

September 2021

Visible snapshot report



australian youth advocates for mental health (AYAMH) and Visible: 2020 findings

AYAMH brings leaders in the Youth Mental Health Sector together to deliver public, youth-led activities aimed at improving mental health literacy among young Australians and their communities.

With guidance from an Advisory Group of leading national organisations working in youth mental health, AYAMH established a group of 16 youth mental health advocates to design and deliver a project under the broad goals of promoting mental health literacy, improving helpseeking, supporting young people's capacity for selfcare, and reducing the stigma associated with mental health difficulties.

AYAMH's first youth-led project, Visible, was created with the aim to establish a platform for young people to come together and share creative expressions of their lived experience with the public.

This was achieved by pairing youth advocates who had a lived experience of mental health challenges with creative artists. Youth advocates and creative artists collaborated to create expressions that reflected the advocates' lived experiences and the messages they wanted to share about mental health. These expressions were subsequently showcased on Visible campaign website, launched online in November 2020: visible.org.au

This snapshot report provides an overview of the findings from the evaluation of AYAMH and Visible activities in 2020, as well as results from the Visible campaign website.

Visible Purpose Statement

'We want to share our stories to help other young people feel safe, supported and accepted for their mental health. We want to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, encourage others to open up about their own experiences, and inspire a culture of acceptance and understanding in our communities.'
(2020 AYAMH Youth Advocates)

what we evaluated

Data was collected to explore the two different phases of the AYAMH initiative. Firstly, the co-design of the AYAMH process was explored through focus groups, interviews and written feedback from the youth advocates and the key headspace National staff. Visible was further examined through surveys with youth advocates and the creative allies, as well as data collected through the Visible website.

Visible partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 16 advocates• 15 creative allies
survey completion about Visible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 advocates• 7 creative allies• 172 website survey respondents
focus group discussion about AYAMH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 advocates• 3 headspace National staff

what we found

Youth advocates found AYAMH to be an empowering way to share their experiences

All participants reported their creative partnership together with the overall experience of AYAMH as very favourable. Youth advocates agreed that the engagement process was authentic, empowering, and supportive and they felt heard and understood while sharing their experiences.

They further reported they felt that they were able to advocate for positive change through sharing their experiences with audiences they would not usually have access to, and that they learnt something new about their own mental health experiences, as well as the challenges and experiences faced by other people.

- *'Each of the art expressions has its own message, details and story. It's such a rich project. Each expression is what it is - it's real. I think the youth advocates really helped move our culture forward'*
(headspace National staff)

Youth advocates and creative allies had a positive experience of their partnerships

Youth advocates reported having had a positive experience with their creative partnerships, in particular agreeing that their creative ally listened to them and they felt comfortable sharing their experience.

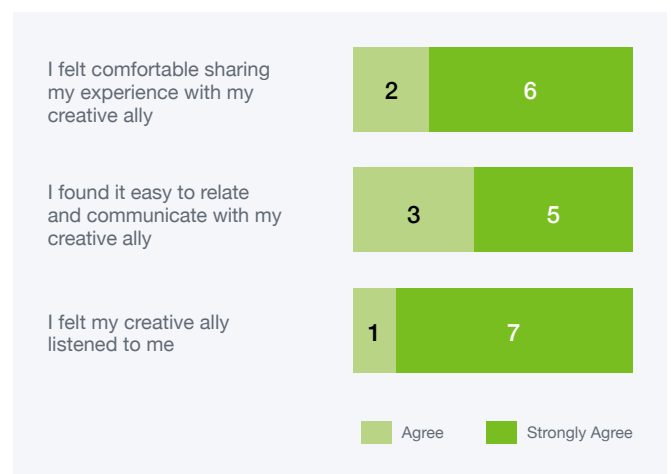


Figure 1.

Youth advocates' experience with the creative allies



Figure 2.

Creative allies' personal experience with Visible

Youth advocates reported very positive attitudes towards Visible. They indicated that they would be highly likely to encourage others to join Visible, and that their involvement in Visible met their expectations. They also felt that the Visible creative outputs would resonate with other young people.

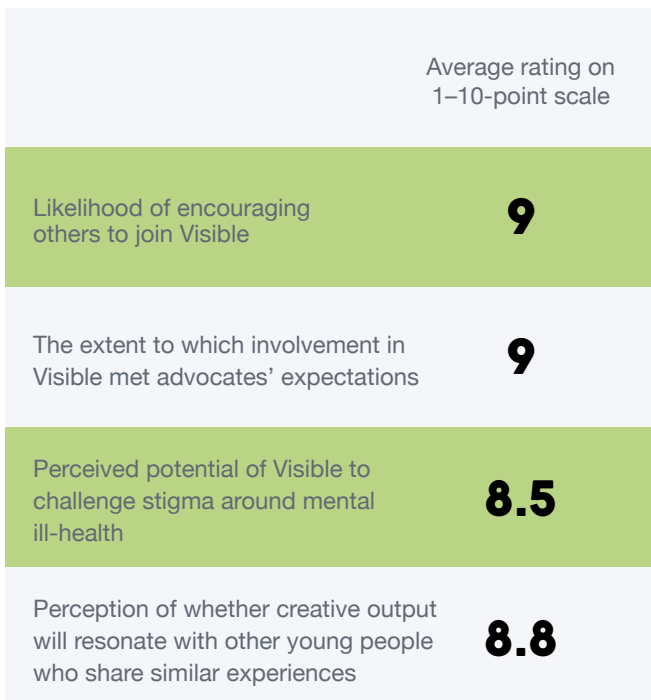


Figure 3.

Advocates' rating about aspects of Visible



Youth advocates felt AYAMH was successful in meeting its objective

Youth advocates agreed that the objective of the AYAMH program – to provide an authentic opportunity for young people to be engaged in meaningful youth participation and advocacy – was met to a large extent:

- *'I struggled in silence, and I didn't want other people to feel that struggling alone. Stigma was the thing that kept me quiet, embarrassed me, and there could be another young person who is in the same position and if they heard your story, at least they know there is one other than them - makes a bit of a difference.'* (Youth Advocate 2)
- *'A project that was entirely co-designed from scratch allowed an opportunity to really tailor whatever we were going to produce to specific audiences, especially in a space that is largely euro & US-centric. It also allowed for the voices of the people we would be reaching out to (young, diverse people) to be resoundingly heard rather than only briefly consulted within the scope of a predetermined project. Our voices were able to be heard right from the start and there was an element of autonomy and agency right from the get go.'* (Youth Advocate 7)

Advocates further reported that they appreciated the opportunity to connect with a variety of young people through AYAMH, and that the most valuable outcome was their participation in Visible.

- *'Connections were the most amazing and unexpected part of this project, and it was more organic. When we were together that was the most special part of this. Working together, having different perspectives and coming together was all part of this.'* (Youth Advocate 4)

People who accessed the Visible website felt connected to someone else's experience of mental health

- The Visible website and campaign officially launched on Monday 16 November 2020 with a multi-channel marketing approach across TV (SBS National News), radio, national newspaper (The Australian) and various digital and social media platforms resulting in a PR reach of over 9.8 million people and 12 million digital impressions.
- Over 20,000 unique users accessed the Visible website during the campaign period (November-March). 172 website users completed a short pop-up survey in which they were asked about their perspectives on mental health after engaging with the webpage:

76%

agreed they felt connected to someone else's experience of mental health

70%

agreed they felt more open to talk about mental health

67%

agreed they learnt something new about mental health

Suggestions for the future

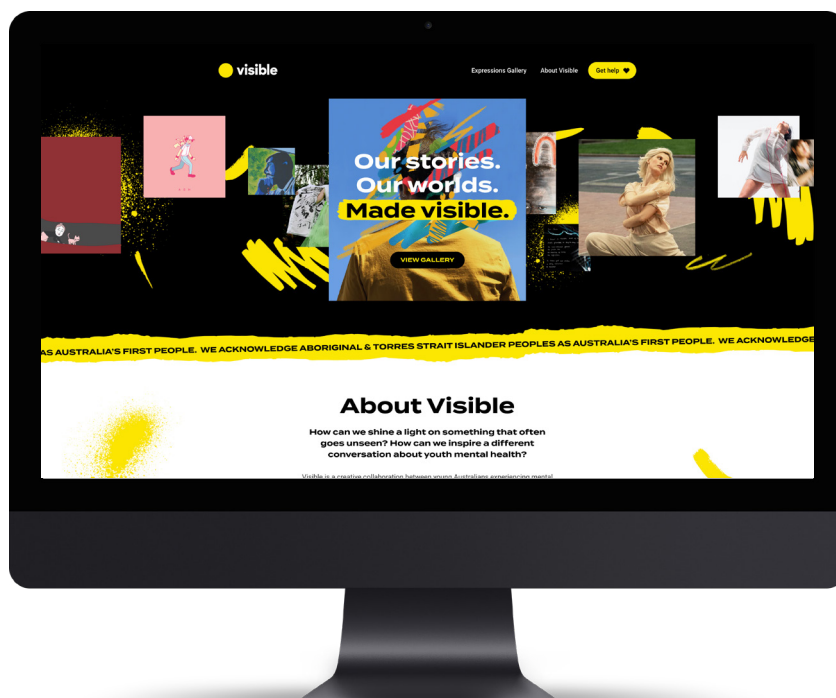
Youth Advocates suggested that the AYAMH program could include more structure and direction in the co-design process in the future, as well as opportunities for maintaining social connections and activities that would facilitate greater connectedness to the program.

- *'It would be good if there was a clear distinction and more deliberate direction in terms of why we're here and then set up a time aside to catch up and chat and do all the social stuff with a bit of separation... There were a number of dead ends that I think could have been avoided with better communication or if we had a little bit more direction about what we were doing. But at the end of the day, we ended up in a good spot.'* (Youth Advocate 6)
- *'It would have been good to get a bit more time where you got to know each other at AYAMH level but also on personal level as well.'* (Youth Advocate 1)

headspace National staff reported that resources and time constraints were also barriers, specifically as the project involved many considerations that required extensive staff time and preparation. They also suggested that the co-design process in the future might require more direction while still enabling autonomy for the youth advocates.

- *'It's a lot easier to give full autonomy to a small community program and slowly support them... but when it's a national program, they are all spread across Australia, during a global pandemic, it's a bit hard to balance that.'* (headspace National staff)

Despite some of the challenges and the difficult COVID-19 conditions the program was facilitated in, all staff were very pleased with the final product and expressed they would like Visible to further expand into the community, and into the future.



Visible creative expressions



Amy & Josh X Zaide

A shared journey towards trust, compassion and support.

For siblings Amy and Josh Boyd, navigating the complexities of their interwoven yet individual mental health experiences has had its challenges. Through this emotive portrait series, artist Zaide Harker uses colour, form and positioning to help the two express their unique perspectives, exploring the impact that mental ill-health can have not only on the individual, but on those closest to them.





Braiden X Nick

How do you express what it feels like to be a young man secretly living with an eating disorder?

For mental health advocate Braiden and graphic designer Nick, the answer was in a collection of bold, abstract designs. Each expression represents an important milestone in Braiden's journey, and together, they capture the real experiences of facing mental health challenges.





Hannah X Rebecca

How do you convey a journey towards empowerment and finding freedom in individuality?

As a young mum with a history of depression and eating disorders, mental health advocate Hannah Godfrey's experience as a teenager was often one of isolation. In this mixed media installation, Hannah and artist, Rebecca, express her journey towards empowered individuality and inspire others to find freedom in their own journey.





Emma X Eloise

How does it feel to live each day under the weight of inner turmoil?

For mental health advocate Emma, facing the stigma of mental ill-health in a small rural community resulted in an inability to express herself. Working with artist and friend Eloise, Emma's experience is shared here through a creative wearable expression that captures the entrapment of internalised turmoil, and the freedom that comes from stepping into the light.





Emmanuel X Anton

Finding the courage to create your own reality.

For advocate Emmanuel Asante, the journey from Africa to Australia was one shaped by struggle, self-determination, and the resolve to persevere. Despite being discouraged to pursue art, Emmanuel found comfort in painting and this drive to create not only helped him to recover from depression but also recreate his life as an artist.

Through colour, shade and symbolism fellow artist Anton narrates Emmanuel's journey on to canvas in his painting 'Fortitude'. A testament to the power of the arts to heal and the courage within us to triumph over adversity.



Methods used

- Survey of youth advocates
- Survey of creative allies
- Focus group, interviews and written feedback from AYAMH youth advocates
- Focus group with headspace national staff
- Website microanalytic data
- Website users pop-up survey
- Creative expressions and their narrative descriptions

Visible was developed with the support of the following partnered organisations:

- Batyr
- Beyond Blue
- Black Dog Institute
- Butterfly Foundation
- Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- Mind
- Orygen
- ReachOut
- SANE Australia



headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.



headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.



headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.