myst
mountains youth services team

MOUNTAINS YOUTH SERVICES TEAM

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

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MYST acknowledges the Dharug and Gundungurra peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands on which we meet, work, and support young people. We pay our deepest respects to their Elders past and present.

As an organisation dedicated to the safety, and empowerment of young people, we recognize that these ridges, valleys, and waterways have been places of community, teaching, and leadership for tens of thousands of years. We reaffirm our commitment to listening, learning, and working in partnership with the Dharug and Gundungurra communities as we support young people in our region.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR & CEO

It is with mixed emotions that we present MYST's 2026 Annual Report.

This year was marked by the passing of two people who made extraordinary contributions to MYST: our former Chair, Joy Cusack, who also served as Acting CEO, and our Chair, Gareth Scott. Their loss was deeply felt across our organisation and the wider MYST community. We reflect further on Joy and Gareth's significant contribution to MYST on pages 6 and 7 of this report.

At the same time, their passion for supporting young people in the Blue Mountains continues to be reflected in the work of MYST and in the many stories, achievements and moments of connection captured throughout this report.

MYST has always been more than a service provider working in the community. We work with our community to strengthen the network of support around young people. Our longstanding partnerships with local schools grew stronger in 2026, extending the impact of established initiatives such as Teen Mental Health First Aid while also creating safe and supportive environments in which young people could participate in new programs.

These included a financial capability program and Healing Through Truth Telling, a targeted cultural program. We also created opportunities for young people to participate in and contribute to community life, from Outdoor Explore adventures to Undercurrent 2.0, which brought young local musicians to the heart of Katoomba's Winter Magic Festival, with more than 500 people coming together to support local bands and celebrate young talent.

2026 was also a year of new beginnings for MYST. We commenced delivery under a new contract to 2031 with the Department of Communities and Justice, welcomed a new CEO and Chair and undertook important changes to strengthen our governance and position the organisation for the future.

As we look towards 2027 and the development of MYST's new strategy, we do so with confidence in the organisation. And most importantly, in the young people we serve. Our ambition is not simply to provide services, but to deepen the support available to young people and create the conditions in which they can be safe, connected, heard and supported to pursue their hopes for the future.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to this chapter of MYST's story.

To our funders, including the Department of Communities and Justice and Wentworth Healthcare, thank you for the confidence you place in MYST and our work.

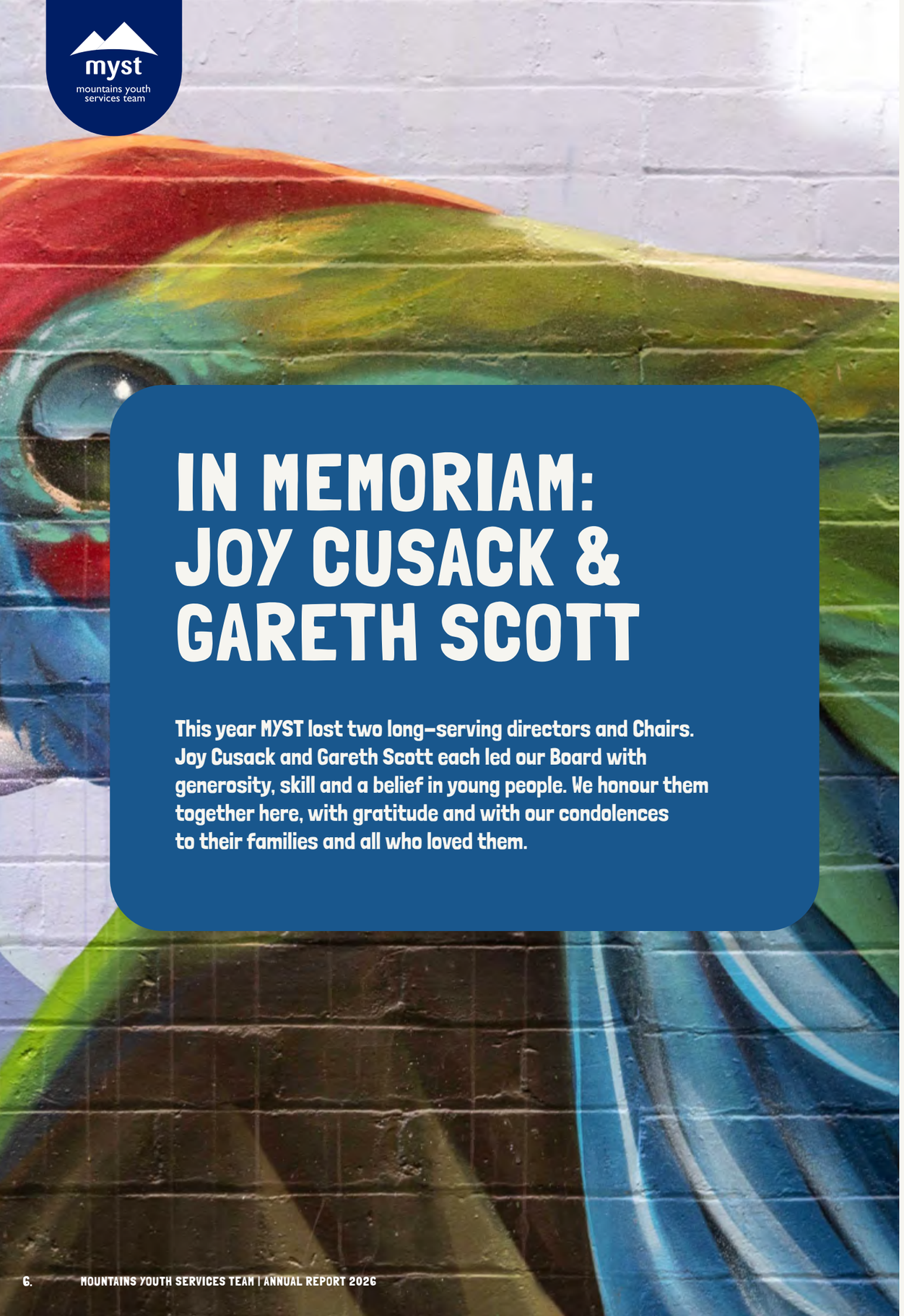
To our team and volunteers, thank you for your commitment, resilience and care. Through a year of considerable change, you remained focused on what matters most: providing consistent, quality support to young people.

To our Board of Directors, thank you for your leadership and stewardship during a year that brought both organisational change and profound personal loss.

And importantly, to the young people we have the privilege of working alongside: thank you. You challenge us, inspire us and continually remind us why this work matters. We will continue to listen to you, learn from you and ask how we can do better.

It is a privilege to see you flourish and an even greater privilege to play a part in supporting you as you shape your own futures.

Sema Whittle, Chair
Mark Turley, Chief Executive Officer



IN MEMORIAM: JOY CUSACK & GARETH SCOTT

This year MYST lost two long-serving directors and Chairs. Joy Cusack and Gareth Scott each led our Board with generosity, skill and a belief in young people. We honour them together here, with gratitude and with our condolences to their families and all who loved them.

Joy Cusack

Director 2015 to 2025 | Chair to October 2025 | Acting CEO to January 2026

Joy joined the MYST Board in 2015 and served as Chair until October 2025, then stepped in as Acting CEO until January 2026. Joy gave MYST her time, wisdom and heart throughout her service.

An experienced chair, company director and executive, Joy steered MYST through bushfires, floods and the pandemic and into a period of renewal: a strengthened Board, teen mental health training in local high schools, a new financial counselling service and the financial sustainability that underpins MYST's work in the years ahead.

Joy believed every young person, especially those facing the greatest barriers, deserves the chance to fulfil their dreams and be valued in their community.

"Respect, innovation and advocacy has and continues to be our North Star." – Joy Cusack, Chair's message, 2025 Annual Report.

In lasting recognition, MYST is pleased to introduce The Joy Cusack North Star Award, which will be presented each year to a young person who keeps moving toward their goals despite significant challenges.

Gareth Scott

Director 2021 to 2026 | Treasurer | Chair 2025 to 2026

Gareth joined the MYST Board in June 2021 and served as Treasurer and as a member of the Governance and Audit and Risk Committees before succeeding Joy as Chair in October 2025. He passed away in office in January 2026.

Gareth's working life was spent in education, in leadership roles focused on wellbeing, people and culture. He was known for leading wellbeing initiatives that helped individuals and teams grow and for coaching and mentoring others to be their best.

He brought that same care to MYST, strengthening governance with a deep belief in the people who do the work. His influence on MYST's foundations endures.

"I am excited about the role that MYST plays within the community, and I am looking forward to helping to expand MYST's influence and impact reach." – Gareth Scott, on joining the MYST Board.

In lasting recognition, MYST is pleased to introduce The Gareth Scott Scholarship, which will support the professional development of a MYST staff member each year in youth work, education or mentoring.

OUR IMPACT

With support from NSW Government | Communities & Justice

139
YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED
through counselling, case management, mentoring and additional supports.

197
YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING
in youth development programs, including Outdoor Explore and Healthy Start.

135
YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING
in programs building practical knowledge and skills, including financial capability.

116
YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESSED
MYST drop-in centres.

6,400
TOASTIES PROVIDED
to students across Blue Mountains high schools.

586
PEOPLE ATTENDED
MYST-led community events.

With support from Wentworth Healthcare

437
STUDENTS ACROSS

7
SCHOOLS
received Teen Mental Health First Aid training.

33
ABORIGINAL YOUNG PEOPLE + ALLIES ACROSS

2
SCHOOLS
participated in Healing Through Truth Telling, strengthening awareness of our country's shared history and increased connection to identity, Country and community.

With support from Our Community

A big thank you to all of our individual donors. Every dollar counts in the community sector, and we really appreciate you getting behind MYST and the young people we connect with.

$19K
INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS

Strong community connections were built and maintained through engagement and collaborations with headspace, Girls & Boys Brigade, Blue Mountains City Council, Street Uni, Belong, the Blue Mountains Youth Expo and Blaxland High School Expo.

UNDERCURRENT EVENT

Winter Magic 2026
by Carl Cintio

With our amazing team at MYST supported by a multi-service support crew from Blue Mountains City Council, Street University and Belong Blue Mountains, Undercurrent 2.0 Local Music Showcase brought hundreds of young people together to express themselves in a safe and inclusive space, complete with three awesome bands playing on a suitably awesome sound system.

For the masses in attendance, it was a great afternoon of live music, connections, and community. And the lineup was quality: Headlined by up-and-coming supergroup Club Halifax and supported by Acid Amora and funk trio EFTPOS Surcharge, each band completely nailed their sets. Toah's music workshop in the forecourt and open mic sessions drew a big crowd in the lead-up, and the Belong glitter stall was a hit.

"This is legit the best thing that's ever happened in Katoomba"

Even considering the extra revellers in town for the festival, the attendance was something rarely seen around these parts. And turns out that most young people we spoke to had come specifically for Undercurrent… very cool to know, and encouraging for any future events too.

It's fair to say that Undercurrent 2.0 was a significant and really positive experience for hundreds of local young people.

They were able to express themselves, meet old friends (and make new ones), jump on stage, and see their favourite acts without sneaking into a licensed venue with all the associated risk factors.

Parents were relaxed knowing their young ones were safe and happy, and some were just as into the bands as their kids. I had heaps of good feedback from parents who popped in when bringing their young people and realising it was a great setup.

The feedback we've gotten shows the event was a big step forward for MYST's place in the community, and it's sparked interest from other services wanting to team up, collaborate, and exchange learnings.

And there were no problems with alcohol, drugs or other disruptive behaviour - everyone kept it safe and inclusive, not a single recorded incident on site, which is truly the best outcome you can have at an event of that size.

BMCC ran some alcohol and other drugs (AOD) awareness activities like the beer goggle experience, an info stall, and a survey that got around 40 people involved. They also handed out 50 Youth Outreach postcards to help connect young people with local AOD support services.

From a young people's survey when leaving the event:

93.8% said the event helped them feel part of their community

Events like Undercurrent matter because they remind us that young people are the heart of community. When young people can express themselves in healthy ways, the whole community benefits. Everyone feels it. Authenticity and ownership are the absolute key to real cultural development.

93.8%
said the event helped them feel part of their community

- Strengthened Youth Engagement
- Genuine Service Collaboration
- Deeper Community Connections
- Elevating Young Local Talent

555
Attendees

BUILDING FINANCIAL FUTURES

Building financial confidence before adulthood: MYST's first school-based Financial Literacy program

by Andrew Middleton / Financial Capability

In 2026, MYST turned an idea first explored in 2025 into a new early-intervention program for young people: our first school-based Financial Literacy course. Developed by MYST Financial Counsellor Andrew Middleton, the pilot was delivered in Term 2 to two Year 11 Life Skills classes at Katoomba High School and, following positive feedback, expanded in Term 3 to a Year 10 Commerce class.

The program brings practical, real-world money education into the classroom at a critical point before students move toward work, further study and independent living. Its timing is particularly significant. Australia's 2018 National Financial Capability Strategy identified educating the next generation through the formal education system as a national priority, while renewed public debate in August 2026 has highlighted Australia's continuing need for stronger school-based financial education as countries such as New Zealand move to embed financial education across its Curriculum.

"The kids enjoyed it and it's a well-structured valuable course. Lovely to have you in class."

— Katoomba High School Teacher

The program is designed to give students something many young people reach adulthood without: practical confidence to make everyday financial decisions. Students explore income and employment, everyday living costs, budgeting and saving, debt and lending, financial products, consumer choices, and where to seek free help when money becomes difficult.

This approach closely reflects the National Financial Capability Strategy's three core behaviours:

- **Managing money day-to-day**
- **Making informed decisions**
- **Planning for the future**

The Strategy also recognises that financial capability is more than knowledge alone; it includes the confidence, attitudes, skills and information needed to manage money over time.

For MYST, this extends early intervention beyond responding to financial crisis. By reaching students before many major financial decisions arise, the program aims to build financial resilience, reduce future financial stress and strengthen young people's capacity to pursue their goals and wellbeing.

Financial capability is a protective life skill. By building practical money skills before young people face the full financial pressures of adulthood, MYST is strengthening its early-intervention role and addressing an area now receiving renewed national attention. The program demonstrates how a local youth service can translate financial counselling expertise into prevention: equipping young people not only to respond to financial difficulty, but to make informed choices and build resilience before crisis occurs.

Feedback Survey

Pre- and post-course surveys showed improved student understanding across all topics assessed.

Observational

Students became increasingly engaged as the course progressed, with practical discussions and activities prompting questions about real-life financial decisions.

Moving Forward

The successful Term 2 pilot was followed by delivery to a Year 10 Commerce class in Term 3, extending the program's reach within Katoomba High School. Its development also places MYST within a timely national conversation about the need for stronger financial education in schools.

LOOKING OUT FOR OUR FRIENDS

Teen mental health first aid training in high schools

Teen Mental Health First Aid Program
Aislinn Naughton – Case Worker and Teen Mental Health First Aid Facilitator

During Term 2, MYST staff members Flinn, Bek and myself launched into delivering the Teen Mental Health First Aid course at La Salle Academy, Blaxland High School and Katoomba High School.

This was an excellent collaboration with local schools made possible through Wentworth Healthcare and the Department of Communities and Justice funding. The Teen Mental Health First Aid course aims to give young people the skills to recognise signs that their friends need mental health support and build knowledge of how to get the help of a trusted adult quickly. Research tells us that the first point of contact for young people experiencing mental health problems is often their friends. This course is so important in ensuring that young people do not feel like they are alone in supporting their friend and that there are many helpful services and safe adults to get support from.

Throughout the term, we delivered sessions to over 300 students, with our team delivering more than 36 hours of content.

This program provided much needed dialogue about mental health problems and crises that is integral to remove the stigma still prevalent in our society today. The Teen Mental Health First Aid Program is facilitated by MYST counsellors and social workers who have the expertise to facilitate such conversations safely and to offer support when young people needed it during, before and after sessions. In this way, MYST was able to grow an already strong relationship with local schools and introduce young people in the community to professionals that are available if they, or their friends, experience a mental health problem or crisis.

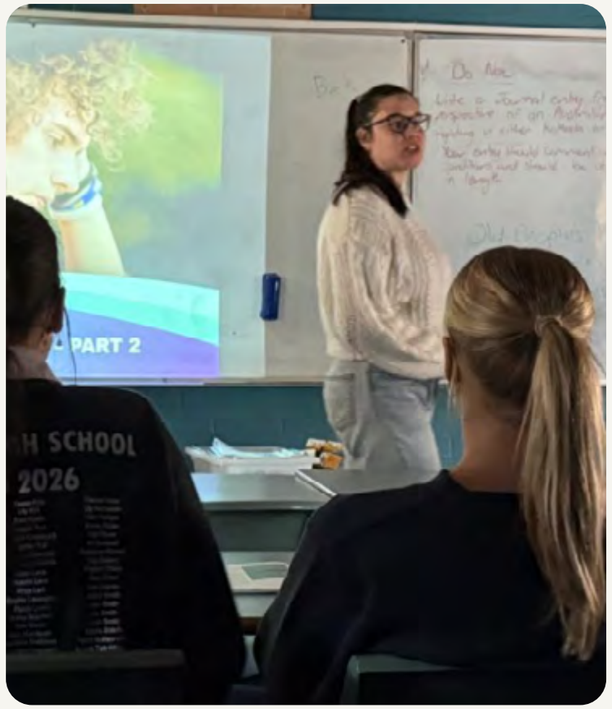
"The Teen Mental Health First Aid program supported our year 10 students to identify warning signs of a mental health crisis, including noticing changes in ways that their friend or classmate might think, feel or behave, and when it is important to seek urgent help from a responsible adult. Ash and Bek from Mountains Youth Services Team were warm and approachable in their delivery of the program, making sensitive content engaging and accessible for our young people."

– Jess Twyman (SSO at Blaxland High School) and Taryn Jackson (Teacher-HSIE, HT Student Services)

9/10
students found the program helpful

"TMHFA increased mental health literacy and gave our Year 7 students practical tools and confidence to recognise when a friend may be struggling and know how to seek support. A worthwhile program."

Viktoria Gulabovski
SSO Katoomba High School



BUILDING NEW STORIES IN NATURE

by Rohan Steel | Program / Team Outdoor Explore Facilitator

Georgia applied for and attended the Outdoor Explore program with Winmalee High School in Term 2, 2026. On starting the program Georgia identified as someone who

"doesn't really like going out into the bush. I'm scared of it"

Throughout the 8-week program, Georgia committed to and attended every single week and courageously put herself out there to give every activity a go. Georgia's commitment didn't stop at the activities themselves, she took ownership of the regular routines of preparing lunch, carrying equipment for her teammates and contributing to group discussions. Georgia grew to love Tuesdays on Outdoor Explore, and with this commitment, came a new-found confidence in herself.

A truly meaningful experience came for Georgia on the abseiling week. She reached her limit with the abseiling and reached out and made an authentic connection with one of her teammates, someone who she didn't have much to do with. This friendship continues to this day. Another highlight in Georgia's Outdoor Explore story came during the rock climbing day. Georgia was self-motivated to build skills in knot tying, an important skill for outdoor pursuits. This wasn't enough for her, as she went on to learn to tie knots with her eyes closed and went on to teach me, a staff member, her new skill. Since finishing up her Outdoor Explore program, Georgia has stayed connected to the MYST community by regularly attending the drop-in space with her friends.

Outdoor Explore at MYST has provided opportunities for growth for Georgia and other young people. The confidence gained, the physical, emotional and social goals that are reached on the program can be continued in the supportive space across our other programs and service areas. There is an opt-in ongoing relationship that provides further opportunities to our young people to engage in their local community in a healthy and empowering way.

Georgia's story exemplifies the intention behind the Outdoor Explore program at MYST, showcasing not only the powerful connection between young people and their local environment, but the opportunities to develop a relationship with self and others.

"I am leaving behind how scared, sad, mad, and any other bad things I have ever thought, because MYST has taught me that I can be myself even if people are laughing at or with me."

36.25%

increase in wellbeing reported from program enrolment to ongoing drop-in service

8/8

OE Sessions attended

WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY

William is a bright, resourceful, well intentioned young person who has been involved with MYST since early year 7, his first experience being with Drop-in on Thursdays at Springwood Youth Centre, which he continues to attend regularly. He then took on the adventure of Outdoor Explore in Term 3 of 2025.

Will's success story involves growth in confidence and a celebration of his natural leadership. He brings a plethora of ideas for the development of Drop-in, and, quite literally, brings a number of ingredients to the table to enhance the Drop-in dinner menu each week. Recently, on the 12 to 14 June, Will attended RYPEN (Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment). He returned with stories, skills and a presentation for Drop-in, as well as some activities up his sleeve. Will gathered his peers together and described RYPEN as "life changing," and took the initiative to teach the attendees an activity that he took part in at RYPEN. This activity's purpose was to remind participants that they are not alone. I was lucky enough to have Will show me several booklets and prompts that he was given over the RYPEN weekend. The one that stuck with me the most was the one that truly shows Will's character. It was a card that asked

"how do you want to make others feel?" and his answer on the other side was "safe."

This mindset was presented at Outdoor Explore, where he took a shine to supporting his peers.

"I went from coming in and not doing much to cooking every week."

Whether that was by facilitating important conversations, or just being there to put an arm around them. He was also not afraid to lend a helping hand to the more inexperienced participants. An example of this was when he paired up with a peer that had no canoeing experience, whereas Will had some previously developed skills through scouts. Although it may have been challenging, Will's spirit remained unbroken, and his achievement meant he got to put his story telling skills to good use afterwards. Will is demonstrating his openness and determination to create a safe space in every situation he dives head first into.

Will cooks every week at MYST. It boosts creativity and the young people around him show their appreciation. His nickname is "chef". Will has started his own knife sharpening business after coming in to sharpen the cooking knives at MYST under supervision. It is called "Fair dinkum knives." He came up with this himself. Will attended RYPEN and after the weekend he said it "changed his life" and he brought in activities and booklets to present to his peers. Will feels like over the past 2 years since he has been attending MYST he has grown in confidence, not only in himself, but in his cooking abilities.

"MYST is a place to be yourself."

Getting to know and learn from Will continues to be one of the greatest highlights of my career with MYST. He is a positive reminder to all of us of the importance and joy this path brings. I get the opportunity to be immensely proud of Will and witness his flourishing altruism.

FROM TWO COHORTS TO ONE COMMUNITY

Story adapted/edited from original by Kate Greenham, Outdoor Explore, MYST
Original story Submitted by Curly Fernandez (Girls & Boys Brigade)

Over three days, youth from the city and the mountains came together. By the last day they were no longer two separate cohorts but one shared community.

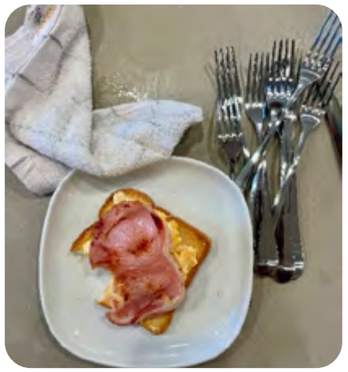
The City Mountain Youth Exchange brought young people from Girls and Boys Brigade and MYST's Outdoor Explore cohort together in the Blue Mountains for a weekend designed to spark meaningful connection between two groups from very different parts of Sydney. The idea was that the physicality of outdoor adventure could act as the social diffuser: by leading with landscape, movement and task, social connections could emerge naturally and organically. Across a sunset bushwalk, shared meals, fire, a six-hour hike, free time at the youth centre and a Race Around Katoomba, the groups began to merge. The young people also shaped the weekend themselves, sitting together to decide Saturday's adventure. It was structured yet free, demanding yet generous, and created space for curiosity to dissolve nerves and entirely new relationships to take root.

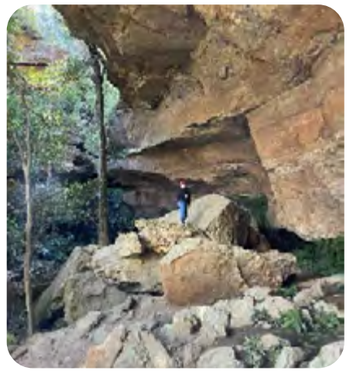
The most striking outcome was the way two very different groups of young people so quickly began to socialise with ease. The MYST teens led with openness, introducing themselves and making space for connection. By the second day, GBB young people were initiating conversations, suggesting ideas and embedding themselves within new groups. Shared exertion, meals around the fire and free time created openings where shyness dissolved and interdependence became part of the experience: carrying each other's gear, helping with climbs, sharing snacks and adjusting straps. By Sunday, these were not two cohorts but one shared community, laughing, competing and reflecting side by side.

Young people left not just with new friendships, but with a wider sense of belonging, trust and what connection across different communities can look like.

"This program was so much fun! It was so cool to meet new people and share experiences and adventures.

It was awesome to meet people that we never could've met without this program and make some new friends!"





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Kids' feedback:

"What I liked about the program was learning about the city from another person's perspective"

"This program was really awesome and I had a lot of fun! I had a great time learning about life in the city as well as sharing knowledge on the mountains"

"I really liked this program because I got to meet new people and go to new places! Would totally do again"

Feedback from Youth Workers at Girls and Boys Brigade:

"The weekend proved the value of collaboration: MYST's outdoor expertise paired with GBB's capacity for reflection and relationship-building created something truly unique. It was structured yet free, demanding yet generous, and profoundly human. For both organisations, this weekend can stand as evidence of how cross-community programs can build not just social cohesion, but resilience, empathy, and joy in the lives of young people"

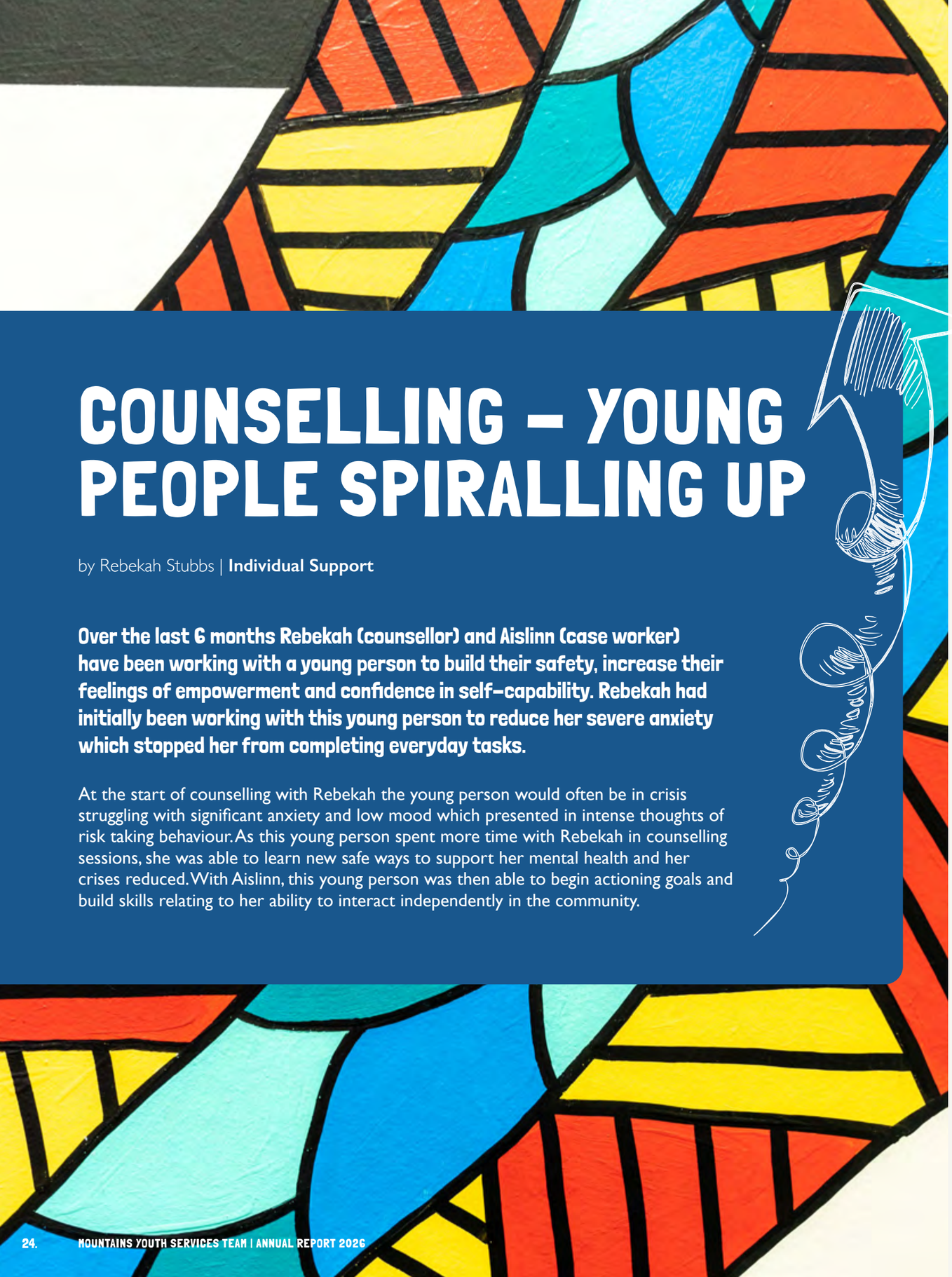
Curly Furnandez, Youth Worker, Girls and Boys Brigade

"This camp was unreal! Teaming up with the Blue Mountains adventure crew and hiking down into the valley where Dr Dark made camp was such a cool experience. Everyone pushed themselves, made new mates, and had heaps of laughs along the way. By the end, it felt like one big crew instead of two different groups."

Bill Porter, Youth Worker, Girls and Boys Brigade

"A deep thanks must go to Kate from the MYST Outdoor Education team, who took on the leading of outdoor program activities with thoughtfulness, cohesiveness, and meaningful insight. Her presence, expertise, and care were central to the success of the weekend—it would simply not have been possible without her. It is worth noting that this relationship with MYST began only six months ago with a cold call from myself after a simple Google search for youth organisations. From there, it has grown into a partnership marked by mutual respect, warmth, and genuine collegiality. This collaboration now feels like a solid foundation to be revelled in and built upon, and it will continue to strengthen into the future."

Curly Furnandez, Youth Worker, Girls and Boys Brigade



COUNSELLING – YOUNG PEOPLE SPIRALLING UP

by Rebekah Stubbs | **Individual Support**

Over the last 6 months Rebekah (counsellor) and Aislinn (case worker) have been working with a young person to build their safety, increase their feelings of empowerment and confidence in self-capability. Rebekah had initially been working with this young person to reduce her severe anxiety which stopped her from completing everyday tasks.

At the start of counselling with Rebekah the young person would often be in crisis struggling with significant anxiety and low mood which presented in intense thoughts of risk taking behaviour. As this young person spent more time with Rebekah in counselling sessions, she was able to learn new safe ways to support her mental health and her crises reduced. With Aislinn, this young person was then able to begin actioning goals and build skills relating to her ability to interact independently in the community.

Recently the young person has reported that she has managed to significantly reduce her risk taking behaviours. With the support of both Rebekah and Aislinn after months of anxiety being a barrier to accessing her GP, this young person used her new safe ways of coping and visited the GP who helped her to develop a Mental Health Plan. The supports in this plan have helped greatly, significantly reducing her levels of anxiety and depression and giving her mind the space to learn skills and complete complex tasks. Rebekah and Aislinn jumped on this and are now able to coach this young person through more complex coping strategies, help her build confidence to complete tasks like going to the doctors or completing a run of an afternoon.

MYST aims to better the lives of all the young people we work with. In this case we can highlight the immense positive change that this young person has experienced due to a holistic approach to her concerns. MYST workers were able to combine skills to improve the way this young person functions in society and she can now live more actively without worrying constantly about her own and others' safety.

"I want to create an art group for people over 18, where people can come and get together and support each other after they no longer need or age out of youth support services, I think this is something that would be good for me but it's really hard to find."

Key Outcomes:

- **The young person has reported a drop in risk taking behaviours**
- **The young person has reported a significant reduction in acute anxiety symptoms and emotional overload**
- **During sessions this young person is actively engaging in therapeutic processes, problem solving and suggesting possible processes she could try to continue improving her mental health**

HEALING THROUGH TRUTH TELLING

Building Connection, Resilience and Cultural Understanding at La Salle Academy

by Flinn Donovan | **Healing Through Truth Telling (HTTT)**

The Healing Through Truth Telling (HTTT) program was delivered at La Salle Academy throughout Term 2 to support young people to build emotional awareness, resilience, cultural connection and positive coping strategies.

The program included nine structured group sessions with 18 students, including 12 Aboriginal young people and six non-Aboriginal peer buddies. Sessions created a safe space for reflection, storytelling and connection to identity, culture and community. A notable highlight was the growth of one participant who initially found it difficult to engage but gradually began contributing more openly. Through group work and mentoring, they developed confidence in sharing their experiences and became more connected with peers and culture.

The program supported participants to increase emotional awareness, strengthen coping strategies and build positive peer connections. All 18 students who attended completed the program, demonstrating strong engagement and commitment. Three students also participated in individual mentoring across six sessions, while two students attended group mentoring. Participants developed a deeper understanding of the impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma experienced by First Nations peoples, creating opportunities for reflection, empathy and stronger cultural identity. The program also supported respectful learning between Aboriginal participants and non-Aboriginal buddies, helping young people connect with each other in meaningful ways. School staff observed increased participation from one student in the classroom, showing that the benefits extended beyond the group setting.

"I feel more connected to my peers and culture, and more confident sharing my story."

9 Group Sessions
with 18 students attending

100%
successfully completing the program

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MORE THAN A TOASTIE

At MYST's Breakfast Club, a toastie is about much more than breakfast.

Each week, MYST staff and dedicated Rotary volunteers arrive early to prepare and serve breakfast to students at local high schools. Across the year, approximately 6,400 toasties were provided to young people across Blue Mountains high schools.

Over years of working together, MYST and Rotary volunteers have developed a well-oiled routine, from preparing sandwiches the afternoon before to firing up six toastie makers early the next morning. For Rotary volunteer Deborah, it is the young people and the sense of community that keep her coming back.

"We enjoy it very much, which is why we keep doing it."

Deb loves seeing the different young people who come through and the "sense of community" that surrounds Breakfast Club. Often it is the small interactions that stand out: a student looking her in the eye to say thank you, familiar faces returning each week, and young people simply being happy that someone has turned up to do something for them.

Those experiences have left Deb optimistic about the young people she meets.

"It gives me hope for students, the next generation."

And the students aren't always on the receiving end. At Springwood High in particular, students will step in and help out, becoming part of the Breakfast Club alongside MYST staff and Rotary volunteers.

6,400
toasties made over the last year!

For MYST, these informal moments are an important part of outreach. Breakfast creates an easy opportunity for youth workers to talk with students, build familiarity and let them know about other opportunities and supports available through MYST.

For Rotary, there is another connection being built. Deb reflected that a young person might one day see the Rotary symbol somewhere in their community and remember the people who got up at dawn to make them a warm toastie at school. Perhaps one day, they might decide to volunteer themselves.

In some ways, that is already beginning to happen. When students choose to lend a hand at Breakfast Club, they shift from simply receiving something from their community to contributing to it themselves.

It is a simple program built around a simple offering, but thousands of toasties later, Breakfast Club has become a place for young people, MYST and Rotary to connect, contribute and get to know one another.

As Deb puts it:

"We concentrate on good vibes."

Big thanks to our Rotary Volunteers Sheryn, Beverly, Deborah, Frank and Bruce.

OUTDOOR EXPLORE OUTCOMES

(Adventure Therapy Outcome Study, Charles Sturt University)

164
Participants

0.04%
Drop Out Rate

Compared to industry drop out rates of 71%

(Australian National Youth Mental Health Foundation)

+5.8
point increase in wellbeing

Measured on the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS). Five points is the mark of clinically reliable change on the ORS

0.76
Effect size
(magnitude of improvement)

Compared with Psychotherapy outcomes of 0.68 (Smith & Glass)

FY26 FINANCIALS

$1.57M
Total Operating Revenue

$1.56M
Total Operating Expenses

91%
of Income went back into youth services, our people, and operations

6%
of Income was spent on organisational Development

myst

mountains youth
services team

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All Donations over $2 are tax deductible