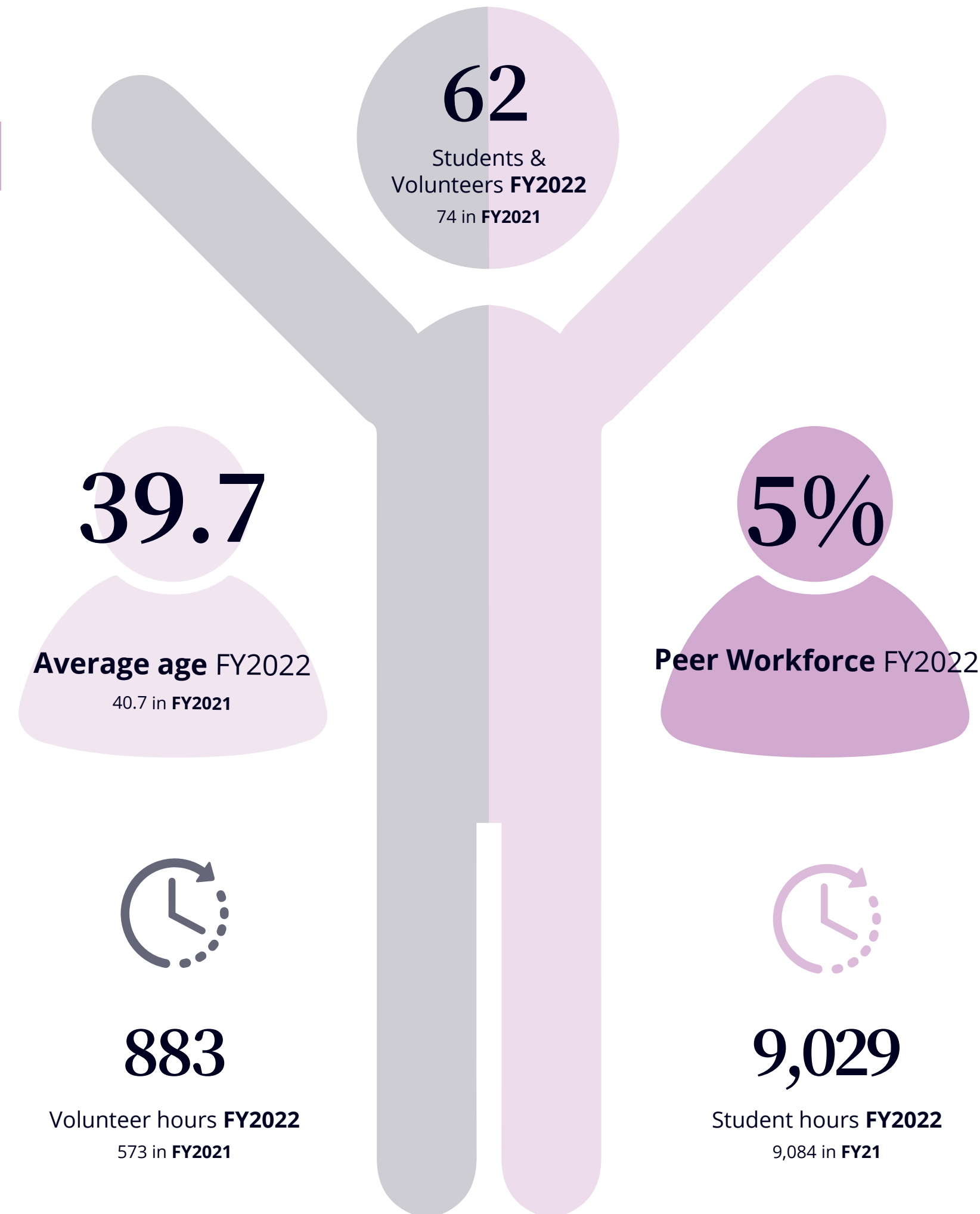
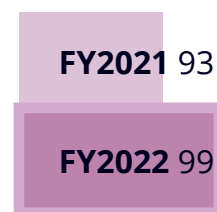
Full time staff



Part time staff



Casual staff



Stride with the best people

At Stride we have experienced, specialist mental-health staff who work with consumers to help them find their motivation, resilience and strength, and guide them to a future of their own making.

Our people are at the heart of every service we deliver, so their wellbeing contributes positively to delivering great outcomes for consumers.

Stride employs more than 750 staff, in over 50 sites across the eastern seaboard of Australia. The average age is just over 39 years, average tenure is about three years and we have seen an increase in part-time staff who now make up 50% of our workforce.

In addition, we also partner with primary health networks, local health districts, hospitals and health services. Students and volunteers complement our professional staff, make a significant difference to the lives of our clients and often improve their own mental health in the process.

We also recognise the individual and collective expertise of staff with a lived experience of a mental health condition. Stride pay tribute to their vital contribution to system change and recognise the courage shown in sharing this unique perspective. One that provides hope and shapes a better future.

Stride professional development

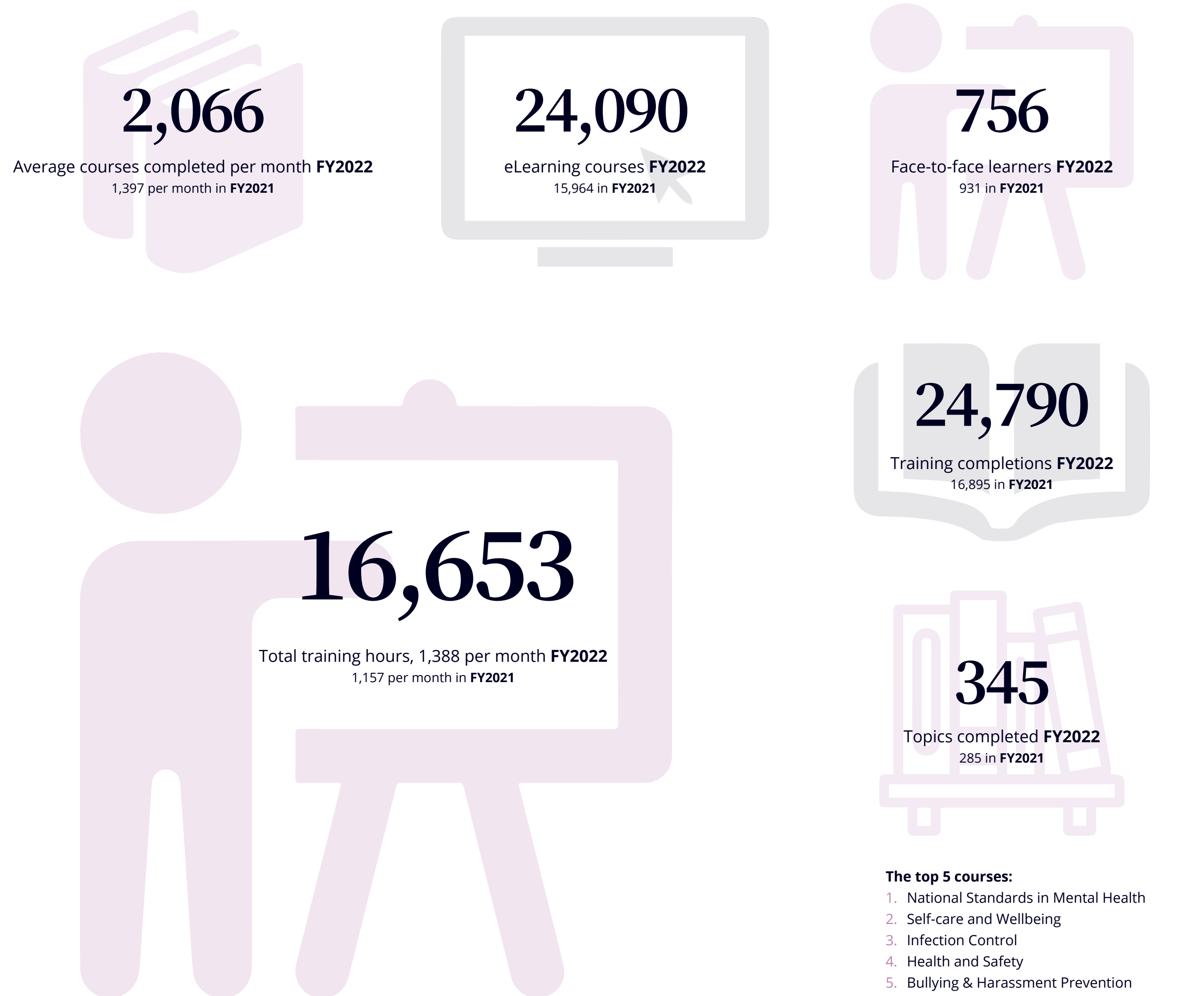
Our key focus continues to prioritise **professional development** through a return to face-to-face training, e-learning, on-the-job learning and peer to peer mentoring.

In 2021/2022 staff participated in 16,653 training hours in total, an increase of 20% on the 13,811 training hours in 2020/21.

A review of our capability framework provides an outline of the strategic and functional requirements of roles and structures the link between performance and remuneration for leadership positions. Revised systems and processes to streamline administration and improve employee experience continues to be our focus.

We are committed to providing a safe, healthy and engaging work environment for our people. Staff reported a 90% favourable response to being encouraged to report incidents and feeling confident Stride takes the necessary decisions on corrective actions and controls.

Our engagement survey indicates 88% favourable responses to Stride valuing diversity, self-care, and staff wellbeing with a continued focus on career and development discussions.





Support Us

Stride with us...

Find out more about us and the ways you can help support people experiencing a mental health concern.

[Explore](#)

Let's talk

Get in touch with the team at
1300 00 1907 or hello@stride.com.au

[Contact us](#)