



# Young Minds Matter but parents falter

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**M**ENTAL health support organisations are calling for more to be done for children and young people in light of this week's release of the second Australian government funded Young Minds Matter report.

Published by the University of Western Australia, the largest national survey of its kind to date examines the mental health and wellbeing of Australian children and adolescents aged four to 17 from 6,310 households across the nation.

"We've known since before this report that the number of people who actually access help is only a relatively small percentage. There's still a lot of work to be done by the community most generally about ensuring that when people are struggling then as many people as possible do reach out and obviously have services that they can go and attend," said Peter Rohr, operations manager, headspace, Bathurst who is also responsible for Dubbo, Orange and Cowra.

The report concluded that 14 per cent, or 560,000 kids, experienced a mental health disorder in the 12 months previous to their six interviews, which were conducted between 2013 and 2014.

"These and other findings, including that one fifth of adolescents have high levels of psy-

chological distress and one in 13 has seriously considered suicide in the past year, are deeply concerning and highlights what beyondblue sees every day," said Brett McDermott, beyondblue board director.

ADHD was the most common mental disorder in children and adolescents (7.4 per cent) followed by anxiety disorders (6.9 per cent), major depressive disorder (2.8 per cent) and conduct disorder (2.1 per cent).

This equates to 278,000 suffering from anxiety and 112,000 from depression in varying degrees.

"From when headspace Bathurst opened its doors in 2008, each year we've seen a growth in the number of young people who are using our service. The fact that more young people are coming through our doors is both a positive and a negative," he said.

"It's a positive that people are seeking out help when they need it. It's a negative to see there is so much need in youth mental health and getting support.

Headspace CEO Chris Tanti, said: "The mental health system needs to be further simplified to make it as easy and seamless as possible for young people and their parents to get the type of help they need. One of the ways of doing this is making sure services are well

advertised, accessible and delivered face-to-face, online and in schools."

"The importance of mental health has very much been put on the radar," said Rohr.

"There's still a degree of hes-

itation by both young people and their parents, around seeking help when mental health may be an issue. That's certainly something headspace ensuring, as are other organisations as well, that mental health shouldn't be seen as something that is kept in the shadows or something to be ashamed of.

"That shame and battling on by yourself and those sorts of things can be so damaging. The more our community do have it as a conversation the more chance we have of getting to things early as well," he said.

"The report's findings confirm the importance of investing in prevention and early intervention programs. Intervention must happen early as this leads to few complications and better outcomes over the course of a child's life," beyond

blue CEO Georgie Harman.

The Young Minds Matter report also revealed parents are often unaware their child is experiencing any problem.

"Adolescence is a time of change but we would want to look out for change of habits, attitudes, friendships, school attendance, eating. It's about knowing your children well as individuals," said Anne Heath, area manager, central west,



Interrelate.

“We have more parents raising concerns about their children and very high levels of inquiry for our Family Mental Health Support Service in Bourke, Cobar and Coonamble,” she said.

“Causes of mental health issues in regional NSW include isolation, distance and less variety of opportunity for self

expression. Also high rates of domestic violence in regional communities mean children may be living in very difficult circumstances,” Heath said.

“One of the impetus behind headspace is to ensure we have support for young people and families when issues are not at crisis point. Sometimes those conversations are easier to have and decisions to make when things are not so bad,” said Rohr.

“It’s important in the community to have confidence to have those conversations. In the report that’s been released and in what we’ve seen from comments from headspace CEO Chris Tanti, it’s important that family and friends around young people feel confident and comfortable to have discussions with their child or the young person. Some families certainly are and others sometimes might be a little bit afraid of what they might hear.

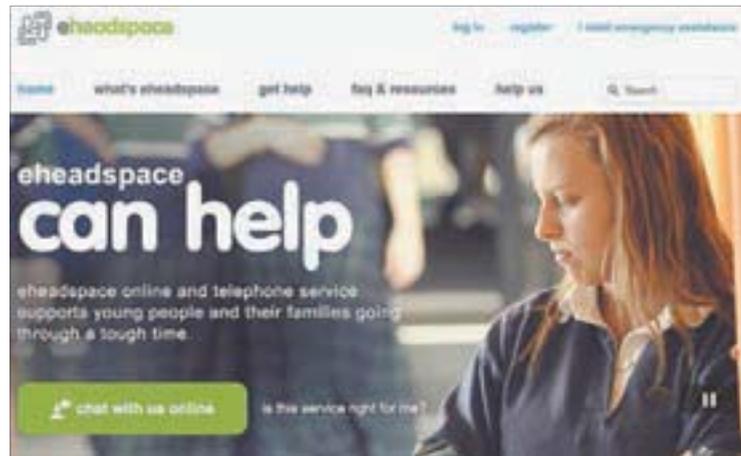
“There’s lots of information around now on how to have those conversations through a centre or e-headspace or other support services.

“When you’re talking the central west, that’s a big geographical area so e-headspace is something any parent or young person can access as long as they’ve got Internet or phone.

Online information is also available for parents and youth

at [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com), [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) and [www.interrelate.org.au](http://www.interrelate.org.au).

The first similar survey occurred between 1998 and 2000.



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