

STRIDE For better
mental health

Annual Report

FY2024-25



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.



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Reflection on the year

FROM THE CEO

It has been an honour to lead the amazing Stride team through another year. Sometimes it feels like we achieve the impossible, working in a sector that continues to be underfunded and operating in ambiguity and continuous change.

However, when you reflect on the year past, you realise that the most important thing we can do is to be there when needed.

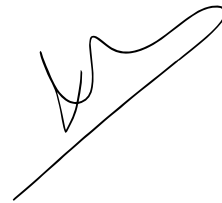
Mental health services should be what is needed, where needed and when it is needed. It makes us incredibly proud to open several services in rural and regional communities, most notably our Medicare Mental Health services as well as the Universal Aftercare suicide prevention service in remote north-west Queensland.

With the increase in Medicare Mental Health Services we operate, the number of LikeMind and Stride hubs, and being one of the largest providers of headspace centres, Stride can proudly say it is the largest not-for-profit provider of integrated mental health services in Australia.

Our NDIS services continue to deliver strong outcomes, even though it has been a challenging year in this space. As the changes to the NDIS continue in response to the NDIS review, we find ourselves constantly having to rethink and adjust how we approach these services. Regardless, we have seen impactful changes to those we support, some of which you can read about in this report.

As we look ahead, Stride will continue to work with our communities to identify the most

appropriate services to support them, embed lived experience in our work, and always bring our passion and knowledge to all we do.



Drikus van der Merwe,
CEO, Stride Mental Health



A successful year and a foundation for the future

FROM THE CHAIR

The past year has overall been a successful one. We have grown our business successfully and sustainably and the future is looking sound. We have reported a small surplus of \$609,000 which is a significant turnaround on past years. Moreover, the grants we have received and business won have placed us in good stead for the years ahead.

Operational highlights include the opening of MMHC centres in Dubbo and Bathurst and commencement of the Youth Clinical Care Coordination service in Hervey Bay and Gympie. New services include a Medicare Mental Health Centre in Caboolture and Universal Aftercare service in western Queensland. headspace Hurstville celebrated 10 years of service in the community and received an award and recognition from NSW Premier Chris Minns. Turning to our own operations, we achieved a major milestone in our digital transformation with the implementation of Health Cloud, our new centralised IT platform, which consolidated four legacy systems streamlining workflows, improving data accuracy, and enhancing visibility of consumer outcomes.

We welcomed four new directors in varying stages throughout the year, namely Pete Shmigel, Liz Forsyth, Peter Kearney and Luke Lindsay. All are very experienced and knowledgeable directors and executives and each has already made a significant contribution to what is now a well credentialed and high functioning board of directors.

Some exciting things lie ahead for Stride. We will refresh our strategy, enhance our risk management, strengthen our IT capability and consider commercial opportunities to broaden our revenue base. All of those are current projects and we are confident that they will add

significant value to the organisation.

As usual, my thanks to our CEO Drikus van der Merwe and the entire management team. Of course also, my gratitude always to my fellow directors and our company secretary. Our business is not an easy one and challenges exist in many corners but the culture and capability of Stride will confidently carry us through as we continue to grow and serve our many stakeholders.



Peter Emery,
Chair, Stride Mental Health Board



OUR LEGACY

Acknowledgment of our founder Emily Paterson

1907 wasn't the best time for mental health services in Australia. A time of government underfunding and misunderstanding led to a situation where many people released from mental health hospitals had to restart their life alone.

Emily Paterson – blind from birth, yet a talented pianist and composer – lived near Gladesville Mental Hospital. She visited patients and often invited them to her home for concerts and afternoon tea, hearing firsthand how hard it was for them to find a job and accommodation after being discharged. Women especially struggled to find support, and Emily became friends with many of them.

From their stories, she decided to create her own solution to the question: What happens when hospital care ends?

From this Emily went on to establish the Aftercare Association, helping people find 'a safe place to live, a place to work, and friendship'.

Now known as Stride, we continue to build on Emily Paterson's legacy.

Today we operate 65 services across 5 states, employ over 821 staff, and partner with a number of health networks, government and social services. Those first principles set down by Emily remain with us as we walk alongside people to make today a little easier, and tomorrow a little brighter.



FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-25

Year at a glance

12%
of consumers
identify as
LGBTQIA+.

We provided
21
integrated
services.

8%
of people
supported are
First Nations.

9%
of people supported have
culturally and linguistically
diverse backgrounds.

We provided
279,507
occasions of service.

Our headspace centres/
satellites supported
10,695
young people with
121,401
occasions of service.

We operated in
5
states and
territories across
77
locations.

Our NDIS services
supported
862
people with
support coordination,
therapeutic supports
and recovery
coaching.

Our 40 Residential
services provided
162
people with Supported
Independent Living
assistance.

We supported
18,579
people across
metropolitan,
regional and rural
communities.

OUR STRATEGY

Stride Strategy: 2024-28

In 2024, the Stride Board and Executive team collaborated with staff across the organisation to develop a new Strategic Plan.

Our purpose

Working together for better mental health and wellbeing today and tomorrow.

Our mission

To support people who access services and those who support them.

We endeavour to:

- engage early in care and support
- with the appropriate service needed
- led by those who engage our services, those
- who support them and the community
- with the right people on our teams and informed
- by lived experience
- always being local even though we are national
- measuring our impact using outcomes and feedback
- whilst operating sustainably to ensure continuity of service

Our values



Dedicated

We go further, try harder, and we never give up.



Outside the box

We work tirelessly and creatively to find the right solution.



On your side

We are with you every step of the way.



Our strategic priorities

The three strategic priorities that we believe will have the biggest impact on consumers and key stakeholders in future years are; growing support, best people and understanding our impact.

Growing Support

To deliver more high-quality and safe services to more people in more places, we will pursue targeted and deliberate growth that increases revenue from grants and other sources.

Our goal is to diversify in step with our Growth Agenda and Plan, which aims to deliver more high-quality and safe services to our core demographic.

Best People

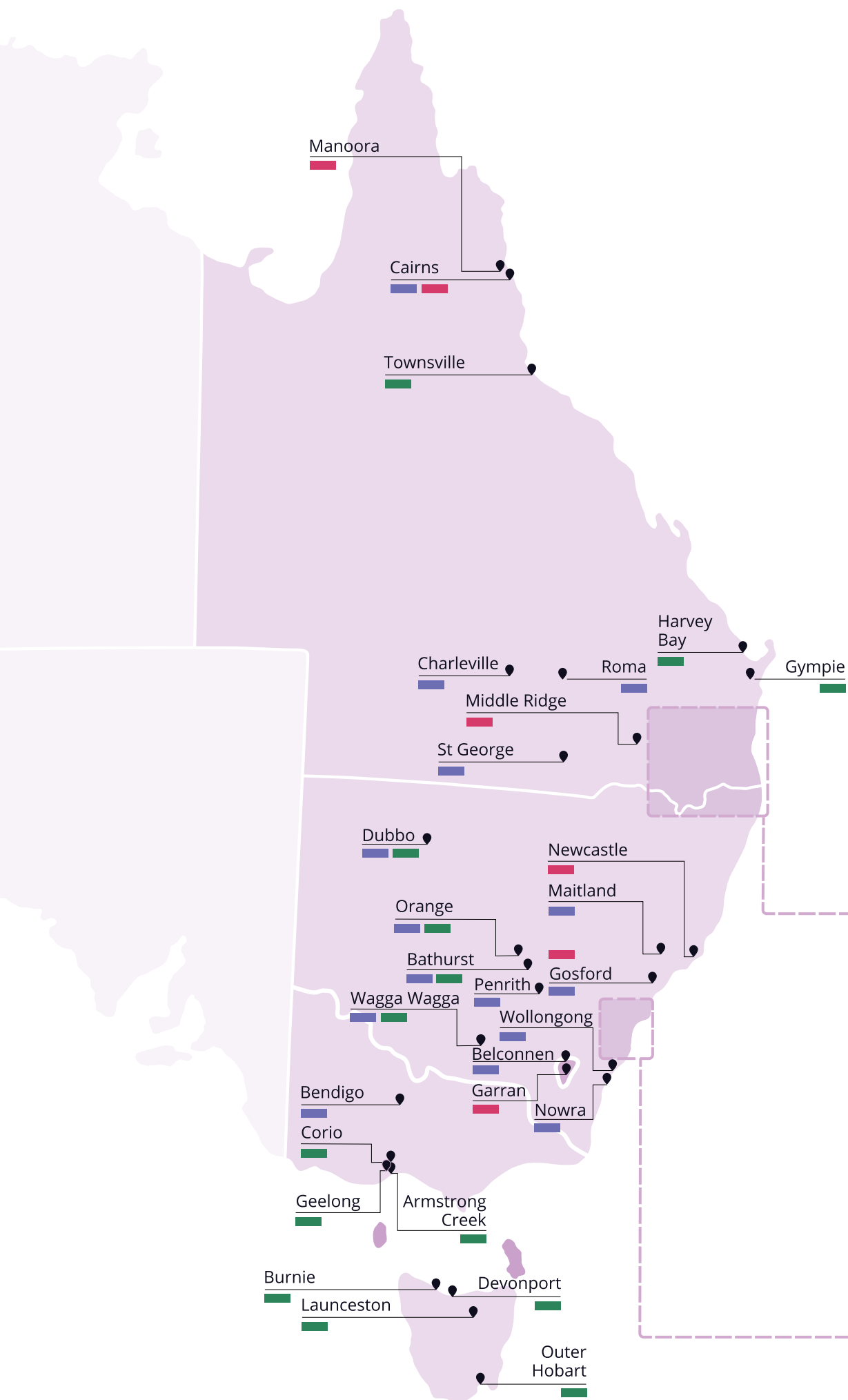
To further our reputation as an excellent service provider, we will continue to build and upskill a diverse workforce to meet the equally diverse needs of consumers.

Our goal is to invest in upskilling our teams, enhance our supportive culture and infrastructure, and increase opportunities for true co-design in services and support with our staff.

Understanding Our Impact

To increase our capacity to measure our impact, we will implement an outcomes framework and invest in the technology that supports this.

Our goal is to enhance our reputation as an excellent service provider by measuring the impact of our services through consumer outcomes and experiences, demonstrating our capacity, and using this information to directly support our consumers.



WHERE WE HELP

Map of services

We're located in 5 States and Territories across 77 locations.

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

COMMUNITY

RESIDENTIAL

INTEGRATED

South-East Queensland

Bayview Heights	Yes	Fitzgibbon	Yes	Paddington	Yes
Beaudesert	Yes	Greenslopes	Yes	Park Ridge	Yes
Bellmere	Yes	Griffin	Yes	Southport	Yes
Brassall	Yes	Ipswich	Yes	Springwood	Yes
Burpengary	Yes	Meadowbrook	Yes	Taigum	Yes
Caboolture	Yes	Middle Ridge	Yes	Wacol	Yes
Capalaba	Yes	Nundah	Yes	Woolloongabba	Yes
Everton Park	Yes				

Greater Sydney

Ashfield	Yes	Five Dock	Yes	Miranda	Yes
Bardwell Park	Yes	Glenfield	Yes	Northmead	Yes
Belmore	Yes	Hornsby	Yes	Parramatta	Yes
Bardia	Yes	Hurstville	Yes	Randwick	Yes
Blacktown	Yes	Ingleburn	Yes	Seven Hills	Yes
Casula	Yes	Lilyfield	Yes	Smithfield	Yes
Dulwich	Yes	Lithgow	Yes	Wattle Grove	Yes
Earlwood	Yes	Maroubra	Yes	Marrickville	Yes
Edmondson Park	Yes				

FY2024-25

Our impact

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. With understanding our impact being a strategic priority, we have increased our focus on research and evaluation.

Research and evaluation

At Stride, we actively contribute to research that builds understanding of mental health and support services. We are also committed to ethical, high-quality evaluation of our own programs to ensure better outcomes for the people we support.

 3 publications and reports

 18 research and evaluation projects

 20 collaborating institutions

Our involvement varied across projects, spanning from supporting recruitment, delivering interventions, collecting data, to co-designing research.



“The staff were so lovely, and clearly always expressed anything they could do to help me and were extremely friendly, caring and personable.”

- Quote from 2025 MMHC YES survey



Research Spotlight: Key Findings from the Co-Creating Safe Spaces Project

Over the past few years, Stride has been working with researchers from the Australian National University to better understand the impact of our Safe Spaces in Belconnen, Blacktown, and Wollongong. The study explored why people come to Safe Spaces, how helpful they find the support, and whether their distress reduces after a visit.

Guests told us they come mainly to get support during times of distress, to receive general help, or simply to find out what the service offers.

On average, people reported feeling 41% less distressed after their visit. Almost all guests (98%) said their visit was helpful, 88% were satisfied with their experience, and 81% said they would choose Safe Spaces over an emergency department if they were in distress again.

These results show the Safe Spaces model provides a compassionate, effective alternative to emergency departments, especially for people experiencing suicidal crisis. The findings will guide ongoing improvements to our services.

Chakouch, C., Batterham, P.J., Fitzpatrick, S.J. et al. Safe spaces as an alternative to the emergency department for suicidal distress: exploring guests' experiences . BMC Health Serv Res 25, 1096 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-025-12999-w>

OUR SERVICES

Residential Services

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

For 118 years, these services have been our cornerstone. We provide young people and adults with a diagnosed mental health condition a safe place to live. The length of stay may be for a short or long-term, depending on individual needs.

This year our teams operated 33 NDIS Supported Independent Living residences where we have assisted 100 people to live independently and on their own terms. In addition to this we operate seven government funded residences. Five are for young people and two are for adults. This year, the residential service in Townview closed and two residential sites moved to new properties. Sourcing new properties continues to be incredibly difficult within the current rental landscape.

Stride continues to operate the Garran Step Up Step Down service for adults in Canberra and the Manoorra Step Up Step

Down Resi for young people in Cairns. Through these two residences we have supported 209 people via the Step Up Step Down program.

Highlights for the year included:

Park Ridge SDA establishment was completed and ready for participant entry in July 2024.

When completing significant recruitment drives for the new residential services above, we received many applicants who had heard about us by word of mouth from current staff members, who highly recommended Stride as a great workplace. As a result, what we thought would be a difficult recruitment feat (due to having to primarily hire males) was actually a recruitment with a large number of suitable applicants due to the word-of-mouth referrals.



“[The best thing about this service was] connecting with new people, becoming comfortable with cooking and other life aspects.”

- Quote from 2025 Residential Services YES Survey

OUR SERVICES

Community-Based Recovery Services

Stride has a significant portfolio of mental health community programs offering non-clinical, recovery-focused supports that are tailored to individual needs. These supports focus on practical day-to-day needs, including self-care, building social connections, accessing housing and addressing physical health goals. They are often led by peer support workers and can be accessed alongside clinical treatment.

We are proud to deliver supports and programs such as:

- Family and Carers Wollongong, Nowra and Hurstville
- Eastern Sydney Suburbs support group
- School Wellbeing program
- Dubbo/Bathurst inpatient program

This financial year our community services teams have supported 1993 people with 33,588 occasions of service. For more information about these programs, visit our [website](#).



“[The best thing about this service was] knowing there is someone else going through similar circumstances and there can be a light at the end of the tunnel.”

- Quote from 2025 Family and Carers YES Survey



Suicide Prevention and Recovery

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

This year we were thrilled to win the NSW State LiFE Awards for Communities in Action and

Outstanding Contribution for Safe Space Blacktown. This achievement is a testament to the dedication and extraordinary work of our team in implementing best practice approaches to suicide prevention in the community.

Our Suicide Recovery services continue to grow with the expansion of The Way Back Penrith service in the Nepean region. We have also commenced the establishment of the new Universal Aftercare service providing critical support to rural and remote Queenslanders at elevated risk of suicide.

OUR SERVICES

NDIS Services

Stride is a registered NDIS provider with deep expertise in supporting people with psychosocial disability. Through our services across Queensland, New South Wales and regional Victoria, we partner with people to achieve their recovery and life goals.

These include:

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

This year, our NDIS team provided quality support to 862 people in our community and residential settings.

Results from our annual Your Experience of Service (YES) survey highlighted the importance of personalised, responsive support.

Consumers shared what they liked about our support coordination services...

“Keeping me updated on my plan and helping me to navigate the NDIS and get the best result for my situation.”

“My service manager came to my home to let me sign documents it was very helpful.”

“Being listened to and heard. A happy smiley voice on the other end of the phone.”

- NDIS Consumers



Support Coordination

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

Therapeutic Support

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

Our Recovery Coaches support people to build skills and confidence in everyday life whether that's cooking a meal, connecting socially or managing day-to-day supports.

OUR SERVICES

Integrated Services

Stride's integrated services are designed to meet the specific needs of children, guardians and parents, young people, adults and carers. They offer a holistic approach to mental health that supports each individual's mental, physical and social needs.

Highlights for our adult focused centres included:

- Commencing the design and establishment of Medicare Mental Health Centres in Devonport, Burnie and Glenorchy.
- Commencing the design and establishment of the Caboolture, Dubbo and Bathurst Medicare Mental Health Centres.
- Establishing the Youth Clinical Care Coordination service in Hervey Bay and Gympie.
- LikeMind Orange celebrating eight years supporting the local community.

Growth and expansion of our youth focused centres included:

- Opening of headspace Armstrong Creek to better support the Geelong community.
- headspace Meadowbrook, Woolloongabba, Townsville, Geelong and Hurstville were selected as headspace PLUS centres.
- headspace Townsville, Geelong, Hurstville, Miranda were successful in their Demand Management Funding applications.
- headspace Nundah and Miranda were successful in the Capital Works Funding applications. Both centres are preparing for a move in the next financial year.
- headspace Meadowbrook and Woolloongabba are participating in a VR project (MOST), led by Orygen (15 months in duration). The project is currently in the planning phase with Orygen and will commence VR therapeutic interventions for young people experiencing moderate depression and anxiety in 2025.



“[The best thing about this service was] being able to talk to someone in person. The staff really do care here and it has made me feel very comfortable.”

- Quote from 2025 Likemind YES survey

EVALUATION AND EVIDENCE

YES Survey 2025

Each year, Stride invites consumers to share their experiences of using our services through the Your Experience of Service (YES) survey. Stride uses the version designed for community-managed organisations, called the YES CMO. This valuable feedback helps us understand what we're doing well and identify areas where we can improve. Feedback from last year resulted in a variety of initiatives being undertaken to improve consumer experience of our services.

Here's what our consumers told us in 2025:

- 78% of consumers rated their overall experience with Stride as Excellent or Very Good over the last 3 months.
- 87% reported an excellent or very good experience in terms of feeling welcomed, recognised, valued, and treated with dignity.
- 86% reported an excellent or very good experience of having their personal needs met with sensitivity to their culture, gender, faith, and individual values and beliefs.

Consumers reported that Stride continues to excel in the following domains of experience...

Showing respect

- How the service provides the individual with a welcoming environment where they are recognised, valued and treated with dignity.
- 87% rated their experience positively.

Valuing individuality

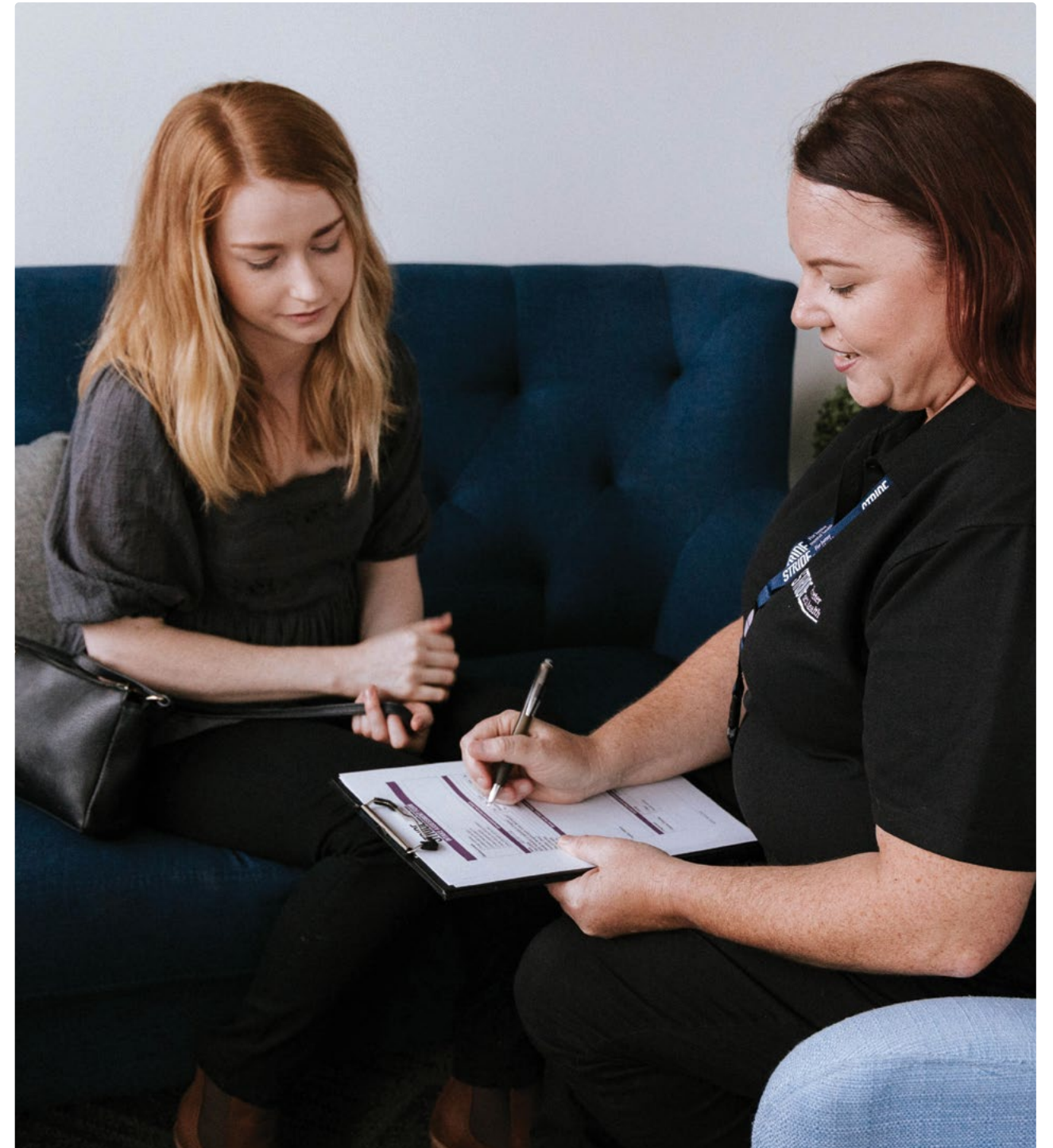
- How the service meets an individual's needs (e.g., sensitivity to culture, gender, and faith, and the importance of personal values and beliefs).
- 86% rated their experience positively.

Supporting active participation

- How the service provides opportunities for engagement, choice, and involvement in the process of service delivery.
- 84% rated their experience positively.

The survey also highlights areas of focus for Stride over the next year:

- Expanding access to peer support.
- Translation of psychosocial support into improved functional and physical health outcomes for consumers.



“[The best thing about this service was] how accommodating they are to help people like myself, who need more ‘out of the box’ styles of counselling and understanding.”

- Quote from 2025 Stride Hubs YES survey

OUR WORKFORCE

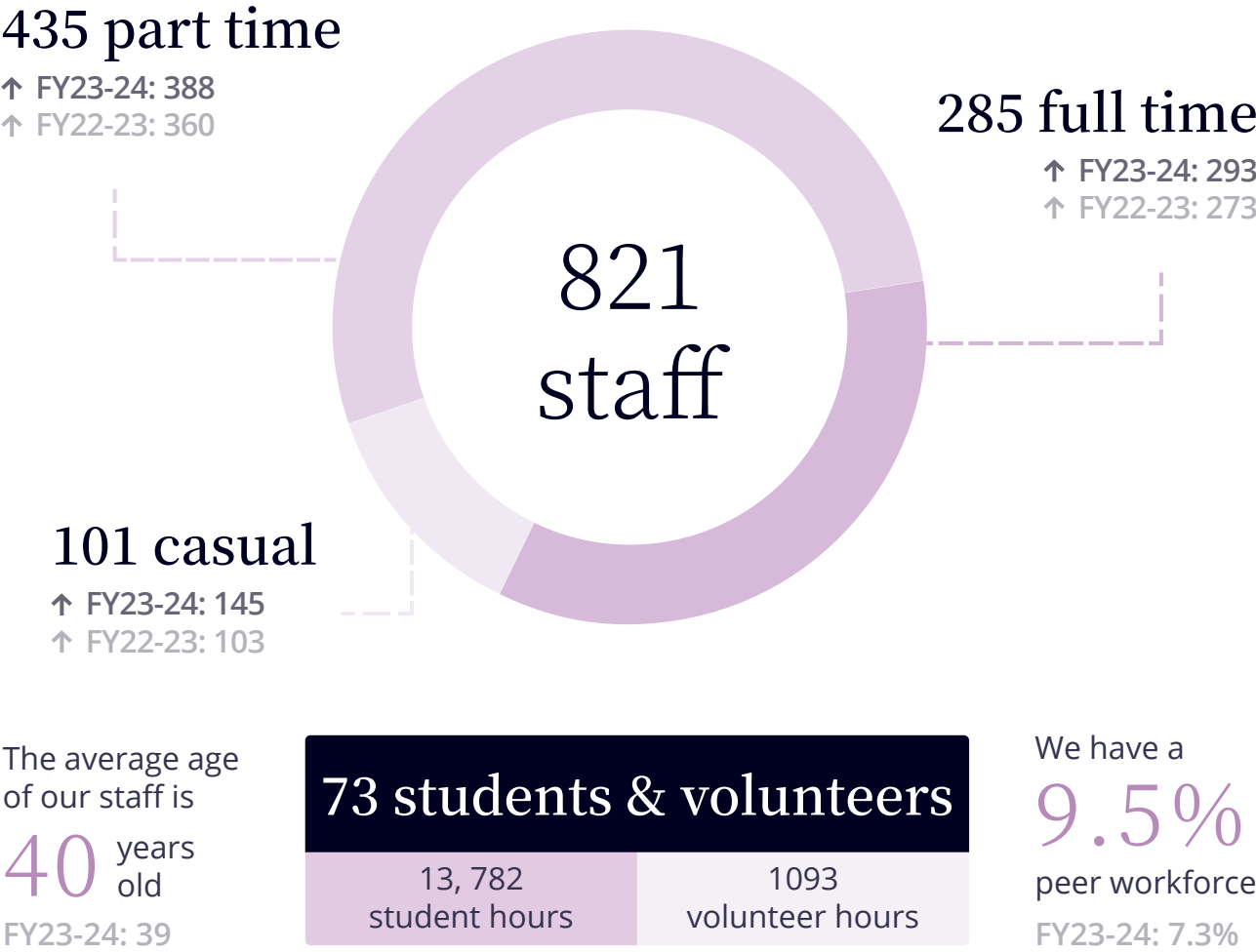
Stride with the best people

At Stride we are continuing to grow and upskill our diverse workforce to meet the equally diverse needs of consumers. Our people are at the heart of every service we deliver and contribute positively to delivering great outcomes in everything they do.

In FY2025 Stride employed 821 staff in over 77 locations across the eastern seaboard of Australia. The average age is 40.4 and more than half of our workforce is part-time. Students and volunteers complement our professional staff and make a significant difference to the lives of the people we support. Throughout the year we have continued to focus on building strong support infrastructure for all staff, including peer workers and those with lived experience.

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.



OUR WORKFORCE

Professional Development

Staff, including managers, co-located staff, students, and volunteers participated in 17,860 training hours during FY2025 to support their ongoing professional development. We had 971 instances of attendance at face-to-face training, and an increase of 16% in the average learners engaged per month.

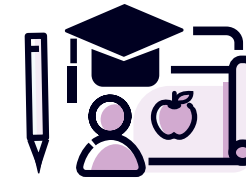
We rolled out new training in: National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse; Right to Disconnect training for staff and managers; plus Managing Wellbeing and Recognising Vicarious Trauma.

Ever popular training continued in: Safe Conversations (DoNoHarm framework) training for the Peer Workforce and their managers; Trauma Informed Care;

safeTALK (suicide alertness); Mental Health First Aid; and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.

We have a training library of 418 Courses and 33 Learning Paths available in our MyLearning training system, that provide countless opportunities for everyone to develop themselves at Stride.

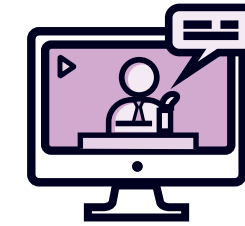
Excitingly we started our Leadership Development Program which focuses on 'Leading the Stride Way' and incorporates Leader Learning sessions, Core Leadership Skills and a review of leadership operational supports that managers told us in focus groups that they want for continuing growth and success.



17,860

Total training hours,
1,488 per month FY2025

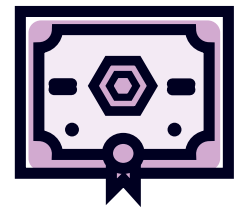
1,593 per month in
FY2024



21,761

eLearning
courses FY2025

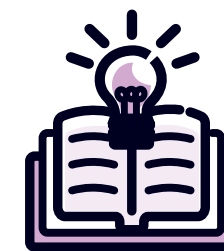
22,323 in FY2024



1894

Ave. courses completed
per month FY2025

1,935 per month in
FY2024



420

Topics completed
FY2025

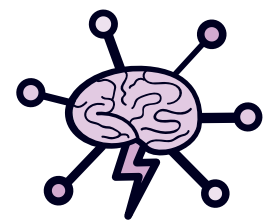
377 in FY2024



971

Face-to-face
learners FY2024

892 in FY2024



22,732

Training
completions FY2025

23,215 in FY2024

The top 5 courses:

1. Mandatory reporting of child abuse
2. National Principles for child Safe Organisations
3. Psychosocial Risk Awareness for Employees
4. Asbestos Risk Awareness
5. Toolbox Talks - Sharps Injuries

The average number
of learners per month
increased by

16%

FUNDRAISING

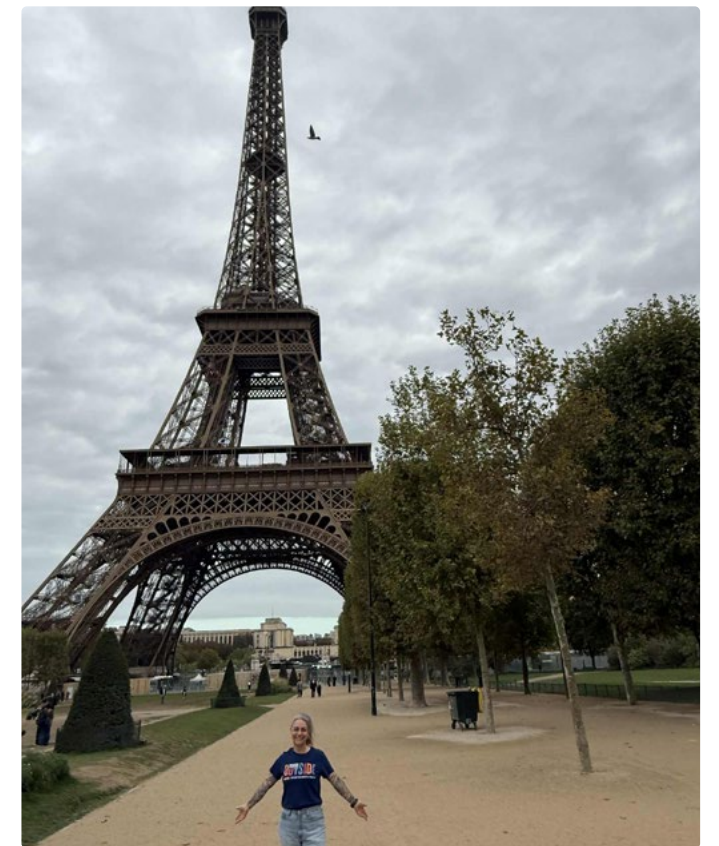
Stride Outside

In September 2024 we launched the Stride Outside Take 30 challenge to our local communities.

Stride Outside is a free, inclusive mental health awareness and fundraising campaign. It encourages participants to spend 30 minutes outside connecting with nature every day for 30 days. The challenge is open to all ages and fitness levels.

Stride Outside is an opportunity to improve personal wellbeing and support Stride's community mental health services and programs.

For our inaugural campaign, we were delighted to have Base Design and Construct as a sponsor and participant in the challenge. Over 300 people registered and we achieved \$36,000 in donations and sponsorship. Importantly, we were able to identify improvements in wellbeing of participants from the commencement to the end of the challenge. It was a successful event which we will look to grow annually.



FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-25

Achievements and awards

Accreditation

- Stride undertook a comprehensive self-assessment against the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Child Safe Standards), implementing identified actions to strengthen compliance, with a commitment to ongoing annual review.
- We also achieved re-certification against the Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) Standards for Quality Improvement, which included re-certifying our Safe Places (Safe Space and Safe Haven services) and newly certifying Stride's Wayback Service in Penrith (NSW) and Universal Aftercare Service in Western Queensland.

Awards and nominations

- The Safe Space Blacktown Team won two NSW State LiFE awards for the Communities in Action and Outstanding Contribution categories
- headspace Miranda were finalists at the Mental Health Matters Awards for their PrideSpace program.
- Caboolture Safe Space were nominated for the Prevention Excellence Award in the QCOSS Community Impact Awards, unfortunately they were not selected as finalists.
- headspace Hurstville celebrated 10 years of service in the community and received an award and recognition from NSW Premier Chris Minns.



Technology innovation

Health Cloud

We achieved a major milestone in our digital transformation with the implementation of Health Cloud, commencing across our Medicare Mental Health Centres and headspace Centres. The rollout successfully consolidated four legacy systems into a single integrated platform, streamlining workflows, improving data accuracy, and enhancing visibility of

consumer outcomes. The success of this implementation was strongly supported by our service teams, who actively participated in user acceptance testing (UAT) and assisted with the rollout across sites. Health Cloud now provides a unified foundation for evidence-based decision-making, compliance, and performance reporting, positioning Stride as a leader in digital enablement within the mental health sector.

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 →](#)

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