

# Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review



## About Raise Foundation

**Founded in 2008** Raise Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to mentor young people in need.

Delivering mentoring programs in 7 states/territories and more than 180 high schools across Australia, Raise recruits, trains and screens volunteers to become mentors.

These mentors are then matched with young people who would benefit from having a caring, trusted adult who shows up for them each week of the 20 or 10 week programs. Operating to a detailed youth safety framework, the Raise youth mentoring program provides a safe, proven and reliable solution for schools and families.

Our program can be delivered in person – on school premises within a school timetable – or can be delivered online to a young person in their school, home, or in their community.

Our early intervention model is focused on years 8 and 9 students who are most at risk of poor wellbeing and disengagement. Since 2008, we have supported more than 16,000 young people and trained more than 10,000 volunteer mentors.

Raise is a registered charity and receives funding from Corporate partners and Philanthropic donors as well as the Federal Department of Health.

## Service Provider Submission to the Review

**How has service coordination and integration changed in the past 3 years?**

Raise supports the growing emphasis and inclusion of [the voices of people with lived experience](#) of mental ill health in policy making and service provision design and delivery. We recognise the valuable and unique contribution people with lived experience make to the design of mental health and suicide prevention policies and practices.

We also see firsthand the challenges associated with access to [timely and accessible mental health services](#), particularly outside major cities. Raise is an early intervention and prevention program which is most effective when existing as part of a wider referral system. This requires appropriate and targeted funding, particularly in early intervention and prevention which are a highly cost-effective investment for mental health and suicide prevention. It also requires working closely with schools and ensuring collaboration and information sharing between the education and health sectors.

Raise welcomed the opportunity to provide a submission to support the design of the [Mental Health Workforce](#) and supported the recommendations from the inquiry regarding workforce readiness and a multi-disciplinary approach. We see firsthand the challenges associated with recruiting mental health professionals and see this challenge in the education sector as well – particularly in terms of recruiting and retaining school counsellors. More work needs to be done in partnership with universities and

training organisations to ensure the workforce meets the needs of the community now and into the future – and meets the needs of communities across Australia regardless of their location.

The introduction of the [National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) in 2023, the first of its kind in Australia, acknowledged the importance of designing separate approaches for children and acknowledging the powerful opportunity of prevention and early intervention initiatives. A one size fits all approach to mental health and suicide prevention policy does not work. As a for-youth organisation, Raise recognises the importance of designing and delivering separately, with and for children and young people.

We are also seeing a growing willingness and appetite across the sector for [collaboration between services providers](#). Raise was a founding member of the Together 4 Youth collaboration, bringing together wellbeing, mental health and education engagement organisations delivering services to young people in high school settings, and building a community of practice across 20+ organisations. Raise also collaborated with service providers through the Beyond Blue (Be You) Mental Health in Education Roundtable which met monthly to support learning communities to deliver on the priorities of mental health and wellbeing.

### **How should governments support prevention and early intervention?**

Raise welcomes the focus of this review on prevention and early intervention support for mental health. Half of all adult mental health challenges emerge before the age of 14 and more than 50% of children experiencing mental health challenges do not receive professional help.

Investing in early intervention and prevention services makes social and economic sense. In a recent economic evaluation of our 20-week school-based youth mentoring program, the social return on investment was found to be \$4.37, meaning a return of 437% for every \$1 invested ([https://raise.org.au/media/ggufjto5/economic\\_impact\\_evaluation\\_raise\\_youth\\_mentoring.pdf](https://raise.org.au/media/ggufjto5/economic_impact_evaluation_raise_youth_mentoring.pdf)).

We also recognise the right of every child to be safe and supported and to thrive through their childhood and into adulthood. The report acknowledges the link between wellbeing and mental health and academic confidence and outcomes at school, which in turn links to positive outcomes post school.

Governments can support prevention and early intervention by:

- [Investing in evidence informed](#) prevention and early intervention programs
- [Listening to young people](#) through consulting with diverse groups of young people, establishing youth advisory groups and ensuring co-design in policies and services
- [Building the evidence base](#) around what works in mental health and suicide prevention early intervention initiatives. Facilitating monitoring, evaluation and learning through data access (including data linkage) and funding support for impact and longitudinal evaluation
- [Supporting communities](#) to implement place-based appropriate solutions through capacity building and investment
- Ensuring [culturally appropriate approaches](#) which are co-designed with the people they are being designed to support.
- Facilitating [collaboration between service providers](#) which enables information sharing and identifying efficiencies in providing more support for young people with less investment, such as

## The Difference Raise makes

Raise Youth Mentoring is transforming the lives of young people and their communities across Australia. Each year we rigorously evaluate our programs, collecting data on outcomes for thousands of young people, mentors, schools, caregivers and families.

In 2024, the University of Melbourne undertook an outcome evaluation of Raise Youth Mentoring, using a **matched control group** to measure impact.

The evaluation found that after six months of mentoring a young person improved their:

- Ability to ask for help
- Engagement with and attendance at school
- Resilience
- Hope for the Future

You can find the detailed evaluation reports here: <https://raise.org.au/about/independent-evaluation/>

Our mentors are also equipped with the skills to support the mental health outcomes of other young people and other adults, including their colleagues after training as a Raise Mentor.

We know that every Raise mentor uses their skills to support at least one additional young person in their community as well as at least one adult in their lives. Raise mentoring creates thriving communities right across the country.