

**2021**

**WAYAHEAD**

**ANNUAL**

**REPORT**

**SUMMARY**

**L**ast year's report mentioned that the last 12 months have brought several changes. It seems a bit like Groundhog Day to start this report the same way, but we are still working in a Covid world.

Technology continues to be essential for our working life.

We now run online anxiety support groups and when the face-to-face groups return, we will continue to offer both options. Many of the support group facilitators took up the challenge of running the groups online, continuing to provide that valuable connection point.

Due to school closures, we have been promoting Small Steps online. We expanded our audience to anyone with an interest in childhood anxiety, including WayAhead Workplaces members. We adapted the program to present on specific disorders - including Covid anxiety in young children. Online events will continue, but there is a demand for in-person presentations. Small Steps has been one of our most successful programs.

Mental Health Month 2020 was online. Instead of offering grants for in-person events, we provided grants to organisations that found creative ways to 'Tune In' to their communities. WayAhead successfully spread the celebrations throughout October. Way Ahead also did things differently, instead of a face to face launch we spread the celebration throughout October, conducting interviews with the Mental Health Matters Award winners and using social media to send out our messages to a broad audience.

Without in-person networking for WayAhead Workplaces, our staff were forced to creatively problem solve. WayAhead presented some excellent, varied sessions and kept the members engaged during challenging Covid times.

During a brief respite from Covid restrictions, we held one community forum in Bega. We look forward to bringing all our forums back to life in 2022 with renewed gusto.

Our primary funder is now the Mental Health Branch, NSW Health. This year, we have concentrated on building a relationship with the Department. Our understanding of their needs, and their understanding of our strengths, will help us to achieve shared successes. We are confident that this relationship will be strong far into the future.

We were excited for our new collaborative offices in Pyrmont, but Covid changed everything. We are still looking forward to the day when that close collaboration can be re-established, although it will be different to the working environment many of us remember fondly pre-covid.

Over the last 12 months, we have experienced some significant staff changes. We farewelled: Ben Graham, Supun Mundigala, Lynley Hurst, Vera Velevaska, Tasmin Hill, Melanie Adams and Tasnim Hossain. They were all wonderful to work with and their talents will take them far in their chosen careers. We are pleased to have played a small part in their professional life.

We also brought on six new employees. Please join me in welcoming: Stephanie Thompson, WayAhead Workplaces Program Lead and Megan Goss, the WayAhead Workplaces Program Assistant. Chloe Seymour started as Office Administrator and Marie Spanoudakis as our Human Resources Officer. Alicia Brightwell is our Mental Health Promotions Assistant working primarily with Asha Zappa on all our promotional campaigns. Two new Consumer Support Phone Line Officers came on board to help with the phones. They are Youn Cho and Min Lou.

With new staff, come new ideas; we gain a fresh approach to the work and a fresh enthusiasm for the road ahead. Our long-term staff, volunteers, and dedicated board directors possess a deep understanding of our organisation's history with the experience and commitment to drive us forward. Together, we will form a stronger organisation and working community.

Finally, we thank everyone outside the organisation who has positively impacted WayAhead over the last year. There are too many to mention, which only serves to show the generosity of those involved, and highlights the excellent support WayAhead has received.

Thank you all,

**Liz Priestley**



***“With new staff, come new ideas; we gain a fresh approach to the work and a fresh enthusiasm for the road ahead.”***

# *We tackle prejudice and stigma to encourage people to seek help*

Our mental health promotion campaigns help to reduce stigma around mental health by providing engaging resources and easy-to-understand information.

For PNDA awareness week we hosted online video conversations with people with lived experience to help challenge stigmatising beliefs.

The Mental Health Promotion and Program Manager spoke at the annual Treatment of Personality Disorders Conference on Parenting and BPD, as well as presenting at Western Sydney University and University of Sydney.

WayAhead Workplaces Lead presented at a number of different conferences and events on the importance of lived experience consultation and codesign including the Suicide Prevention Symposium Feb 2021; Frontline Mental Health Conference in Brisbane 2021; Participating in the Rehab Management Mental Health Education Series on Psychosocial Risk and Lived Experience and many more.

The WayAhead Workplaces Lead and the Mental Health Promotion and Program Manager co-chaired the Mental Health in light of COVID-19 Summit.

Our anxiety support group participants share their experience of living with Anxiety and learn from each other. This breaks down stigma and isolation experienced by people living with Anxiety.

We have hosted focus groups with people with lived experience to help inform our programs.



Perinatal Mental Health  
*Speaker Series*

Consumer perspective:  
Postpartum psychosis



Perinatal Mental Health  
*Speaker Series*

Consumer perspective:  
Recognising the signs



Mental Health Matters Awards - Online

# We lower barriers to accessing information and finding the right support

Our Anxiety Support Groups are free and open to people dealing with anxiety, as well as their friends and family. The groups strive to raise awareness of anxiety whilst complementing existing Mental Health Services. The groups promote early intervention and encourage attendees to continue seeking help. The Anxiety Support Groups are delivered in-person and online.

The Information service is delivered via the WayAhead Directory website, as well as 3 phone lines: the mental health information line, the anxiety information line and the carer connection line in partnership with MHCN. The carer connection line is a new addition to our services this year.

We offer support for consumers, carers, friends, and family to find mental health resources and services in their area. We also operate the Official Visitor answer service for NSW Health taking calls from consumers in hospital or under a community treatment order and their carers and families.

**1,125** Information Service calls taken  
**2,174** Official Visitor calls taken  
**923** Referrals made

**118,246** Directory visitors  
**369,299** Directory page views

## Productivity Commission Inquiry Report into mental health

WayAhead Workplaces cheat sheet

### What is the relevance of this report to workplaces?

The report calls out the role workplaces play in supporting people's mental wellbeing. Section seven of the report is about the need to equip workplaces to be mentally healthy, and there are seven recommended actions.

### WayAhead's response to the report

From a Workplace's perspective, we are incredibly supportive of the call out of the role that workplaces have in supporting mental health, and think that this report will provide additional evidence for workplace mental health professionals to demonstrate the value that preventative mental health programs have. You can find our full response at: [wayahead.org.au/productivity-commission-into-mental-health-2020/](http://wayahead.org.au/productivity-commission-into-mental-health-2020/)

### Summary of report

People with mental ill health spend an average of **10-12 days** off work... psychological distress... **\$10 billion** per year.

People with mental ill health spend an average of **14-18 days** off work... psychological distress.

The Productivity Commission report has explicitly called out the need to equip workplaces to be mentally healthy. Being employed and mentally healthy workplaces are important to maintain the good mental health of those who work there.

Mental ill health can lead to **presenteeism**... ability to function at work.

There is a growing focus on the **role businesses can play** in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their workforce... investing in strategies to create healthy workplaces.

Businesses want to know **what a mentally healthy workplace is**... evidence-based measures they should take.

Psychological hazards in the workplace receive less attention than physical hazards, as they are often **harder to define** and investigate. However, such hazards are increasingly identified as contributors to psychological management approach should be applied.

WayAhead Workplaces cheat sheet

With in-person events being completely cancelled over the past year, WayAhead Workplaces has remained ahead of the curve by creating content that is relevant, useful and accessible for both members and non-members.

For example, in November 2020 the Productivity Commission released their report into mental health and had a specific recommendation to equip workplaces to be mentally healthy. In response to this, WayAhead Workplaces created a Cheat Sheet for members, which summarised this recommendation in an easy-to-read format using infographics, highlighting important information.

Anyone can access the WayAhead Directory online, and users can contact information lines through an interpreter service. Our Mental Health Matters Awards presentation was Auslan interpreted.



MENTAL  
HEALTH  
MONTH  
OCTOBER

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2020

# Tune in

**MENTALHEALTHMONTH.ORG.AU**

Mental Health Month is run by WayAhead - Mental Health Association NSW and supported by NSW Health

WayAhead  
Mental Health Association NSW





## *We recognise the importance of good mental health and wellbeing in our communities*

The Mental Health Month small grants program saw 211 applications, and 47 successful grants across NSW, enabling communities to host events specific to their needs. The Mental Health Matters Awards saw 46 nominations, with 15 finalists. The online events helped celebrate the incredible work being done.

2021 saw the continuance of the WayAhead Workplaces In Conversation series, where experts in the workplace health and wellbeing sector are interviewed so we can shine a light on specific topics. In 2021 we highlighted Workplace Loneliness with Dr Michelle Lim; Rural and remote mental health with Professor David Perkins and Psychosocial Risk in the Workplace from the perspective of lived experience.

Our public anxiety forum in Bega connected us with the community and other organisations in the region, and included local speakers with lived experience, as well as a guest speaker from NSW Health to speak about the mental health impacts of bushfires, which had recently occurred in the region.





## *We work collaboratively to improve the lives of those with lived experience*

At present there are 60 Financial members and 64 Affiliate members. In the process of updating the membership recording system moving from WooCommerce to a new system.

For our public anxiety forum in Bega we connected with Pepper Money, One Door Carers Services, Flourish Australia, Grand Pacific Health, headspace, RUOK, Wellways, Catholic Care, Katungul Aboriginal Corporation and Regional Health Community Services, SNSWLHD - Mental Health Service & Bushfire support

Pepper Money's sponsorship donation of \$5,000 enabled WayAhead to travel to the Bega Valley in March 2021 and run an anxiety forum called "Let's Talk About Anxiety in the Bega Valley". This forum helped people in rural & remote NSW identify anxiety, connect to a mental health service and move forward in their life with a plan to manage the disorder. A rural & remote support group was set up and is currently running online.



Bega - local service providers

# Let's talk about anxiety



Grant recipient - Rutherford High School - Aboriginal cultural awareness project