



Promoting help-seeking, mental

Young people can be particularly vulnerable to mental health problems, self-harm and suicide. Schools are therefore an important place for promoting mental health, resilience and help-seeking among kids and teenagers.

Youth Aware of Mental Health was chosen because it's a program that gets young people involved and talking about mental health, and it has a strong evidence base for reducing suicidal behaviour.

What is Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM)?

YAM uses role-plays and discussions to help young people come up with strategies to help each other and to reach out for support themselves. One of our YAM instructors describes it as a program that "gives students the freedom to talk about issues they would normally avoid."

Young people drive the program, exploring different topics and solutions for everyday dilemmas. YAM Instructors are there to support and guide the students as they think through the best ways to deal with common situations young people experience.



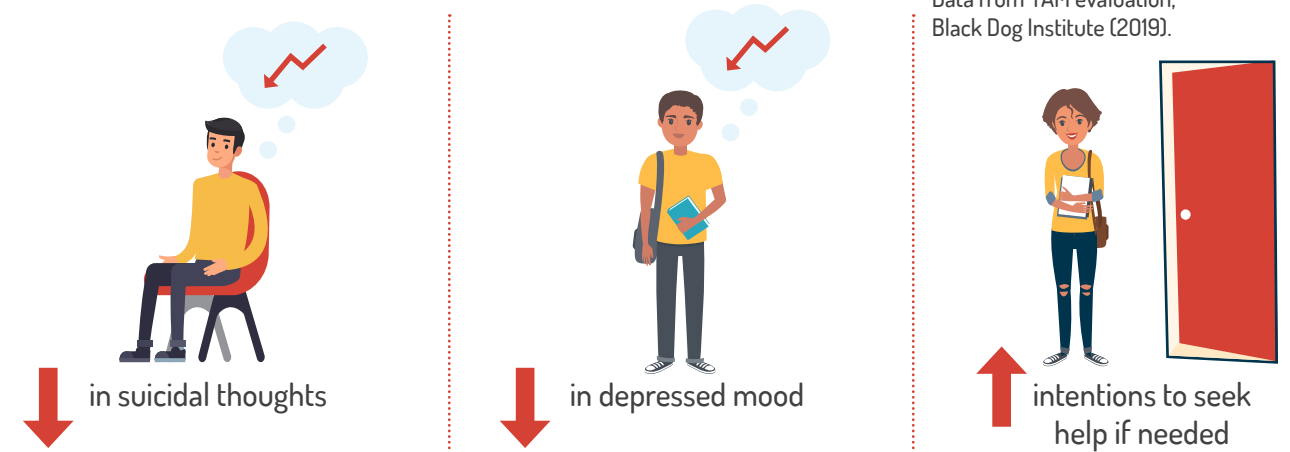
health and resilience in schools



What's been the impact of YAM?

Four schools within the Illawarra Shoalhaven have participated in the Black Dog Institute's evaluation of YAM. This compares student survey responses before YAM to their responses three months afterwards. Preliminary results from schools across NSW that are doing YAM are very promising.

Data from YAM evaluation, Black Dog Institute (2019).



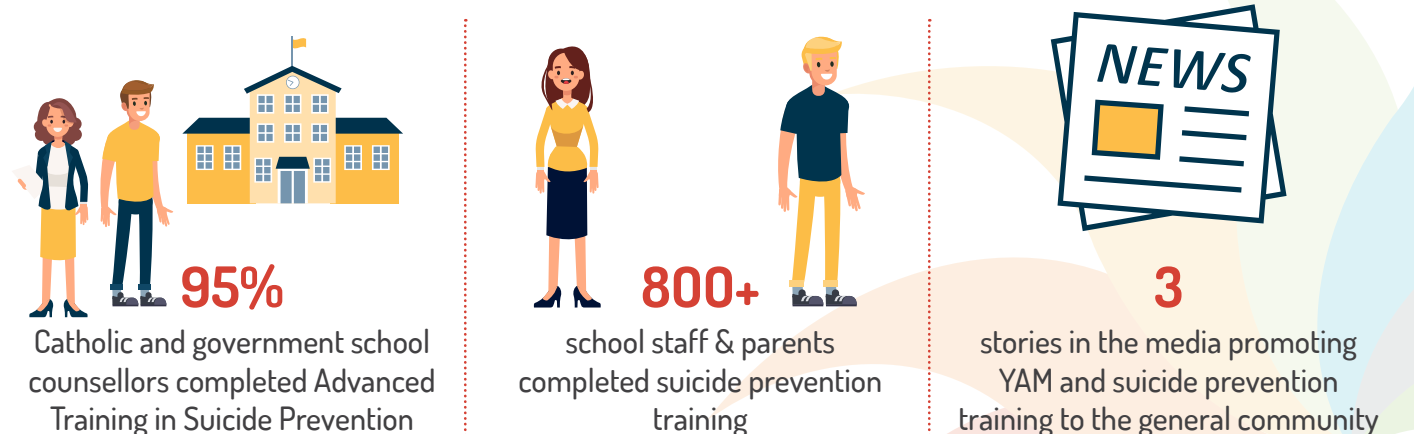
"I just wanted to say after last week's role play I went home and spoke to my mum about how I felt every time I was about to leave to go visit my dad. I told her the words she said made me feel sad and I would feel stressed and upset before going and seeing him. I asked mum to consider my feelings and even though her and dad don't get along he is my dad and I love him. We ended up speaking for an hour, mum cried, I cried and it was really good." - Student

"I saw a Year 9 student whose best friend Betty* cut their wrists and tried to kill themselves. The student said that because of YAM they knew what to do. They connected Betty* with the school counsellor, who brought in the family. Betty* was diagnosed with depression and is now receiving therapy." - School counsellor.

*not their real name

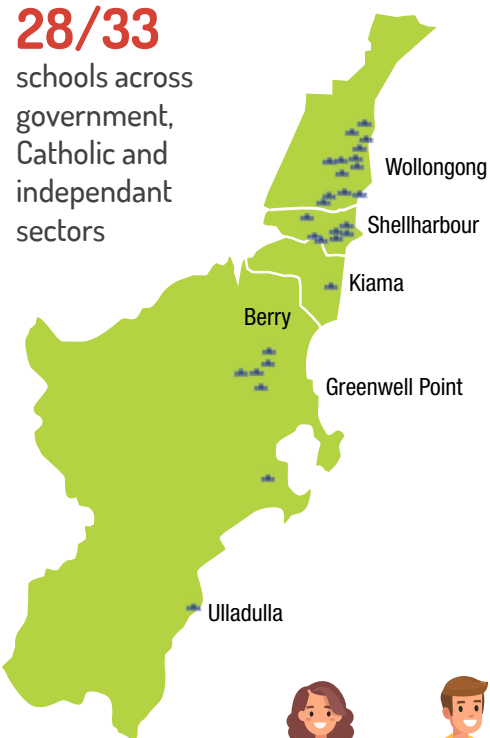
What was done to support the roll out of YAM?

YAM aims to teach young people how to look after themselves and their school mates. It also emphasises where young people can get help when they need it. So the Collaborative worked on ensuring their potential supports were well-prepared to provide that help.



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schools across government, Catholic and independent sectors



School systems come together to deliver YAM to over 5,800 students

The Illawarra Shoalhaven is one of the first regions, and the largest region, in Australia to rollout YAM.

For the past three years, representatives from across school systems have come together with local services in the Collaborative's Schools Working Group to coordinate the delivery of YAM across 28 government, Catholic and independent schools.

We needed an army of people to deliver YAM to so many students, at so many schools. Collaborating across school systems was the only way we could make it happen. We worked together in all aspects of YAM implementation, from preparing resources and recruiting schools, to coordinating YAM Instructors and Helpers.

YAM was delivered by

43 YAM Instructors and **170+ volunteer YAM Helpers**

from the community who committed significant time and energy to YAM.

