Mental health conditions are common, often start early in life and can have significant implications for success in education, future careers and personal relationships.

Affected children and teenagers can have difficulties at school, drop out early, and can struggle to establish meaningful relationships. Tertiary education and training, and paid employment can sometimes seem unattainable.

One in four young people experiences a mental health condition and suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians aged 15 to 24, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
However, identifying issues early and getting a young person into the right support and treatment can change lives.

A survey commissioned by beyondblue in February 2015 revealed that stigma is the main reason nearly 80 per cent of young people don’t get help for anxiety and depression when they need it most.

The survey of 600 teenagers aged 13 to 17 also revealed that two out of five respondents thought young people might not seek support if they were experiencing a mental health condition because they believed nothing could help.

In light of these statistics, beyondblue connects with parents and young people aged 12 to 25 through a variety of channels, including the Youthbeyondblue website and other online resources, and in primary and secondary schools through the KidsMatter, MindMatters and SenseAbility initiatives.

In 2014/15, beyondblue launched a number of initiatives to encourage young people to overcome their fear of what others might think, which led to the groundbreaking Brains Can Have a Mind of Their Own campaign.

Research has shown that half all mental health conditions emerge by the age of 14, and three-quarters by age 24.
In May 2015, beyondblue launched a series of quirky, animated videos featuring an adolescent brain that harasses, annoys, distracts and provokes its owner.

The campaign, directed at 13 to 18 year olds, featured a pesky brain character as an external representation of the symptoms of depression and anxiety.

The videos used humour to empower young people to overcome their fear of stigma by explaining: “It’s not me, it’s my brain being weird.”

The Brain won’t go to bed when it should, stops its owner doing what needs to be done, constantly seeks attention, sulks and makes the wrong decisions.
It’s like your head has become the bedroom you share with a younger sibling.

Responses exceeded expectations with a 230 per cent increase in web traffic to youthbeyondblue.com in June 2015, more than double the web traffic recorded in the same month in 2014.

One in four visitors to the site — approximately 23,500 — completed the Brain Quiz in June 2015.

Audience feedback showed young people openly related to The Brain’s behaviour and used the videos to explain what they’re going through to friends and family.

The animations encourage teenagers experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety to visit youthbeyondblue.com and take a Brain Quiz to check out how they are feeling and consider whether they should seek help.

beyondblue created six videos; the first five to explore symptoms of depression and anxiety, and the sixth to act as a powerful finale for tackling stigma.

As part of this campaign, beyondblue became the first not-for-profit organisation in Australia to advertise with the popular social media app Snapchat. The campaign was published on the app over a two-week period.

Tumblr beyondbluebrain.tumblr.com

Facebook facebook.com/beyondbluebrain

Twitter @beyondbluebrain

Instagram @beyondbluebrain
The Brains Can Have a Mind of Their Own campaign message is all too familiar to me. I know that sometimes, your brain can prevent you from doing things you want to and make your life difficult.

I was in the middle years of high school when I noticed my brain was behaving unusually. Before then, I’d been a high-flyer and a perfectionist at school. I excelled academically, played netball and tennis, and was well-liked by my school mates.

But in Year 10, I began experiencing frequent migraines, and as these became increasingly worse, I also became more and more anxious. I avoided going to school or studying because it made me feel tense and panicky.

By the middle of Year 10, I wasn’t physically or mentally well enough to do exams. I wanted to be alone and slept a lot more to avoid dealing with reality.

Depression and anxiety can be tricky subjects to tackle, but The Brain does so in a cute and even funny way that makes depression and anxiety seem just that bit more manageable.
It felt like my life was crashing down around me and in an attempt to reclaim some control, I set myself tasks to eat healthier, exercise more and lose weight. Unfortunately, this became an obsession.

My GP was concerned about my rapidly declining weight and referred me to a psychiatrist, who treated me for depression and anxiety, and also diagnosed me with Anorexia Nervosa.

I decided to go to hospital for a few weeks to get well. Although I had a couple of very low points after I left hospital, I gradually settled in to treatments that worked for me and developed sound coping strategies. I returned to school a new person with a new outlook.

Throughout this time, I had told my friends very little about what I was going through because I was afraid of what they would think, but when I told them, I was amazed at the support they offered.

What I like about The Brain campaign is that it tells teenagers that experiencing depression or anxiety doesn’t mean you’re weak or weird, it simply means your brain is giving you a hard time. If I’d understood this, I might’ve shared what I was going through with my friends earlier.
Nearly 500,000 people visited youthbeyondblue.com in 2014/15, with the Brains Can Have a Mind of Their Own campaign attracting record numbers of 12 to 25 year olds.

Traffic peaked on 30 June 2015, with 8,256 visits in a single day.

The Brains Can Have a Mind of Their Own campaign encourages young people to go to youthbeyondblue.com and complete a Brain Quiz to check how they have been feeling and whether they should seek help.

New resources added to the website include tips on how young people can talk to adults about their mental health.

Visit youthbeyondblue.com
Family Guide to Youth Suicide Prevention

Approximately 350 young Australians die by suicide annually, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

In response to this tragic toll, beyondblue developed a Family Guide to Youth Suicide Prevention, funded by Symantec Australia, makers of Norton security software.

It includes information to help parents recognise warning signs and risk factors indicating that a young person might need professional support.

During 2014/15, the Family Guide to Youth Suicide Prevention webpage was viewed more than 10,000 times on the beyondblue website.

The campaign video was viewed more than 84,000 times on Facebook.
The BRAVE Program

The BRAVE Program is a free, online, evidence-based program that helps prevent and treat anxiety in young people aged between eight and 17 years.

The program is made up of 10 interactive sessions which use cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) techniques to help teach young people and their parents how to manage anxiety.

The program has been trialled and evaluated over the last 13 years by a team of researchers from Griffith University, the University of Southern Queensland and the University of Queensland.

BeyondBlue provided more than $500,000 between 2012–2016 to fund the conversion of The BRAVE Program from a one-on-one therapist-led program to a self-directed online therapy program.

To date, nearly 8,000 children and young people have accessed the The BRAVE Program online.
beyondblue continued its partnership with the youth group Red Frogs Australia.

Red Frogs Australia promoted beyondblue’s messages in 369 schools in 2014/15. Its Safe Schools Education Program reached out to 50,000 students with advice on how to stay safe while having fun at Schoolies celebrations.

Red Frogs Australia also distributed approximately 262,000 resources to young people, co-branded with beyondblue.
In 2014/15, beyondblue supported 15 research projects focused on young people’s mental health, with funding totalling $2.8 million.

beyondblue.org.au/research
Four of the research projects were funded with nearly $1.3 million from The Movember Foundation. A total of 10 projects were completed in 2014/15, while five projects are still in progress.
KidsMatter

Research reveals that mental health issues are common among primary school children and can lead to reduced learning capacity.

KidsMatter is a national, early intervention mental health initiative for primary schools, pre-schools and childcare services that helps build resilience and improved social and emotional skills in young children.

In 2014/15, 482 new schools signed up to KidsMatter Primary, bringing the total number of participating schools to 2,666, with a target of 3,000 schools by July 2016.

A total of 274 pre-school and childcare providers was signed to KidsMatter Early Childhood by 2014/15, with a maximum target of 480 by July 2016.

Other highlights included the development of resources for an early intervention program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Visit kidsmatter.edu.au
Number of KidsMatter Primary schools by year to July 2015, provided by Principals Australia Institute (PAI)

- 2007-08: 76
- 2008-09: 98
- 2009-10: 274
- 2010-11: 358
- 2011-12: 700
- 2012-13: 1221
- 2013-14: 2056
- 2014-15: 2555
- 2015-16: 2703

Target of 300 by mid-2016
In May 2015, beyondblue relaunched the MindMatters initiative which is designed to help secondary school communities reshape their mental health culture.

MindMatters was relaunched following a beyondblue survey that found one in five teachers were not confident handling students’ mental health issues and half reported difficulty accessing training tools.

The new MindMatters initiative helps staff, students, parents and service providers develop good mental health cultures by changing attitudes, beliefs and behaviours across their school community.
Teachers can access online training, face-to-face events, webinars and project officer support from Principals Australia Institute.

MindMatters is funded with $6 million from the Commonwealth Department of Health and aligns with the National Mental Health Commission’s Review of Mental Health Programs and Services, which encourages prevention and early intervention programs.

The initiative was relaunched by beyondblue Chairman, The Hon. Jeff Kennett AC, and beyondblue Board Director, The Hon. Julia Gillard, at her old high school, Unley High School, in Adelaide on 4 May 2015.

Information packs were delivered to 3,500 secondary schools nationally and digital advertising ran across paid, search and social media channels.

The relaunch was covered by all major metropolitan newspapers, with 100 news articles appearing in print and online editions.

beyondblue representatives were heard across FM and AM radio stations, and commercial and public TV news coverage reached mass national audiences.

Media monitoring service, iSentia, estimated the coverage reached more than 3.5 million Australians, equivalent to $470,000 in paid advertising.

Visit mindmatters.edu.au
MindMatters participating schools by sector

- Government: 63%
- Independent: 20%
- Catholic: 17%

MindMatters participating schools by state and territory, July 2015

- NSW: 193
- ACT: 17
- NT: 28
- QLD: 95
- SA: 44
- TA: 17
- VIC: 54
- WA: 25
By the end of June 2015, 494 schools had signed to the program, with a target of 1,500 schools by July 2016.
Our little school in Nhulunbuy, 650km east of Darwin at the tip of the Northern Territory, boasts just under 200 students and their wellbeing is very important to staff.

We have been involved with the MindMatters initiative for a few years, but were excited by the release of the new MindMatters in 2015. We saw this as an opportunity to consolidate and reinvigorate the work we were doing to improve and protect the mental health of our students.

MindMatters is like a support scaffold that secondary schools can use to create their own unique mental health strategy, based on the most relevant issues. We use the online resources that are provided and we get personal support from a Project Officer.
I led the Wellbeing Team at our school, and we’ve been particularly interested in the MindMatters information on ‘relationships’, ‘belonging’ and ‘inclusion’.

This followed a school survey which revealed that non-Indigenous staff and students wanted to learn about the culture of the local Yolngu people because they were keen to make Indigenous students feel more included.

To help achieve this, we organised opportunities for students to learn the local Indigenous language, Yolngu Matha, through a ‘word of the week’ program. We also have a ‘word of the day’ for staff. It has been incredible watching staff and students getting excited about this and to hear the Yolngu Matha words becoming part of our school vernacular.

We hope initiatives like this will send the message that our school is a place where everyone belongs and is valued.

This will become even more significant for us when the school becomes a boarding school in the coming years, attracting more Indigenous students from the very remote communities across Arnhem Land.

The presentation of the new MindMatters website makes information readily accessible and we consider it a focal point to help create a positive school community, foster resilience in our students, connect with parents and families, and support students who may be having a tough time.

Over the past few years, MindMatters has helped us to understand that the wellbeing of the students is the staff’s responsibility, and it’s just as important as the content they teach.
Focusing on the well-known trigger issues of stress, body image and bullying, SenseAbility is a program for adults working with young people aged 12 to 18 years.

Nationally, 66 per cent of secondary schools have a SenseAbility kit, comprising modules to strengthen life skills and psychological resilience in young people. More than 2,100 teachers have accessed the free SenseAbility e-learning program since it was launched in November 2010.

Promotional activities this year included the distribution of 1,000 USB drives containing SenseAbility kits and other related resources for teachers.

Components of the SenseAbility kit have been adapted for young people and are now available on the youthbeyondblue.com website.

Visit beyondblue.org.au /senseability
Tertiary students can access this free, self-guided online program of skills and strategies for mental wellbeing and academic success.

_beyondblue_ promotes thedesk through social media during university orientation weeks and exam periods, with each Facebook post resulting in more than 2,000 new visitors to the website.

Visit thedesk.com.au

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Almost 100,000 people worldwide have visited thedesk website since its launch in February 2012, with 138,000 sessions and almost 1 million page views.
beyondblue Support Service
1300 22 4636 — 24/7
Web chat at beyondblue.org.au — 3pm to 12am AEST

Find help online
beyondblue.org.au/get-support

Get involved
beyondblue.org.au/get-involved