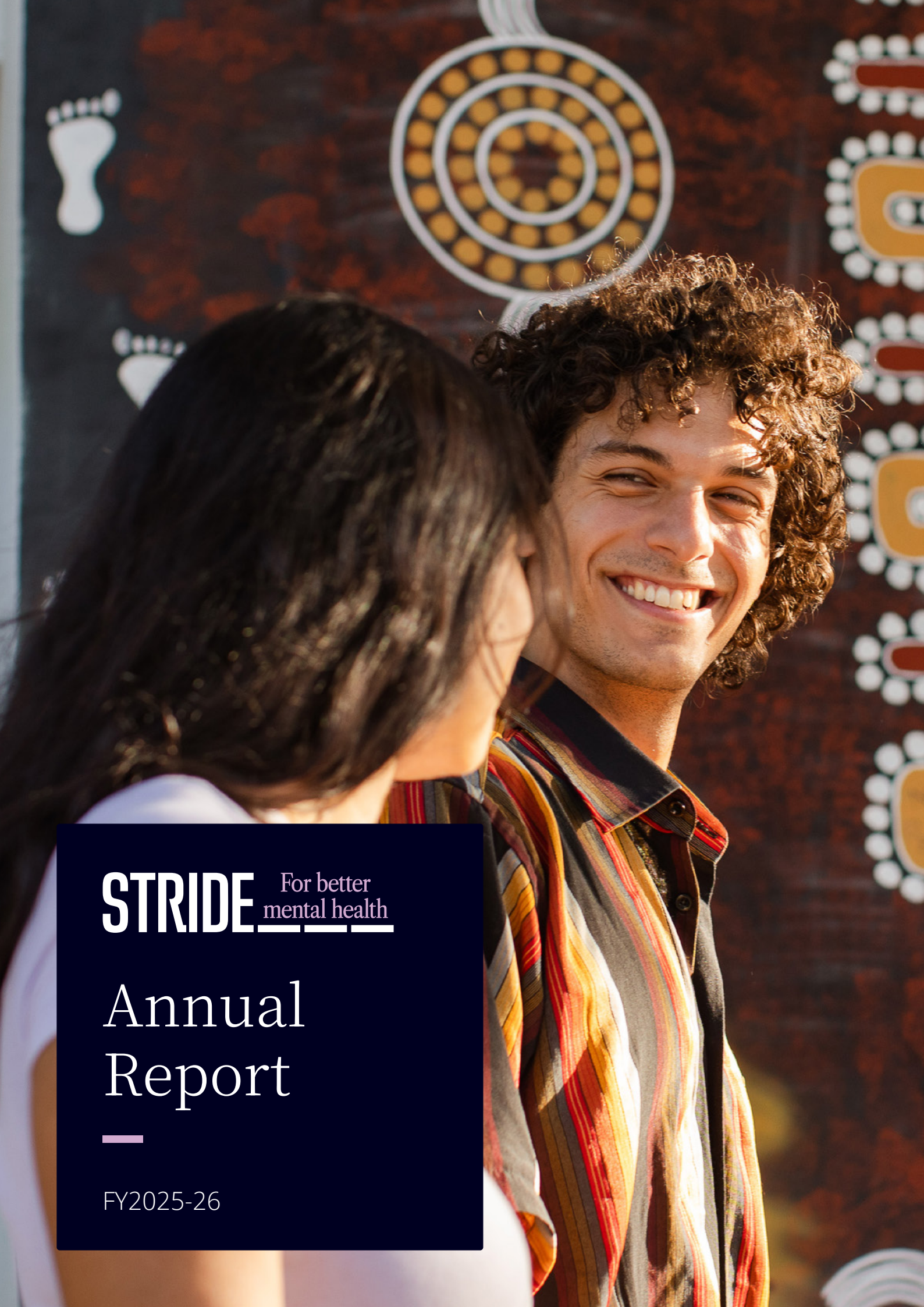


STRIDE For better mental health

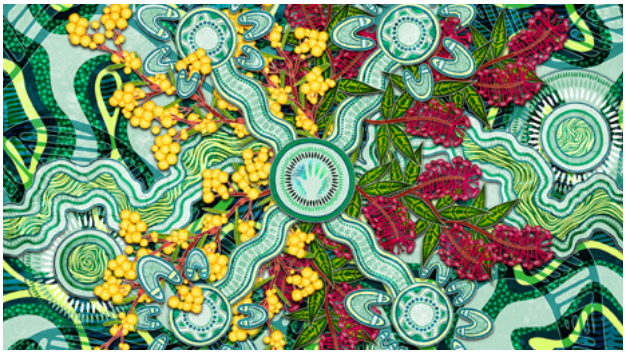
Annual Report

FY2025-26

Acknowledgement of Country

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.

Miyan (2025) by artist Nathan Peckham. Miyan means “one who provides and cares for another.”



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A Word from the Chair

PETER EMERY

The 2026 financial year has seen new opportunities and significant decisions being made at Stride with the objective of improving our sustainability into future.

Highlights for the year included expanded access to mental health support in metropolitan, regional and rural communities, opening four new Medicare Mental Health Centres, strengthening our youth services and continuing to provide vital community-based and suicide prevention supports.

Alongside this, we said farewell to CEO, Drikus Van der Merwe in November 2026. Drikus led the organisation through a genuinely demanding period with commitment and care, and the Board thanks him sincerely for his contribution.

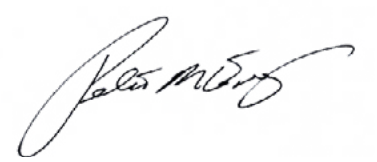
With a focus on the future, the Board made a challenging and considered decision to exit NDIS Support Coordination, Recovery Coaching and Therapeutic Support Services from February 2027. This decision was right for the long-term sustainability of our service portfolio, and one that contributed to this year's financial result.

Looking ahead, we commenced development of the Stride Strategy 2030 to guide our next phase of growth, sustainability, innovation, and lived experience. FY27 will be a year of deliberate reset for Stride and the Board is closely engaged in overseeing this work.

At this year's Annual General Meeting, we farewell Dr Lorna Moxham from the Stride Board. Lorna has served as a Director for nine years, and her contribution has been substantial. She has brought independence of thought and an unwavering focus on the people Stride exists to serve to our discussions. She has been, in the truest sense, an important voice and conscience of this Board. Stride is a stronger, more considered organisation for her contribution, and we thank her warmly.

This is also my final year on the Stride Board, after serving my full term of nine years as Director and more recently as Chair. It has been an immense privilege to play a part in stewarding Stride to where it is today.

I thank our new CEO Luke Lindsay, our incoming Chair Liz Forsyth, the Executive team, the Board, and our dedicated people across Stride for their contribution and commitment to our purpose.



Peter Emery,
Chair, Stride Mental Health Board



A Message from the CEO

LUKE LINDSAY

It has been a privilege to join Stride as Chief Executive Officer in April 2026, joining an organisation with such a proud history and people deeply committed to making a difference. In my first months I've visited our services, met our teams, and heard directly from the communities we support. These experiences have reinforced the importance of our work, and the extraordinary contribution Stride makes to mental health care across Australia.

FY26 has brought both challenges and opportunities, requiring strong governance and leadership. The exit from NDIS services was not an easy decision and we take great pride in how our NDIS staff demonstrated their commitment to participants, ensuring they were directed safely to alternative support. We also experienced the loss of funding and closure of Safe Space Blacktown. Safe Space Blacktown provided five years of invaluable service to the local community and we thank staff for their care and compassion.

Despite these changes, Stride's workforce continued to show up for the people we support, for each other, and for the communities who rely on us. We expanded our footprint in Tasmania and gained first time accreditation against the National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards. I want to sincerely thank every member of our team for the compassion, professionalism and determination they bring to their work each day, and to extend my gratitude to our consumers, families, carers, partners, commissioners and communities for their trust and continued support.

I would also like to thank our outgoing Chair, Peter Emery, for his nine years of dedicated service to the Stride Board, and to welcome Liz Forsyth as our incoming Chair. I look forward to working closely with Liz as we bring the Stride Strategy 2030 to life and enter this next chapter with confidence.

This year has been one of reflection, learning and change. As we look to the future, I am optimistic about what we can achieve together. Our ambition for 2030 is not simply to deliver more services, but to ensure the support we provide is accessible, responsive, evidence informed and genuinely shaped by the people who need it.

Above all, we will remain true to our purpose of walking alongside people through their mental health journey, supporting their recovery and empowering them to create the lives they want to live.



Luke Lindsay,
Chief Executive Officer Stride Mental Health



OUR LEGACY

Acknowledgement of our founder Emily Paterson



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.

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'.

> 'a safe place to live, a place to work, and friendship'.



Australian Research Discovery Project participation

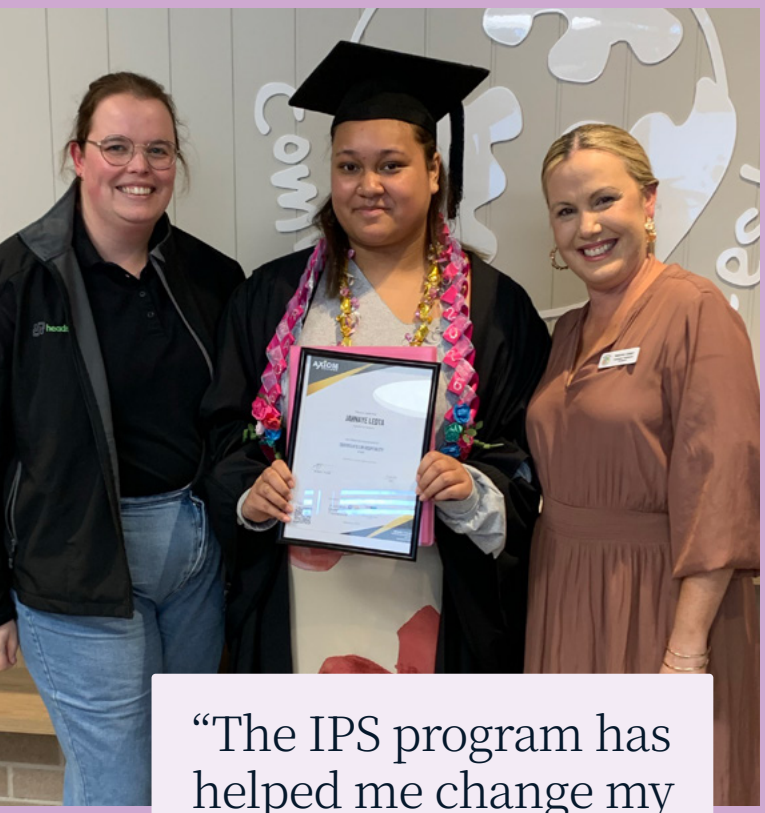
Throughout 2025, Stride collaborated with Researchers on an Australian Research Discovery Project 'Life outside institutions: histories of mental health aftercare 1900 to 1960' (2024-2026).

Researchers from Newcastle University set out to look for evidence of the people who left mental hospitals in the period from 1900 to 1960 to help expand our knowledge of mental health care in the community before new ideas about 'community psychiatry' took hold from the 1960s and 1970s. This period of time, the first half of the twentieth century, has not been studied in much detail. Historians interested in psychiatric confinement and institutional stories cannot gain access to sensitive archival records after about 1920 due to privacy laws. As institutions and medical experts began to experiment with voluntary admission and increasing attention on destigmatising psychiatric confinement, they turned to different mechanisms to allow people more time in the community and outside institutions.

Aftercare (now known as Stride) was one aspect of this movement away from long-term institutional confinement, although many people did not have the opportunity to be discharged from mental hospitals because they were either deemed too unwell, or had no one to advocate for their release. One such advocate was Emily Paterson, Stride's founder.

The research findings have been shared at an Exhibition in Newcastle called **FINDING HOME: Life Outside Institutions.**

Jahnaye's Story



"The IPS program has helped me change my life around"
- Jahnaye

When Jahnaye first connected with headspace Meadowbrook, anxiety had made everyday life feel difficult. She had left school in Year 9, spent a long time self-isolating, but still wanted to build her confidence, gain her driver's licence and find part-time work.

Through the IPS program, Jahnaye worked with Vocational Specialist Annemiek to explore her strengths, interests and career goals. With support from Vocational Peer Support Worker Kayla, she took small, practical steps to build confidence in social and workplace settings.

When Jahnaye felt ready, she began exploring opportunities and connected with a hospitality traineeship through Multilink.

Today, Jahnaye works casually at Guzman y Gomez and continues to grow her skills and confidence. Her journey shows what can happen when a young person's strengths, goals and potential are supported.

FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-26

Year at a glance

7%
of consumers identify as LGBTQIA+.

We have
36
Residential services.

6.6%
of people supported are First Nations.

6.7%
of people supported have culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

We provided
212,646
occasions of service.

Our headspace centres/ satellites supported
10,237
young people with
75,116
occasions of service.

We provide
78
services across
5
states and territories.

Our NDIS services supported
1,000
people with support coordination, therapeutic supports and recovery coaching.

We have 39 Residential services supporting
345
people

We supported
18,225
people across metropolitan, regional and rural communities.

OUR STRATEGY

Stride Strategy 2030

Throughout 2025, our activities were guided by the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. The plan identified three clear priorities of growing support, building our best people and understanding our impact.

Faced with an evolving funding environment and increasingly competitive commissioning landscape, the Board and Executive team undertook a review of our strategic direction at the end of 2025. The result is a new strategic plan for FY27 – FY30.

This builds on the foundation of our earlier plan whilst sharpening our focus and ambition for the years ahead. Importantly, our values remain the same and continue to underpin everything we do.

We are proud of what we achieved in our 2024-2028 plan. Our new Stride Strategy FY27 to FY30 will build on that progress with a sharper focus on financial sustainability and strategic growth, modernisation of our operating model and a deeper commitment to lived and living experience.

Our values

Dedicated

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

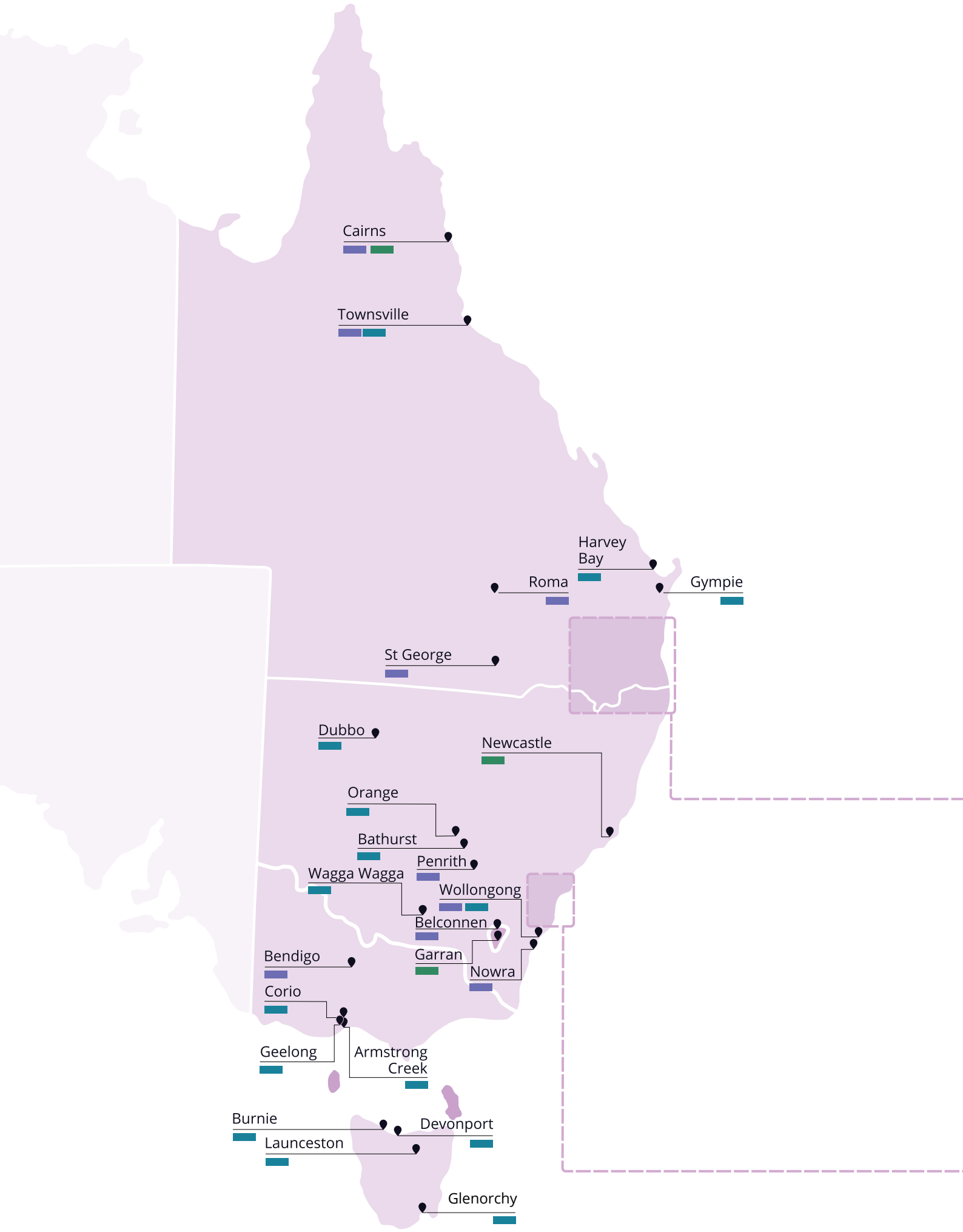
Outside the box

We work tirelessly and creatively to find the right solution.

On your side

We are with you every step of the way.




Cairns
Townsville
Harvey Bay
Roma
Gympie
St George
Dubbo
Newcastle
Orange
Bathurst
Penrith
Wagga Wagga
Wollongong
Belconnen
Garran
Nowra
Bendigo
Corio
Geelong
Armstrong Creek
Burnie
Devonport
Launceston
Glenorchy

WHERE WE HELP

Map of services

We're located in 5 States and Territories across 78 locations.

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

COMMUNITY | INTEGRATED | RESIDENTIAL

Greater Brisbane

- Beaudesert
- Bellmere
- Burpengary
- Caboolture
- Everton Park
- Fitzgibbon
- Greenslopes
- Griffin
- Ipswich
- Meadowbrook
- Nundah
- Paddington
- Park Ridge
- Springwood
- Taigum
- Woolloongabba

Greater Sydney

- Alexandria
- Ashfield
- Bardwell Park
- Belmore
- Bardia
- Casula
- Croydon
- Dulwich Hill
- Edmondson Park
- Five Dock
- Hornsby
- Hurstville
- Marrickville
- Miranda
- Northmead
- Parramatta
- Randwick
- Seven Hills
- Wattle Grove

Cassie's Story



"I feel more confident to be able to communicate with different support workers and identify my needs and wants in my current situation."

- Cassie

For Cassie, returning to study has been a big step towards a future she feels excited about.

With support from Stride Bendigo, Cassie has reconnected with her strengths, built her confidence and explored what's possible.

"I have found purpose by re-enrolling in TAFE and being able to look forward to my future."

She also feels more confident advocating for herself and communicating with support services.

"I feel more confident to be able to communicate with different support workers and identify my needs and wants."

Living in regional Victoria, Cassie loves plants, LEGO and spending time outdoors with her animals, family and friends. She's continuing to build on her strengths and look ahead.

FY2024-25

Our impact

At Stride, we believe that understanding outcomes is essential to delivering high-quality mental health services. By listening to consumers, measuring what matters, and building a strong evidence base, we can better understand our impact and continuously improve the support we provide.

This section highlights how we are strengthening evaluation, outcome measurement, consumer feedback, and research to improve services and outcomes for the communities we support.

Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes

In 2026, we took several important steps to strengthen how we measure, understand, and improve consumer outcomes across Stride.

Evaluation Framework

Published Stride's first organisation wide Evaluation Framework, providing a consistent and rigorous approach to measuring program effectiveness and impact.

Outcome Measurement Improvement Plan

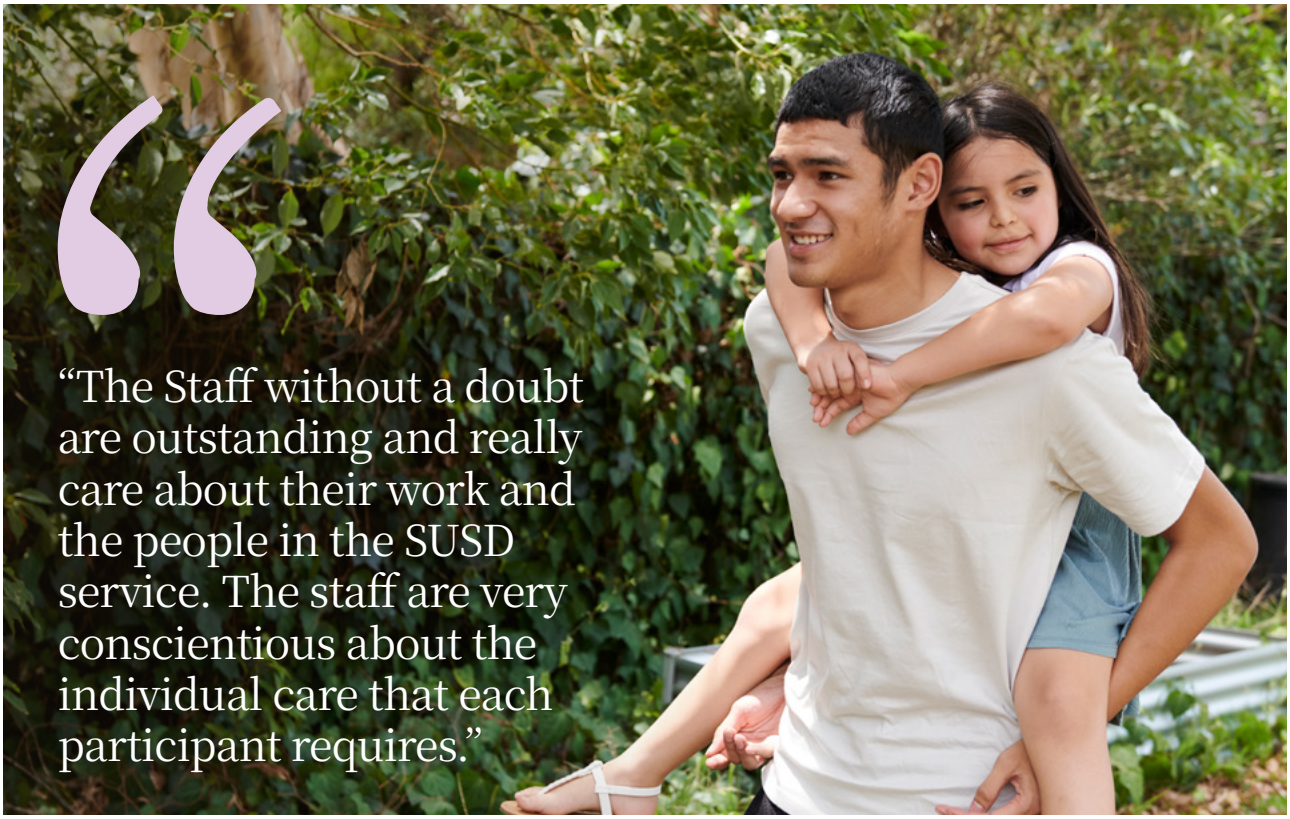
Implemented a program of a work to strengthen outcome measurement and improve our ability to capture and report on the outcomes that matter most to consumers.

Outcome Mapping

Expanded the use of program logics to clearly map how our activities lead to intended outcomes, strengthening program design, accountability and understanding of how our services contribute to meaningful outcomes.

Consumer Voice

Conducted our annual YES survey, enabling consumers to share their experiences and helping services identify opportunities for improvement.

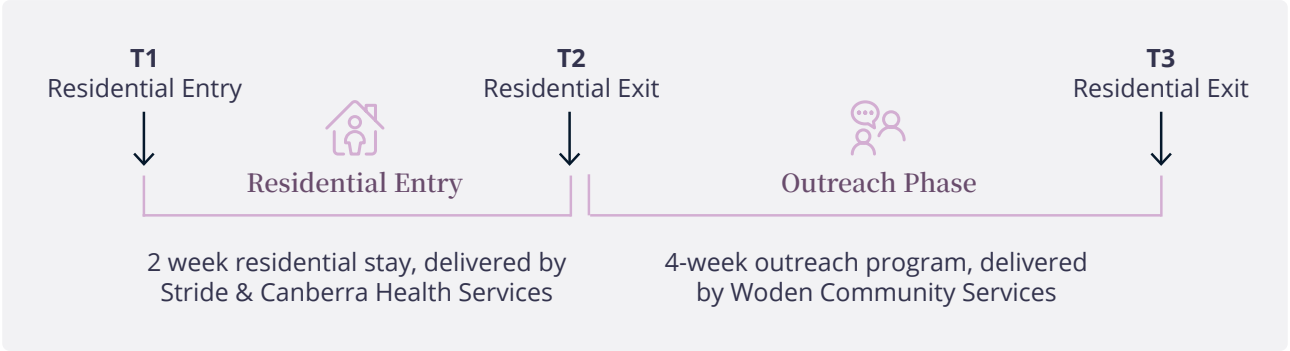


Evaluation of Southside Community Step Up Step Down

One example of how we put this into practice is our evaluation of the Southside Community Step Up Step Down (SUSD) service. The Southside Community SUSD service, funded by ACT Health, is a short-term, community-based residential (sub-acute) mental health service for adults aged 18 to 65 years who have recently experienced, or who are at increased risk of experiencing, an acute episode of mental illness.

The program includes a 2-week residential stay followed by 4 weeks of outreach support.

An evaluation was conducted to determine the program’s effectiveness in improving consumer outcomes and inform ongoing improvements to service delivery. The evaluation reviewed de-identified routinely collected data from July 2022 to January 2026, covering 436 episodes of care.



What did we find?

Overall, the residential phase of the program was associated with positive outcomes for most consumers.

During the residential stay:

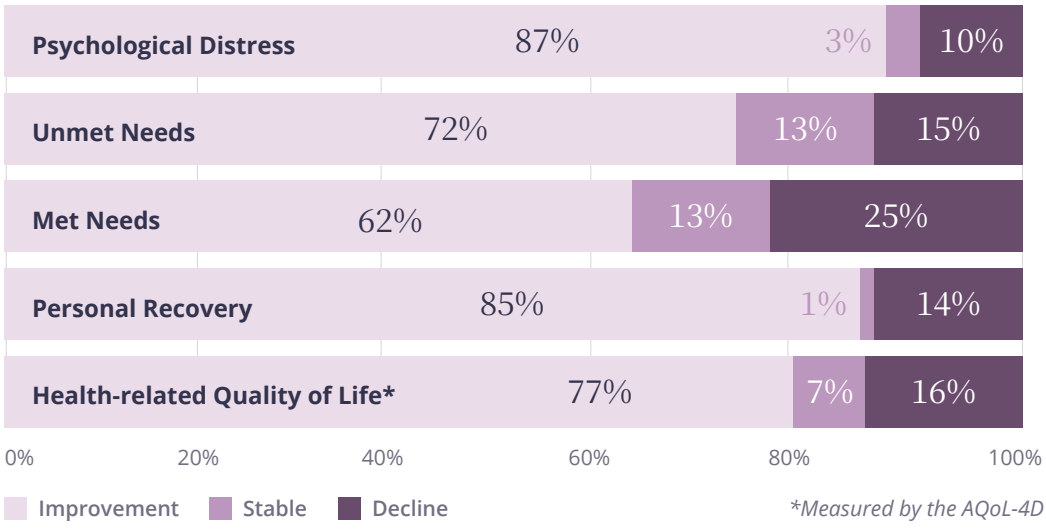
87% experienced a reduction in their psychological distress

85% showed improved personal recovery

77% reported an improvement in their quality of life

72% experienced a reduction in their unmet needs

Statistically significant improvements were also observed across all key measures.



Overall, the evaluation showed the Southside Community SUSD is making a real difference for consumers. These findings are a credit to the dedication of the wonderful staff at Southside Community SUSD.

In 2027, the program will build on findings from the evaluation and undergo several changes to further strengthen outcomes for consumers.



OUR SERVICES

Residential Services

Stride Residential Services offers 24/7 supported accommodation for adults and young people. 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 30 NDIS Supported Independent Living residences where we have assisted 103 people to live independently and on their own terms. In addition to this we operate six government-funded residences. Five are for young people and one is for adults.

Stride continues to operate the Garran Step Up Step Down service for adults in Canberra and the Manoora Step Up Step Down Resi for young people in Cairns. Through these two residences we have supported 174 people via the Step Up Step Down program.

Highlights for the year included:

- Our Garran service was evaluated and had its funding extended
- We received funding renewals for Mawarra and Biala Transitional Residential programs
- We received funding extensions for our NSW Family and Carer programs.

Kurinda Good News Story

In May 2025, Stride welcomed a 19-year-old young woman to Kurinda Youth Residential Service following significant housing instability and complex mental health and support needs.

Initially, she was withdrawn and reluctant to engage with staff, health services and activities. Through consistent, trauma-informed support and trusting relationships, she has made significant progress in her confidence, self-advocacy and engagement.

During her time at Kurinda, she successfully completed her Higher School Certificate remotely after being unable to return to mainstream education. She went on to pursue further study in Community Services and Youth Work, demonstrating a strong commitment to her future. Recognising when she needed additional support with her studies also reflected her growing confidence in asking for help and advocating for her needs.

More recently, she made the decision to pause her studies to focus on employment and successfully secured an Indigenous traineeship with CommBank, which she currently attends three days a week. She is also working towards securing long-term accommodation, obtaining her motorcycle licence and purchasing a motorbike.

Her journey at Kurinda reflects significant growth in independence, resilience and self-determination. She has developed stronger relationships, increased her engagement with health and community supports, and built her capacity to reflect on her experiences, make informed decisions and take ownership of her goals. Most importantly, she is increasingly able to see a positive future for herself and actively take steps towards achieving it.





OUR SERVICES

NDIS Services

Our NDIS services supported **1,000 people** with support coordination, therapeutic supports and recovery coaching.

After careful consideration over an extended period, Stride made the difficult decision to cease offering NDIS Support Coordination, Recovery Coaching and Therapeutic Support Services from February 2026. We are greatly appreciative of our NDIS staff who worked diligently to ensure continuity of care was provided to our NDIS participants as we transitioned them to alternative providers.

Since inception of this service, NDIS staff have made an invaluable contribution to the lives of thousands of participants. Their dedication and commitment to supporting people on the NDIS has been significant and is an important part of our Stride legacy.

Stride continues to support NDIS participants via our Supported Independent Living services.



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.

This financial year our community services teams have supported 1,915 people with 33,532 occasions of service.

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.



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 three Safe Havens and Safe Spaces which help reduce strain on hospital emergency departments including:

- Safe Space Caboolture, QLD
- Safe Haven Wollongong, NSW
- Safe Haven Belconnen, ACT

We were delighted to have funding extended for our Caboolture Safe Space, however due to funding reductions the Blacktown service closed in June 2026. Since it opened in 2022, Safe Space Blacktown supported thousands of local residents with suicide prevention and recovery support. We are very proud of the invaluable contribution our team made to the lives of so many people.

Our Suicide Recovery services include The Way Back Penrith service in the Nepean region and Universal Aftercare service providing critical support to rural and remote Queenslanders at elevated risk of suicide. Through these services we have supported 226 people and offered 4,541 occasions of service.

A Way Back Recovery Story

When this young person came to The Way Back Support Service, they were living with significant suicidal ideation, high psychological distress, the weight of childhood sexual assault and trauma, housing instability, and no clear path towards work.

Hardest of all, they were still living in the very environment where much of their trauma had occurred; something they identified themselves, with remarkable insight, as the greatest barrier to their healing. Over 23 weeks, from 31 March to 8 September 2026, our peer support worker walked beside them for roughly 2.5 hours each week, around 57.5 hours in total, holding hope on the hard days, advocating for housing, navigating unfamiliar systems together, and quietly building the confidence for them to navigate those systems on their own.

The results speak powerfully. Their SIDAS score for suicidal ideation fell from 38/50 at intake to 18/50 at review and just 5/50 at exit; an 87% reduction. While psychological distress measured on the K10 dropped from 46/50 to 31/50, a 33% improvement, with steady progress at every review point. Alongside these numbers came real, tangible change: a secured move through Homes NSW within weeks, finally taking them away from a trauma-associated home; three ongoing support pathways established through a NSW Health Drug and Alcohol psychologist, acceptance into YESS, and EMDR trauma treatment via Victims Services; reduced cannabis use; JobSeeker payments moved to weekly for greater financial stability; and employment pathways in retail, fashion and warehousing actively explored. They also returned to making and releasing music and purchased their own microphone; a specific goal from their support plan, achieved.

Recovery is still underway, and employment remains a goal ahead, but the direction of travel has been consistently forward. Perhaps the most moving outcome was hearing this young person speak about one day becoming a peer support worker themselves, inspired by the relationship they built through The Way Back and the Peer Support offered. Reflecting on how far they had come, they said simply: “I never felt like I would ever get to this point.” That is what happens when someone is met with consistency, belief and lived-experience understanding at the moment they need it most.

Story from Naomi Herborn



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:

- Opened Dubbo, Bathurst and Caboolture Medicare Mental Health Centres
- Expanded our services in Tasmania with the opening of Devonport Medicare Mental Health Centre and a temporary location for Burnie Medicare Mental Health Centre.
- Established the Youth Clinical Care Coordination service in Hervey Bay and Gympie.

Growth and expansion of our youth focused centres included:

- headspace Meadowbrook, Woolloongabba, Townsville, Geelong and Hurstville were announced as headspace Plus centres.
- headspace Townsville, Geelong, Hurstville, Miranda were successful in their Demand Management Funding applications
- 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 Early Psychosis Program at headspace Meadowbrook will be transitioning to a Youth Specialist Care Centre.
- headspace Ipswich is expanding to support outreach in the Lockyer Valley.

EVALUATION AND EVIDENCE

Listening, Learning and Improving through Consumer Feedback

84% rated there overall experience as ‘Excellence’ or ‘Very Good’

88% felt welcomed, values and treated with dignity

88% felt their individual needs, values and identity were respected

57 Net Promoter Score (up from 51 in 2025)

2026 YES Survey Results

Every year, Stride invites consumers to share their experiences through the Your Experience of Service (YES) survey. Their feedback helps us understand what we are doing well and where we can improve.

In 2026, 1,193 consumers from 78 services participated in the survey, representing approximately 16% of people accessing Stride services.

Their responses show that consumers continue to experience high-quality, person-centred care, while improvements across key areas demonstrate the impact of our commitment to continuous improvement.

> “I have so much hope for my future now.”
> Consumer, LikeMind Wagga



Consumer Experience is Getting Stronger

Compared with 2025, consumers reported stronger experiences in receiving information and support, and greater positive impacts on their wellbeing, daily life, and hope for the future.

The increase in Stride's Net Promoter Score reflects growing consumer confidence, satisfaction, and willingness to recommend our services to others.

What Consumers Valued Most

Across services, consumers consistently described staff as:

- Caring and compassionate
- Professional and respectful
- Supportive and understanding
- Reliable and trustworthy

Consumers frequently highlighted the importance of being listened to, feeling understood, and developing trusting relationships with staff.

Many reported that these relationships made a meaningful difference to their wellbeing, confidence, and recovery.

Opportunities for Improvement

While feedback was overwhelmingly positive, consumers also identified opportunities to enhance their experience by:

- Improving service availability and continuity of support
- Increasing staffing capacity and access to services
- Expanding programs, activities and practical supports that contribute to recovery and wellbeing

Importantly, most suggestions reflected a desire for greater access to supports consumers already value, rather than concerns about the quality of care being provided.



Turning Feedback into Action

Consumer feedback is central to how Stride improves services.

Each year, YES Survey findings are reviewed across the organisation and translated into local and organisation-wide quality improvement initiatives. Previous feedback has informed practical changes to communication, care planning, family and carer involvement, access to information, and opportunities for consumers to have a greater say in their support.

The 2026 YES Survey highlights both the strengths of our services and opportunities to further enhance the consumer experience. These insights will inform future improvements across Stride, helping ensure our services remain responsive, person-centred and focused on what matters most to the people we support.

Contributing to the Evidence Base through Research

At Stride, we believe that meaningful mental health care must be grounded in evidence. That's why we actively contribute to research and evaluation, from co-design and data collection to intervention delivery, ensuring our practice is continually improved. We also support recruitment for research studies, giving consumers the opportunity to contribute their voice, because we believe the future of mental health care must be informed by lived experience.

In 2026, our involvement spanned 22 research and evaluation projects with 35 collaborating institutions.



22

Research and evaluation projects



35

Collaborating institutions



3

Publications and reports

Publications and reports:

Kernaghan L, Green E, Clarke L, et al. Experiences of health students and supervisors during rural mental health placements. International Journal of Mental Health Nursing. 2025 Oct;34(5):e70147.

Dunn, B. (2025). Tern: Development and Multi-site Evaluation of a Person-Centred, Trauma-Informed Model of Care for Young People with Histories of Complex Trauma (Doctoral dissertation, CQUniversity).

Lawn S, Rattray M, Fuss B, et al. The Potential Role of Peer Support Workers in General Practice: Perspectives of Consumers, Carers, Peer Support Workers and General Practice Staff. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research. 2026 Mar;53(2):125-41.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Whose Care? Our Care!

Stride is a co-partner on the Whose Care? Our Care! project being conducted through the ALIVE National Centre for Mental Health Research Translation and co-led by Professor Victoria Palmer (Co-Design and Primary Care Mental Health), Professor Michelle Banfield (Lived-Experience Research) and Professor Sandra Eades (Noongar) (Priority Populations, Indigenous Health). Along with Stride, the project is partnering with Neami National, Monash Health, Roses in the Ocean and Children's Ground, a First Nations led and governed model, through their Medicare Mental Health Centres, Mental Health Hubs (adults and kids), Safe Spaces and Safe Havens, Community Led Safe Spaces, Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals and a First Nations led and governed approach.

The project is building from the knowledge of guests and their families/carers/kin and service staff to help create a service system that is better more integrated, accessible and impactful for the whole community. The project is developing understanding of how services meet the cultural needs of guests, how services integrate lived experience into what they do, and how services are accessible and communicate this for people accessing support, their families/carers/kin and local communities.

Key project activities

Stride is supporting in the Whose Care? Our Care! project are:

- a national survey of staff and volunteers involved in delivering care across the service models to understand who they are, who they see as key communities and what their experiences are.
- Continuing work to validate the COGWheel, a new way to understand the experiences of guests that was co-designed Stride staff and guests through Stride services in the Co-Creating Safe Spaces project led by Professor Michelle Banfield.
- Supporting interviews with guests to understand their care journey to the Stride services, through the services and beyond.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Mind VR Trial

Stride-led headspace centres leading the way in Virtual Reality Research

Supported by the Queensland Mental Health Commission and Telstra Foundation, Stride has participated in the Mind trial, a study of virtual reality (VR) treatment designed to support young people experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety. VR uses digital technology to create immersive, interactive environments that young people can engage with as though they were in the real world. It is being explored in mental health care as a way for young people to develop and practice therapeutic skills in an engaging, interactive, and safe environment, with support from a clinician.

In partnership with Orygen Digital and Accoras, the project is evaluating both the effectiveness of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy-based program and how VR can be implemented in routine youth mental health care.

A total of 147 young people across six headspace sites participated in the study. With VR pilot research averaging around 60 participants, the trial substantially exceeded its original recruitment target of 75 participants, placing the headspace Mind VR trial among the larger clinical evaluations of VR in mental health to date. The Orygen Digital team have also highlighted the excellent completion rates, with more than 80% of young people completing the intervention sessions and research participation requirements.

20 clinicians from headspace Ipswich, headspace Woolloongabba, headspace Nundah, headspace Meadowbrook, and headspace Beaudesert received training and supervision in the use of VR. Participating clinicians delivered VR sessions to help young people learn and practice core therapeutic skills in an interactive way. Monthly VR-specific supervision provided an opportunity for clinicians to share their experiences and explore both the benefits and practical considerations of integrating VR into routine mental health practice.

Data collection and trial delivery concluded in September 2026, marking a significant milestone after more than a year of recruiting young people, delivering the VR program, and learning from young people and clinicians across South-East Queensland. These strong completion rates reflect the engagement of participating young people, as well as the dedication of Stride-led headspace clinicians delivering Mind VR across the participating sites.

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 FY2026 Stride employed 821 staff in over 78 locations across the eastern seaboard of Australia. The average age is 39 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 would like to recognise the individual and collective expertise of those with a living or lived experience of a mental health condition. We 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 for themselves and others.



430 part time

↑ FY24-25: 435
↑ FY23-24: 388

294 full time

↑ FY24-25: 285
↑ FY23-24: 293



97 casual

↑ FY24-25: 101
↑ FY23-24: 145

The average age of our staff is

39 years old

FY24-25: 40

71 students & volunteers

16,554 student hours	810 volunteer hours

We have a

9.9%

peer workforce

FY24-25: 9.5%

OUR WORKFORCE

Professional Development

Continuous learning is a focus at Stride, and we offer a vast range of development opportunities to Staff, including managers, co-located staff, students, and volunteers to support them to be their best.

Our MyLearning training library of 328 Courses and 38 Learning Paths is accessible to everyone, anytime, at Stride. We uncluttered our LMS content library and included 11 new courses, including Lone Workers & Safe Home Visits training and 7 short courses for NDIS training.

We saw participation in 18,685 training hours throughout FY2026 and a lift of 8% to 1,052 face-to-face training attendances, over a range of 336 different topics.

Courses undertaken included: Trauma Informed Care, Mental Health First Aid, Safey Intervention, Peer Workforce training in Safe Conversations (DoNoHarm framework), ASIST suicide intervention, Accidental Counsellor, and Managing Wellbeing & Recognising Vicarious Trauma.

Our Leadership Development Program “Leading the Stride Way” included 6 Leader Learning topic-specific sessions and 16 Core Leadership sessions during the year, with a reflection and focus on thinking styles, key conversations, and coaching. We also created a new Leadership “Service Safety and Quality” Learning Path incorporating key service delivery courses.



18,685

Total training hours, 1,557 per month FY2026

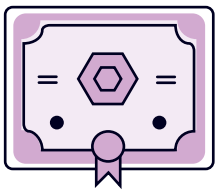
1,488 per month in FY2025



19,721

eLearning courses FY2026

21,761 in FY2025



20,773

Avg. courses completed per month FY2026

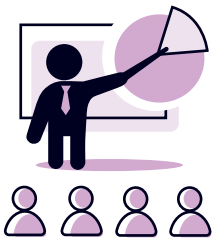
22,732 per month in FY2025



336

Topics completed FY2026

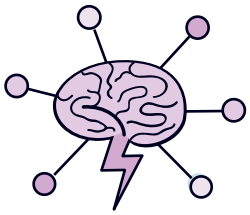
420 in FY2025



1,052

Face-to-face learners FY2026

971 in FY2025



20,773

Training completions FY2026

22,732 in FY2025

The top 5 courses:

1. Lone Workers and Safe Home Visits
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety
3. Learning and Development Survey 2026
4. StrideIn (welcome induction)
5. Driver Safety Awareness

The average number of learners per month

288

HEAD OFFICE MOVE TO PARRAMATTA

Setting a strong foundation for the future

After 17 years at the historic Rozelle Hospital site in Lilyfield, our Head Office has moved west to better reflect where our services and communities are located.

Placing us closer to Stride services including the Parramatta Medicare Mental Health Centre, The Way Back Penrith and our Seven Hills Residential Service, and reflects plans for future growth.

The office opening was celebrated by staff and guests at a morning tea on the 24th of June, bringing together staff, Board members, partners and guests to recognise both our history and our future.

We were delighted that Councillor Tania Raffoul could attend our opening on behalf of the Lord Mayor of Parramatta. In her address, Councillor Raffoul reflected on Stride's impact across New South Wales and the importance of accessible mental health services, particularly for people who may not know how, or where, to seek support. She thanked our teams for the difference they make every day and recognised the opportunities our new Parramatta home will create for the future.

The morning was also an opportunity to reflect on Stride's remarkable 119 year journey. Visitors to the new office can explore this history through a colourful timeline and commemorative plaque honouring Emily Paterson's legacy, a reminder that while our location has changed, our purpose remains the same: supporting people to build the lives they want through accessible, person-centred mental health care.









FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-26

Achievements and awards

Accreditation

In June 2026, Stride achieved accreditation for the first time against the National Safety and Quality Mental health Standards for Community Managed Organisations.

Applying across all Stride services, the accreditation replaces our previous certification against the National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010 and reflects our ongoing commitment to deliver safe, high-quality services in line with national industry standards.

Awards and nominations

- Safe Haven Belconnen was a Spirit of Impact Finalist in the Lifeline Spirit of Canberra Awards and a recipient of the Lived Experience Ally Recognition Award from the ACT Mental Health Week Awards.
- Kurinda Resi celebrated its 30 year anniversary.
- Stride's Head Office moved from Lilyfield to new premises in Parramatta.
- Stride Outside 2025 fundraising campaign raised nearly $43,000 in sponsorship and donations.

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 hello@stride.com.au

Contact us →

STRIDE For better mental health



All are welcome