



Act Belong Commit Mentally Healthy Schools

Phase IV Report (2022 -2023)

ABOUT US

The Mentally Healthy Schools Program aims to embed the Act Belong Commit™ principles in schools to boost the mental health and wellbeing of students, staff and parents.

Taking a whole-of-school approach, Mentally Healthy Schools (MHS) focus on the classroom, school environment and broader school community. Importantly, MHS encourage students to adopt mentally healthy behaviours early in life to help build resilience and reduce the stigma around mental illness.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Over the past year, the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation funding has enabled us to:

- Reach over **90,000** students
- Support schools to **deliver over 700 Act Belong Commit™ events and activities**
- **Increase partner schools by 10%**
- Develop **23 new school Act Belong Commit™ resources**
- Co-deliver a **Mentally Healthy Schools Professional Development Day** to teachers and staff from schools across five regional areas of Western Australia
- Deliver **bespoke webinars for school communities**
- Bring **cutting edge researchers to WA schools**



“Working in a unique educational environment with a cohort of students from across WA, can be challenging. It can impact staff and students' mental health and wellbeing in unforeseen ways. Being a part of this program and feeling a sense of belonging matters and makes a difference. Whether it is staff being encouraged by the leadership team to attend an activity, practice some self-care or take a walk at lunch, or for students, recognising the Act Belong Commit logo when back in the community and feeling connected to something greater than themselves, the campaign has power.

Banksia Hill Detention Centre Mentally Healthy School



Busselton Senior High School students promote “Standing Strong Together” – the Aboriginal focussed message.

OUR SCOPE & REACH

All students benefit when they engage in mentally healthy activities. Using tailored and flexible mental health promotion resources, we are engaging with some of the most vulnerable and hardest to reach students in Western Australia through:



REINTEGRATED SCHOOLS

with students who disengaged from mainstream schooling.



ISOLATED AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN REMOTE AREAS



EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRES

supporting students living with disabilities.



SCHOOLS IN LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC AREAS



YOUTH DETENTION CENTRES

The Act Belong Commit campaign delivers initiatives throughout the year to promote ways to Act Belong Commit. MHS participated in key events using tailored promotional and educational resources and the MHS Newsletter delivers information direct to schools' inboxes.

See the appendix for the full list of partner schools.

IMPACT

Partner schools implement the program in their own way, so the types of activities and the way they promote mental wellbeing is tailored to their school communities. Teachers from schools across WA attended a dedicated professional development day in 2022 to develop skills and knowledge required to deliver the activities. This work is continually reviewed to ensure relevance and reach.

In 2023, a paper entitled the “Impact on Students of the Act Belong Commit Mentally Healthy Schools Framework” found the program had *“clear implications not only for prevention of mental disorders, but for academic achievement, employment, and overall contribution to society.”* Page 2. Donovan, R. et. al., (2023). Impact on Students of the Act–Belong–Commit Mentally Healthy Schools Framework. Children 2023, 10, 548. You can read the full paper [here](#).

“The program is self-sustaining and complements areas of the Australian curriculum, giving schools the flexibility to adapt the Framework to their specific requirements and priorities, and hence reducing the demands on staff.”

“Health intervention’s such as the Mentally Healthy Schools Program that are led by the teacher have a significant positive impact on increased mental health literacy and reduced mental health stigma.”

MATERIALS FOR THE CLASSROOM

In 2023 we focused on supporting schools to integrate the Act Belong Commit culture across the whole school community. This involved exploring and reviewing evidence of effective mental health promotion strategies in schools.

Findings highlighted the need for age-appropriate activities and messaging to engage more teachers and therefore reach more students. Consequently, we developed more evidence-based factsheets alongside classroom resources.

33 new resources were developed, including:

- Initiative resources
- Factsheets
- Classroom activities (such as worksheets, puzzles, breathing exercises and collaborative colouring)
- School holiday resources
- Social media assets



Classroom activities for Lower High School.



Informative, evidence-based factsheets on mental wellbeing topics.



CREATING HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

In 2022, the Ursula Frayne Catholic College Student Team organised the *Dressdown to Stressdown Day*, allowing students to try a range of activities in a supportive environment to promote mental wellbeing, reduce stress and try something new. The event won Catholic Education Western Australia's QCE Aware for Best Secondary Student Led Initiative.

Our team met with the Ursula Frayne's Student Team to provide additional information on promoting the Act Belong Commit message and to clarify their role in mental health; that it isn't to provide mental illness information or advocacy, but rather provide opportunities to promote the message of doing things for your own mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health.

"The program is self-sustaining and complements areas of the Australian curriculum, giving schools the flexibility to adapt the Framework to their specific requirements and priorities, and hence reducing the demands on staff."

School Psychologist, Ursula Frayne Catholic College

REACHING OUT TO THE PILBARA REGION

Beck Johnson is the Act Belong Commit Social and Emotional Wellbeing Project Officer based in the Pilbara. In June 2022 Act Belong Commit team members connected with Pilbara schools and organisations to share ideas and learn more about local community needs.

We discovered schools in the region were using innovative learning activities to promote mental wellbeing. Following the MHS sessions, Newman Senior High School and Baler Primary School joined the program.



***Mentally Healthy Schools
Information session – Karratha***



***The Act Belong Commit Team in the
Pilbara – Meg Clarey, Campaign
Manager, Phoebe Joyce, Schools
Coordinator, Beck Johnson,
Emotional Wellbeing Project Officer
and Andrew Walton, Partnership
Program Coordinator.***

ACTIVE AUGUST 2022

Active August aims to highlight various ways staff, students and the wider school community can act to improve their mental wellbeing. The idea is to engage the whole school community to initiate mentally healthy activities during August with the intention of encouraging ongoing participation.

Digital resources were created for schools to adapt to their local context including a social media kit with promotional tiles, a calendar with 31 days of ideas about ways children and families can be active, and a downloadable Active August poster.

About half of MHS used the Active August resources to promote mental wellbeing. See the social media post from Karratha Primary School promoting Active August to their community.

Karratha Primary School's Active August Facebook post



MEET THE TEAM



REEARNA MORGAN

*Mentally Healthy Schools Program
Coordinator*

Reearna Morgan is the new Program Coordinator for the Mentally Healthy Schools Program. Reearna has extensive experience in delivering health promotion programs within school settings. She led and implemented Foodbank WA's highly successful Food Sensations for Schools and School Breakfast programs. Reearna joined the Act Belong Commit team after working as a Program Officer at Healthway, the Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation. There she focussed on arts and community events and worked with community organisations to promote relevant health messages to their target audience. She worked on school-based programs including WA Opera, WA Music, Downsyde, WA Ballet and Barking Gecko Theatre Company to develop and implement strategies promoting the Act Belong Commit message within the community and school setting.

Reearna holds a Bachelor of Health Science Majoring in Nutrition and Minor in Health promotion and is currently studying a Master of Teaching (Primary) at Edith Cowan University and is also a Committee member on the WA Health Promoting Schools Association.



HANNAH SAMSA

*Act Belong Commit
Campaign Manager*

Hannah Samsa is the new Campaign Manager for the Mentally Healthy WA Act Belong Commit Program. Hannah specialises in developing, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive state-wide behaviour change programs in the fields of mental health, alcohol, and illicit drugs. In Western Australia she was the strategic public education lead for State Government led programs aiming to reduce alcohol and drug related harm. Campaigns developed by Hannah have contributed to more parents choosing not to provide alcohol to their teenager, more women choosing not to drink alcohol while pregnant or planning a pregnancy, less adults drinking alcohol at harmful levels and generating increased community support for policy and legislation changes that contribute to reduced rates of harmful alcohol consumption. Hannah will provide strategic support to the Mentally Healthy Schools Program.

Hannah holds a Bachelor of Communications (Advertising, Marketing), and Graduate Diplomas in Health Promotion and Psychology. She is currently studying a Graduate Diploma (Advanced) in Psychology at the University of Adelaide.



SHARYN BURNS

*Mentally Healthy WA
Co-Director*

Professor Sharyn has recently joined the Mentally Healthy WA Team as Co-Director, alongside Associate Professor Christina Pollard.

Sharyn is Professor of Health Promotion in the Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact in the School of Public Health at Curtin University, Western Australia. She is Chair, Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee. Sharyn is a health promotion practitioner and researcher with a specific interest in translational intervention-based research. Her research includes a specific focus on children, adolescents, young adults and parents and has been conducted in a range of settings with key focuses on sexual health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs and obesity prevention. Professor Burns has a strong background in school-based health promotion research and has expertise in conducting evaluations, in mixed methods research and in implementing innovative health promotion interventions.

She is the Principal Investigator on the Relationships and Sexuality Education Project that has been running since 2014. Sharyn also leads a range of other sexual and mental health-related research projects.

Appendix

MENTALLY HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Alkimos Primary School
All Saints' College
Armadale Senior High School
Ashdale Secondary College
Assumption Catholic Primary School
Atwell College*
Balcatta Senior High School
Baler Primary School*
Banskia Hill Detention Centre
(Education Services)
Bannister Creek Primary School
Belmont City College
Bluff Point Primary School
Bob Hawke College*
Butler College
Byford Secondary College
Busselton Senior High School
Canning Vale College
Carey Baptist College
Carine Senior High School
Carramar Primary School
Castletown Primary School
Cervantes Primary School
Churchlands Senior High School
Clarkson Primary School
Cloverdale Education Support Centre
Coastal Lakes College
College Row School
Comet Bay College
Como Secondary College
Coodanup College
Cooina Primary School
Coorow Primary School
Cranbrook Primary School
Cyril Jackson Senior Campus
Dandaragan Primary School
Dowerin District High School
Duncraig Senior High School
East Butler Primary School
East Fremantle Primary School
East Narrogin Primary School
Ellenbrook Secondary College
Eneabba Primary School
Esperance Education Support Centre
Esperance Primary School
Frankland River Primary School
Frederick Irwin Anglican School
Secondary - Meadowbank, Halls Head
Fremantle College
Geraldton Grammar School
Gilmore College
Girrawheen Senior High School

Gooseberry Hill Primary School
Gosnells Primary School
Governor Stirling Senior High School
Grandis Primary School
Gwynne Park Education Support Centre
Hammond Park Secondary College
Hampton Senior High School
Harvey Senior High School*
High Wycombe Primary School
Illawarra Primary School*
Joondalup Primary School
Kalamunda Secondary Education
Support Centre
Kalamunda Senior High School
Karratha Senior High School
Karratha Primary School
Kellerberrin District High School
Kelmscott Senior High School
Kiara College
Kinross Primary School
Koorda Primary School
Lakeland Senior High School
Lake Monger Primary School
La Salle College
Leeming Senior High School
Lesmurdie Senior High School
Lynwood Senior High School
Mandurah Baptist College
Mater Dei College*
Mazenod College
Melville Senior High School
Mindarie Senior College
Morawa District High School
Morley Senior High School
Mosman Park Primary School
Mosman Park School for Deaf Children
Mount Lawley Senior High School
Mullaloo Heights Primary School
Narembeen District High School
Newman Senior High School*
Newton Moore Education Support
Centre*
Noranda Primary School
North Lake Senior Campus
Ocean Reef Senior High School
Orelia Primary School
Paraburdoo Primary School
Peter Carnley Anglican Community
School
Pingrup Primary School*
Rockingham Senior High School

Rosalie Primary School
Rossmoyne Senior High School
Safety Bay Senior High School*
Salmon Gums Primary School
Sawyers Valley Primary School
School of Isolated and Distance
Education
Secret Harbour Primary School
Serpentine Primary School
Sevenoaks Senior College
Shenton College
Shenton College Deaf Education
Centre
Smyl Community College –
Beal Campus
Smyl Community College –
Crompton Campus
Smyl Community College –
Cockburn Campus
Smyl Community College –
Fremantle Campus
Smyl Community College –
Mandurah Campus
Smyl Community College –
Medina Campus
Smyl Community College –
Tesla Campus
South Coast Baptist College
South Lake Primary School
South Perth Primary School
Southern River College
Southern Cross District High School
Spencer Park Education Support Centre*
Spring Hill Primary School
St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
St Joseph's School Boulder
Thornlie Senior High School
Two Rocks Primary School
Ursula Frayne Catholic College
(Primary campus)
Ursula Frayne Catholic College
(Secondary campus)
Waikiki Primary School
Warnbro Community High School
West Balcatta Primary School
Wickham Primary School
Willetton Senior High School
Wyalkatchem District High School
Yuna Primary School*

**Joined within the last 12 months*