

A man and a woman are sitting on a set of three terracotta steps outside a building. The man, on the left, is wearing a white t-shirt, dark grey trousers, and blue and white sneakers. He is looking towards the woman. The woman, on the right, is wearing a brown V-neck top, blue jeans, and black loafers. She is looking back at the man. Behind them is a building with a large window and a black door. A purple sign on the wall reads "STRIDE For better mental health". To the left of the steps is a large potted plant in a brown planter. The ground in front of the steps is paved with reddish-brown stones.

STRIDE For better
mental health

Annual Report 2024

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, and of the many different nations across the wider regions from which we all come. We pay our respects to the Elders, past, present, and emerging as the holders of the memories, the traditions, the culture, and the spiritual well-being of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation. We acknowledge any Sorry Business that may be affecting the communities as a whole. In the spirit of reconciliation, partnership, and mutual respect, we will continue to work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to shape our community mental health services to respond to the needs and aspirations of the communities to which we serve.





Note, the following data is for the fiscal year ending 30 June 2024.

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CEO Drikus van der Merwe

FROM THE CEO:

Building for the future

A reflection on a year of work never pays enough tribute to each team member and the passion they bring each day. I am always humbled by the Stride team’s work and the positive change each day brings to those we support through our services. Reading through the impact stories in this annual report, it is easy to see the difference they make.

The continued pressure on our daily lives is increasing the need for quality and safe mental health services in our community. This increasing need is one of the critical drivers for Stride and our work in preparing ourselves for the future.

With our stakeholders and funders, we have opened new Medicare Mental Health Centres in Parramatta and Wollongong and added three high-intensity residential services in Queensland.

But building for the future is not just about increasing services. It is also about meeting the diverse needs of our community with equally diverse, motivated, and well-resourced teams. Projects supporting our teams through reflective practice supervision and investment in our core technology started this year and will finish in 2025, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact of these on our services.

We look forward to releasing our new strategy 2024, which will take us from 2024 and beyond and renew our mission of working together for better mental health and wellbeing today and tomorrow.

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

Drikus van der Merwe,
CEO, Stride Mental Health

FROM THE CHAIR:

A year of renewed strength

The past year has seen Stride achieve continued growth and be rewarded with new opportunities, reflecting our leading reputation in the sector and the hard work of our team. Despite challenges and uncertainties in our funding environment, we are finishing this year with renewed strength and are well-regarded as an excellent service provider and employer of choice.

We know that this past year has been a difficult time for many, with economic concerns and difficult local and global news. We have confidence that our services and teams have responded well, supporting consumers and welcoming those who seek our support. During the hardest times, our teams really rise to the challenge, something that Stride has always done. Stride.

During this past year, and in this continually evolving environment, we have made some difficult decisions but have also seen some very positive changes. It is an exciting time for Stride, with new services and regions, many new people joining our team, the renewal of our Strategic Plan and continued investments in our resources, sites and teams.

After nine years on the board of Stride, our previous Chair, John “JT” Thomas, retired. We thank him for his dedicated leadership, often through some very difficult and challenging times. More recently, Sue Klose, who took over from JT as Chair, has also resigned. Her leadership over the past year and her significant contribution as a director in the seven years before that have been greatly appreciated.

The coming year should bring even greater success for Stride and we are well positioned to succeed as we move forward.



Peter Emery,
Chair, Stride Mental Health Board



100 Years of Compassionate Care: Archival Findings from 1924

In 1924, Stride (formerly Aftercare) was already making a profound difference in the lives of individuals struggling to reintegrate into society after being discharged from mental health hospitals. During a time when mental health care was severely underfunded and patients often had little to no support after leaving the hospital, Stride stepped in as a lifeline.

A century ago, the Association focused on providing people with the essentials for recovery: employment, accommodation, and ongoing personal support. Stride's efforts in 1924 were highly individualised—whether it was helping people find stable jobs and housing or offering them a place to stay after their hospital discharge. Stride ensured that no one was left behind, providing both job assistance and health check-ups, or reuniting individuals with friends and support networks when placements failed.

Stride's approach has always recognised that recovery is a personal journey. Even in cases where individuals struggled, facing initial difficulties before finding their path, Stride kept its doors open. Each person was treated as an individual with unique needs, and this remains a core principle today.

This legacy of care has been brought to light thanks to research conducted by Professor Catharine Coleborne, Dr. Robyn Dunlop, and Dr. Effie Karageorgos from the University of Newcastle. Their work, along with interviews of current consumers, has highlighted Stride's unwavering dedication to holistic care over the last century.

Our Impact in 2024: Wayne's Story

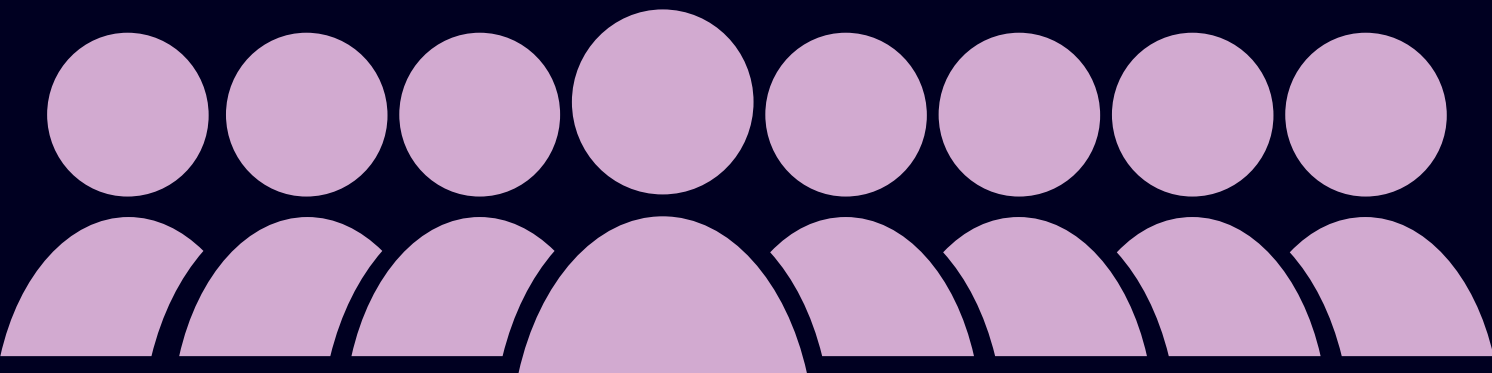
"Stride has been by my side every step of the way on my journey to better health. When I started, I was at 162 kilograms, and with their incredible support, I've lost 16 kilograms this year. They've helped me develop an active routine that works for me—whether it's through exercise physiology, hydrotherapy, gym sessions, community walks, or cycling, Stride always gave me the freedom to pursue my goals at my own pace.

One of the biggest impacts Stride has made is allowing me to regain control over my health journey. Now, my daily routine includes 6,000 steps, cycling for 15 minutes twice a day, and 45-minute gym sessions twice a week. Stride also helped me prepare for my upcoming hernia operation by supporting me to reach the required weight. Keeping a food diary has given me ownership of my progress.

Doctors sometimes expect fast results, but Stride understood that real change takes time. Thanks to them, I'm not just healthier and more active—I'm ready to face whatever challenges come next. I'm grateful for everything they've done and excited to continue my journey with Stride's help."

Year at a Glance

FINANCIAL YEAR 2024



We supported

21,049 people

across metropolitan, regional
and rural communities.
With 325,332 occasions of service.

We operate

110 teams

with over 800 staff.



We have
94 residential
services

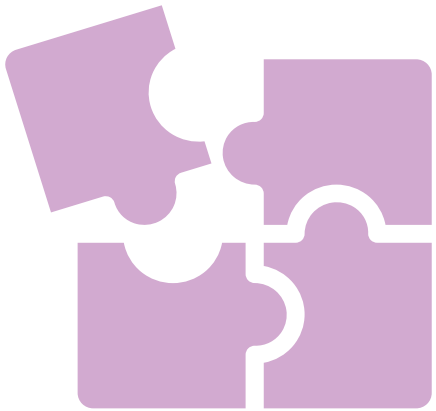
we provided

193 people with

Supported Independent Living.

We have

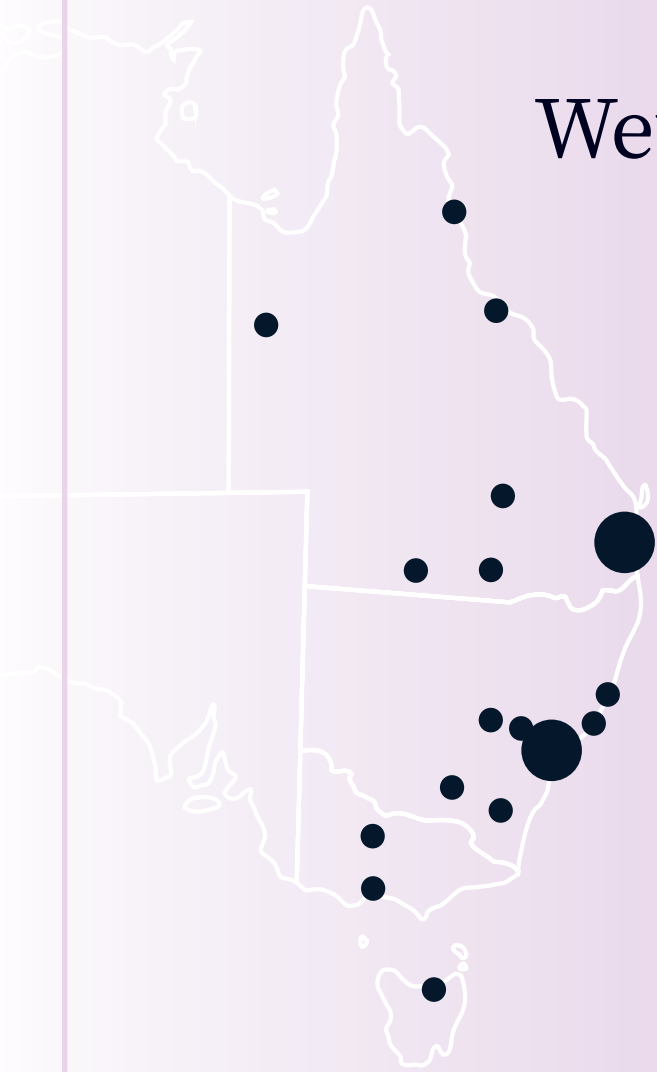
18 integrated
services



Of these, 11 are headspace
centres/satellites that supported

10,921 young

people with 128,258 occasions
of service.



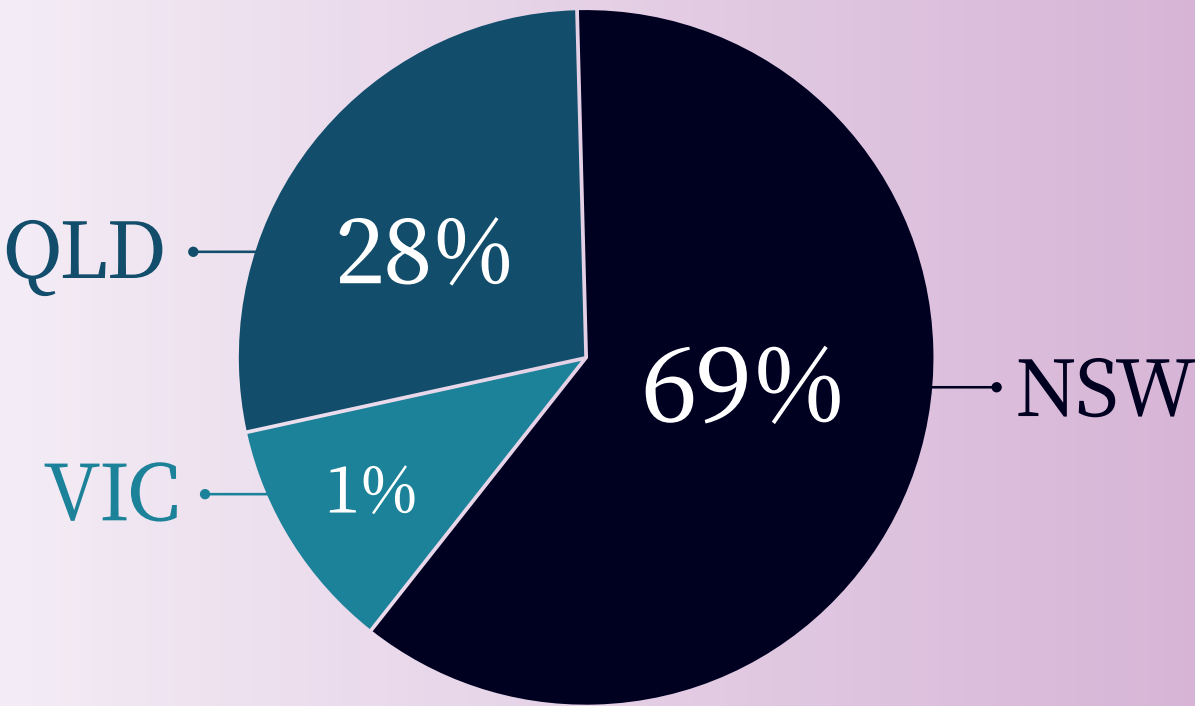
We're located in
5 states and
territories

across

65 locations.

Our NDIS services supported

1,438 people, in:



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.

This year we have been reviewing our strategy and developing a new one that will take us from FY24 onwards. This will be shared broadly in future months.

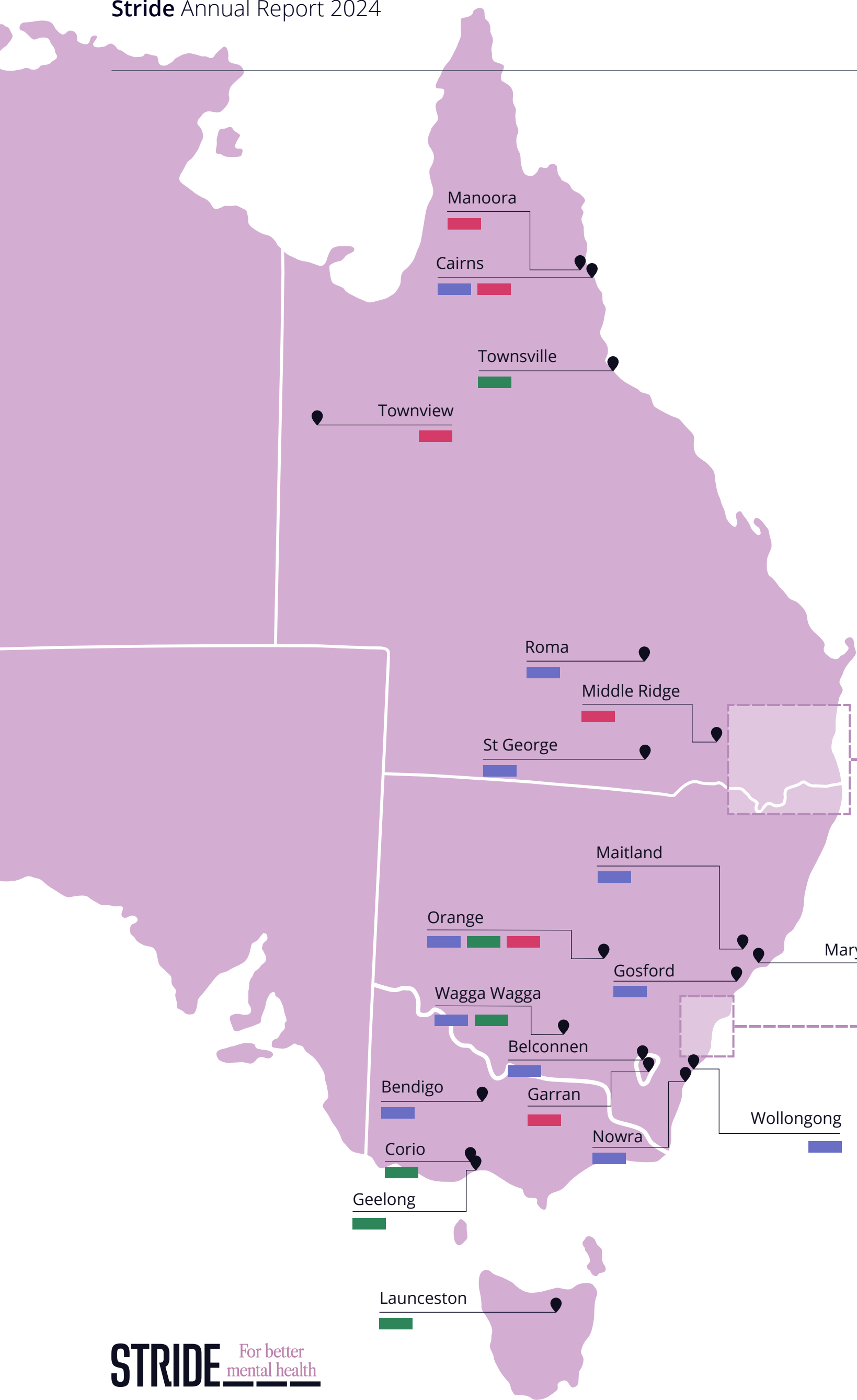
In the meantime, we continue to focus on our mission and purpose of helping people have a better day, today and tomorrow.



Map of Services

We're located in 5 States and Territories across 65 locations.

We offer services in Queensland, New South Wales, the ACT, Tasmania and regional Victoria.



South-East Queensland

Aspley	Red	Fitzgibbon	Red	Nundah	Green
Beaudesert	Green	Greenslopes	Red	Paddington	Green
Bellmere	Red	Griffin	Red	Southport	Blue
Brassall	Red	Ipswich	Blue and Green	Springwood	Green
Caboolture	Blue and Green	Kallangur	Red	Taigum	Red
Cleveland	Red	Meadowbrook	Green	Woolloongabba	Blue and Green

Greater Sydney

Ashfield	Red	Five Dock	Blue	Maroubra	Blue
Bardwell Park	Red	Hornsby	Red	Marrickville	Red
Belmore	Red	Hurstville	Blue and Green	Miranda	Green
Blacktown	Blue	Ingleburn	Red	Northmead	Red
Casula	Red	Lilyfield	Blue	Parramatta	Green
Dulwich	Red	Lithgow	Blue	Prestons	Red
Earlwood	Red	Liverpool	Blue	Randwick	Red
Edmondson Park	Red	Marayong	Red	Seven Hills	Red

Key

- COMMUNITY
- RESIDENTIAL
- INTEGRATED

Our Services

Stride continues to expand its impact, delivering diverse mental health and wellbeing services across the country. This year, we launched new services, won key tenders, and streamlined our operations for sustainable growth.

Highlights include:

- Opening headspace Corio, Geelong, Townsville, Head to Health Parramatta, and Wollongong Mental Health Hub.
- Becoming one of three pre-approved providers for the Pathways to Community Independent Living (PCLI), marking a significant investment in NSW.
- Establishing our first high-intensity Specialist Disability Accommodation SIL service, with two more underway.
- Relocating headspace Hurstville to a vibrant new location.
- Submitting 18 tenders in 18 weeks, valued at \$41.5M, with headspace Armstrong Creek set to launch in FY25.

A re-certification audit for the National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS) in May 2024 led to a recommendation for Stride's re-certification for three years with no non-conformities.

In terms of closures, we responsibly exited services at our Stride Hub Ipswich and Stride Kids Ipswich and Townview TCP, alongside the consolidation of five SIL services. This allows us to focus on sustainable, strategic growth moving forward.

Additionally, we won The Way Back service in Penrith, supporting those transitioning out of care.

SERVICES:

Residential Services

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

For 117 years, these services have been our cornerstone. We provide young people and adults with a diagnosed mental health condition a safe place to live. We offer both short and long term stays, depending on individual needs.

This year our teams have operated 41 Residential Services in New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. 9 of these are government funded residences, of which 6 are for young people and 3 for adults. The remaining 32 are NDIS Supported Independent Living residences, where we have supported 108 people to live independently and on their own terms.

Stride currently has close to 154 beds across the country, including longer-term residential supports as well as transitional supports such as Step Up Step Down services for adults and young people.

Our goal is to continue to grow our residences in 2025 and beyond.



SERVICES:

Community Services

Community-Based Recovery Services

Stride is one of the largest providers of specialised, recovery-oriented supports in the community. This includes a significant portfolio of mental health community grant programs such as our Family and Carer programs, Independent Patient Rights Advisers, Take 2 program and Psychosocial Support Programs. In addition, we run NDIS funded supports across NSW, QLD & VIC. Our team of professionals is passionate about providing advocacy and support to people in need during their recovery journey.

Suicide Prevention Services

Stride is a leading provider of peer-led Safe Spaces and Safe Havens for people experiencing distress and suicidal ideation. We operate four Safe Havens and Safe Spaces which help reduce strain on hospital emergency departments including:

- Safe Space Caboolture, QLD
- Safe Space Blacktown, NSW
- Safe Haven Wollongong, NSW
- Safe Haven Belconnen, ACT
- The Way Back Penrith, NSW



This year our NDIS team has supported 1833 people access quality, relevant supports. During the year we transitioned away from providing core supports and focused our resources on offering capacity building supports. Our approach focuses on psychosocial activities to foster social connections. Through helping people to feel more connected to others, we aim to help reduce feelings of anxiety and depression whilst encouraging feelings of trust, cooperation and empathy. This generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical wellbeing, all of which are vital elements in a person's recovery journey.

SERVICES:

NDIS Services

Stride offers a suite of NDIS services throughout Queensland, New South Wales and regional Victoria.

These include:

- Support Coordination
- Therapeutic Supports
- Psychosocial Recovery Coaching
- Residential Services

Our ability to provide holistic, coordinated, and tailored support has enabled us to build capacity and provide more tailored support.

A re-certification audit for the NDIS Practice Standards was undertaken in November 2023. Stride was recommended for re-certification with no non-conformities identified.

Our approach focuses on psychosocial activities to foster social connections. Through helping people to feel more connected to others, we aim to help reduce feelings of anxiety and depression whilst encouraging feelings of trust, cooperation and empathy. This generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical wellbeing, all of which are vital elements in a person's recovery journey.

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

We provide a recovery-oriented approach to housing for people with psychosocial disability placing emphasis on capacity building in addition to activities of daily living building the inclusiveness of the communities in which they live.

Recovery Coaching

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.

NDIS CASE STUDY

Brett's Story

"I was first introduced to Stride in 2016, when I was staying at an aged care facility. I suffer from OCD, which is not completely disabling but has the potential to effect the activites I do in my daily life.

One of my support workers and my sister helped me to get a place at one of the Supported Independent Living facilities - which is much better than living in an aged care home.

There is a lot more freedom, I can leave when I want to because I've always got the key to come back in. I can also buy my own food and live more independently.

This year, I was able to successfully travel from my home in Queensland to the visit the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. Because of my condition, I have never had a driver's license and was therefore entirely dependent on public transport during my trip. Nevertheless, I still had a successful trip and a great time.

Stride staff helped me to plan my trip and this was a huge achievement for me personally."

WHEN REFLECTING ON HOW FAR HE'D COME, BRETT SAID:

"This year, I was able to successfully travel from my home in Queensland to visit the Blue Mountains in New South Wales."

SERVICES:

Integrated Services

Stride’s integrated services offer a holistic approach to mental health that supports each individual’s mental, physical and social needs. These services are designed to meet the specific needs of children, guardians and parents, young people and adults. We experienced increasing demand throughout the year, providing 325,332 occasions of support through our services. Faced with this growing demand, our teams continue to work with on behalf of our funders to provide quality, accessible services in the community.

Our Adult Integrated Services

Stride operates 6 Adult Integrated hubs providing access to free mental health support in the community including:

- 2 LikeMind Centres (Orange and Wagga Wagga)
- 2 Head to Health Centres (Launceston and Parramatta)
- 3 Stride Hubs (Caboolture and Brisbane South)

Our Youth Integrated Services

Stride is the largest provider of headspace services in Australia, and is now the lead agency for 11 headspace centres and satellites in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

In addition, we run family and carer programs in Cairns, Townsville and Wollongong.



HEADSPACE WORK AND STUDY CASE STUDY

Alex's Story

Alex's story is one of resilience. After battling depression and obsessive-compulsive behaviors since high school, he found new hope in late 2022 with the headspace Early Psychosis team. In January 2023, Alex joined the Individual Placement & Support (IPS) program, determined to rebuild his confidence and find meaningful work.

With the help of headspace staff, Alex created a resume and explored new career options. After some setbacks, he secured a traineeship in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, a field he hadn't considered before. This role brought financial stability, confidence, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Through the IPS program, Alex overcame social isolation, repaired relationships, and built strong connections at work. Reflecting on his journey, he credits the Work & Study team for their support, saying, *"Without them, I wouldn't have had this opportunity to grow."*

Alex's story is a testament to the power of determination and the right support system.

WHEN REFLECTING ON HOW FAR HE'D COME, ALEX SAID:

"Without headspace I wouldn't have had this opportunity to grow."

NEW SERVICES & PROGRAMS:

Highlights 2024

This financial year Stride established a variety of services to better meet the needs of our local communities.

Parramatta Head to Health Opening

Parramatta Head to Health is a place for anyone who is experiencing emotional distress, or those that need advice on how they could support a loved one. Supported by funding from WSPHN (Western Sydney Primary Health Network) through the Australian Government’s Primary Health Network program, we aim to address mental health concerns in the area. Parramatta Head to Health complements – rather than replaces or duplicates – services already provided in the community and will connect people with other local services for ongoing care.

In its first year of service, Parramatta Head to Health supported 369 unique consumers, providing 3422 total occasions of service and over 2525 hours of support.

Parramatta Head to Health co-hosted with ACON a new free workshop series for young LGBTQIA+ people living in Western Sydney to connect and share their experiences of being a queer Westie called “Starting Out West”.

Parramatta Head to Health co-hosted with MHCN a new free workshop series for Mental Health Carers in Western Sydney.



WOLLONGONG MENTAL HEALTH HUB

Wollongong Mental Health Hub

Wollongong Mental Health Hub, commissioned by Coordinaire – South Eastern NSW PHN, is a vital initiative led by Stride Mental Health. The mission is to provide accessible and free mental health support to individuals who face barriers to accessing services in communities located on Dharawal country, in southern New South Wales.

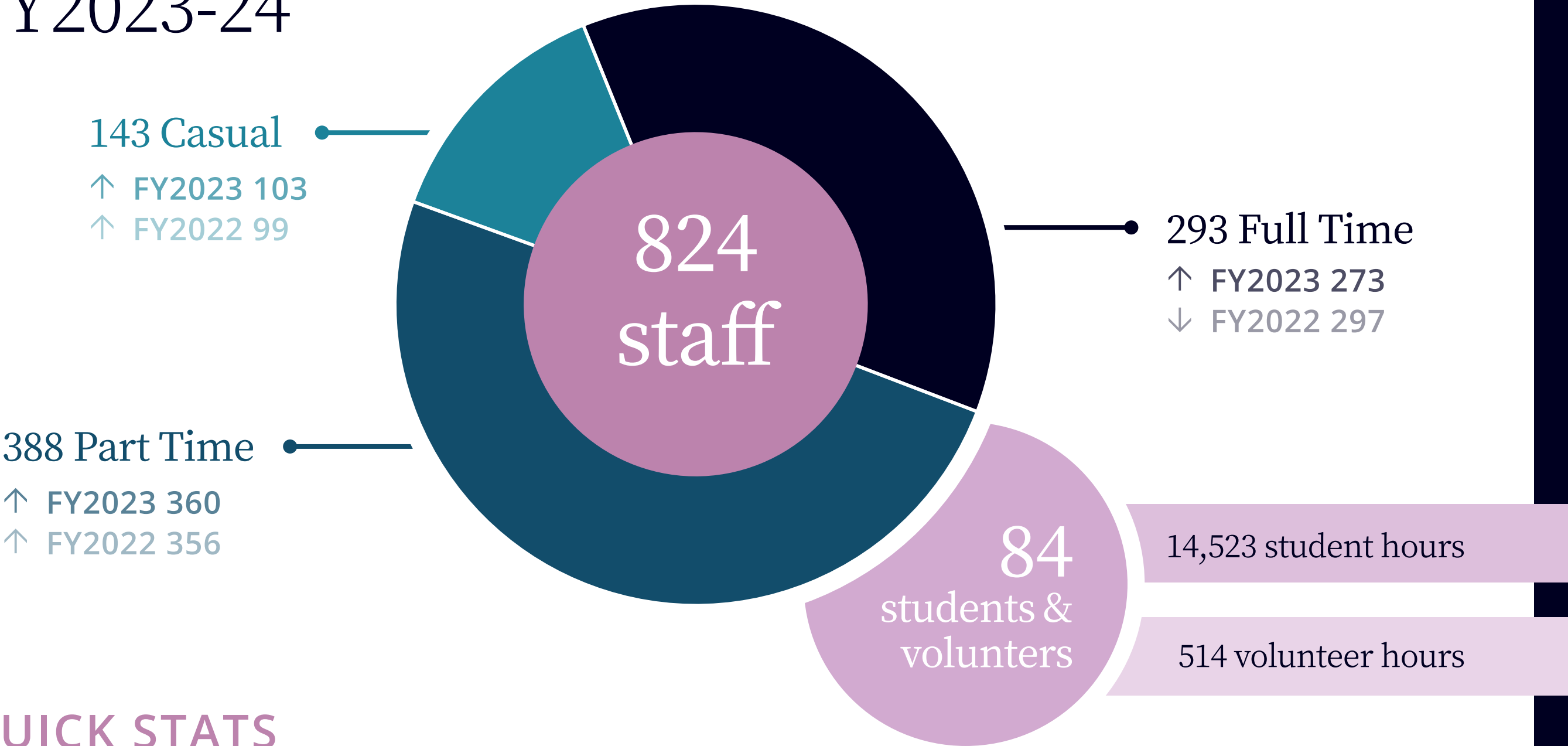
The Wollongong Mental Health Hub is conveniently co-located with the Stride Family and Carers Centre in Auburn Street, Wollongong. In addition to the centre, we are committed to connecting to communities through our outreach services (specifically in Bellambi and Corrimal). The Hub opened its doors in January 2024 and continues to make valuable connections within the local community.

headspace Woolloongabba Relocation

In October 2023, headspace Woolloongabba celebrated the launch of their brand new space. Working with our YRG and lead agency Stride, headspace Woolloongabba proudly co-designed the new centre to be an inviting and comfortable space. The larger centre features state-of-the-art counselling rooms, family and general practitioner spaces, natural light, as well as a calming outdoor deck.



FY2023-24



QUICK STATS

we have a **7.3%** peer workforce

the average age of our staff is **39.7** years old



Stride with the Best People

Our experienced and professional mental-health staff work with consumers to help them find their resilience and strength, and work alongside them towards a future of their own making.

Our people are at the heart of every service we deliver and Stride’s Best People contribute positively to delivering great outcomes for consumers. Great self care and working in a safe environment is key at Stride.

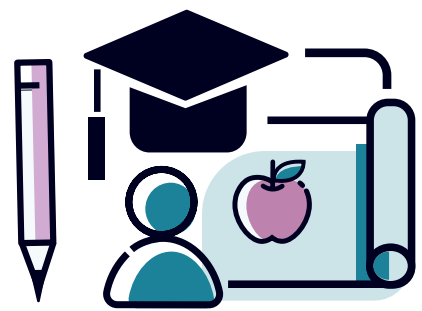
In FY2024, Stride employed close to 824 staff, in over 65 sites across the eastern seaboard of Australia. The average age is just over 39 years, average tenure is just under three years and we have seen an increase in part-time staff who now make up close to 50% of our workforce. Our peer workforce is growing and we have a number of initiatives planned to increase support provided through a lived experience.

In addition, we also partner with primary health networks, local health districts, hospitals and health services.

Students and volunteers complement our professional staff and they make a significant difference to the lives of consumers, contributing towards positive mental health outcomes and the talent pool of tomorrow.

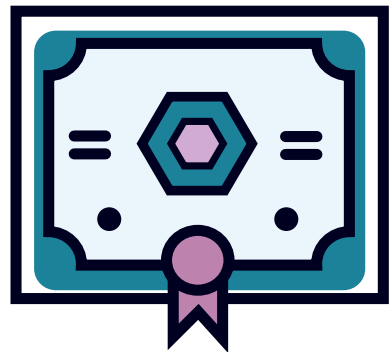
Our Recognition of Lived Experience

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.



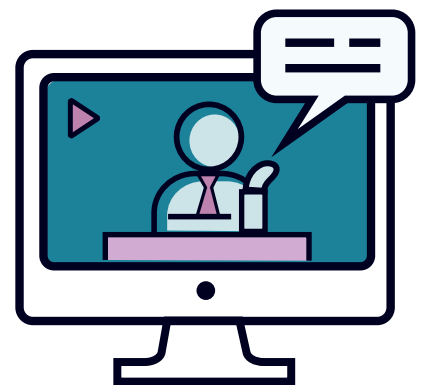
19,112

Total training hours,
1,593 per month FY2024
1,549 PER MONTH IN FY2023



1,935

Ave. courses completed
per month FY2024
1592 PER MONTH IN FY2023



22,323

eLearning courses FY2024
18,582 IN FY2023



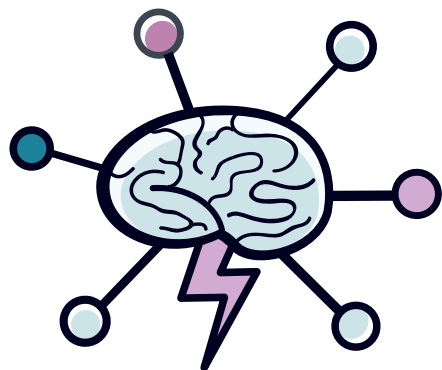
892

Face-to-face learners FY2024
849 IN FY2023



377

Topics completed FY2024
333 IN FY2023



23,215

Training completions FY2024
19,136 IN FY2023

THE TOP 5 COURSES:

1. Positive Duty
(Eliminate Sexual Harassment)
2. Psychosocial Risk Awareness
3. StrideIn (Induction)
4. Cyber Security
5. Compliance Essentials

Stride Professional Development

During FY2024 staff participated in 19,112 training hours, demonstrating our ongoing focus on supporting the professional development of everyone at Stride, including staff, managers, contractors, students and volunteers.

We effectively implemented Positive Duty (Eliminate Sexual Harassment) training for all staff and managers that outlines the 7 Standards and practical steps for us to comply with the new Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act. We introduced Psychosocial Risk Awareness for Employees training and Psychosocial Risk Management training for managers.

We continued to provide face-to-face training, including safeTALK (suicide alertness workshop), Mental Health First Aid, Professional Relationships with Clients, Health Safety Wellbeing Committee & Champions training, and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.

We have a training library of 380 Courses and 31 Learning Paths available in our MyLearning training system, including many micro-learning that allow learners to receive just-in-time information when needed and improving knowledge retention.

With continual awareness on the 3E's of learning and offering new and relevant training opportunities, professional development remains a valuable area of focus to support employee engagement, retention and career development.

Fundraising and Advocacy

Our first big step into formal fundraising was the Scenic Rim Fundraiser, held at the end of July 2023. A group of hikers with a passion for mental health raised over \$18,000 for Stride services and programs. This year we also commenced our Gifts in Wills program through partnering With Safewill. Safewill is an online Will writing platform supported by legal practitioners. Stride has been honoured to receive two bequests via this partnership to date.

Advocacy has taken the form of participating in alliances, supporting peak bodies and partnering with like minded organisations on projects. Some examples are:

- Stride partnered with Lived Experience Australia and Flinders University in the Peer GP Project. This first of its kind project sees GP's make direct referrals to peer workers for people experiencing mental health concerns, which are managed in Primary care. Stride delivers two of the three projects in Australia in Maleny QLD and Launceston in TAS.
- headspace Geelong has partnered with Griffith University to participate in STARS-p research. STARS-p is an adaptation, feasibility and utility of Systematic Tailored Assessment for Responding to Suicidality protocol (STARS-p) for youth/parent populations.



Awards and Achievements

A long list of eligible external Awards has been collated with a stronger focus on submissions and Conferences to build brand awareness and recognise Stride staff’s great work.

Some nominations included:

- The Stride Hub Ipswich team has been nominated for the QCOSS Community Impact Award. This award is for recognising the extraordinary contribution of an organisation or team in supporting or serving their community in Queensland
- headspace is a finalist for the QLD Mental Health Awards under the LGBTIQA+ category for their Diverse City Program.
- The Safe Space Blacktown Team was nominated for the 2023 ZEST Awards in the category of Outstanding Project.
- Stride Hub Ipswich was nominated for the QCOSS Community Impact Award
- headspace won the QLD Mental Health Awards under the LGBTIQA+ category for their Diverse City Program

We also had the opportunity to celebrate some longstanding services provided in community with headspace Miranda celebrating its 10th Anniversary in April.



Support Us

Stride with us...

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

Explore

Get in touch

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

Contact us