

Resilient Kids

Year two evaluation report
December 2025

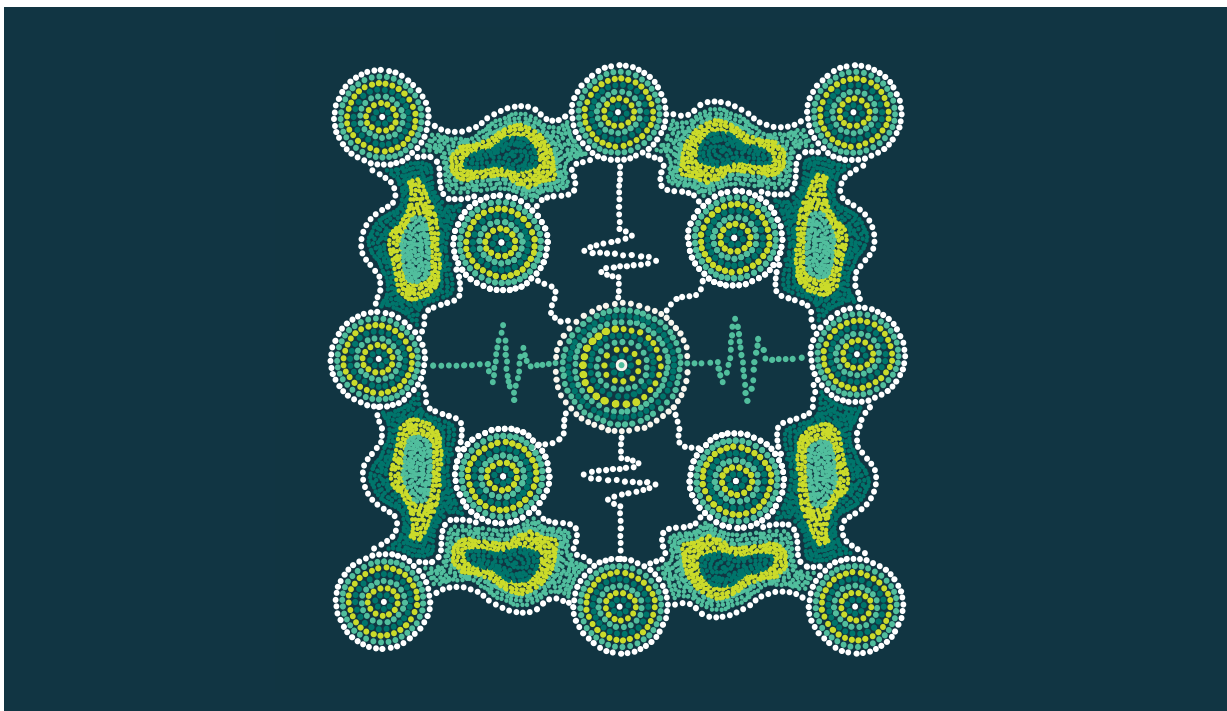
Acknowledgements

Healthy North Coast acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across our region, and pay our respect to Elders past, present and on their journey.

Healthy North Coast recognises these lands were never ceded and acknowledges the continuation of culture and connection to the land, sky and sea. Healthy North Coast acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Land's First Peoples and honour the rich diversity of the oldest living cultures.

Healthy North Coast acknowledges and thanks the individuals and communities across the Northern Rivers region who shared their time, perspective and experiences to inform this evaluation report.

The Resilient Kids Program is funded by Healthy North Coast through a grant provided by the Australian Government's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).



Ethical oversight

To ensure appropriate ethical oversight of the evaluation of the Resilient Kids program, ethics approval has been obtained from the North Coast New South Wales Human Research Ethics Committee [HREA399 2024/ETH00449].

Resilient Kids is a collaboration involving a range of partners.



Healthy North Coast is an independent, not-for-profit organisation committed to improving the health of North Coast communities. Healthy North Coast proudly delivers the Australian Government's Primary Health Network (PHN) Program on the North Coast, which covers the combined geographical regions of the Northern NSW and Mid North Coast Local Health Districts (LHDs). Healthy North Coast has led the co-design, commissioning and oversight of Resilient Kids.



Social Futures is a leading not-for-profit community service organisation working in the Northern Rivers and across New South Wales. Social Futures has been the lead agency delivering Stream 1 and 2 of Resilient Kids, and led the consortium arrangement with The Family Centre and Human Nature.



The Family Centre is a community-owned, social purpose organisation based on the North Coast of NSW creating opportunities for children, young people and families. The Family Centre has delivered activities under Stream 1.



Human Nature delivers innovative, nature-based mental health support for vulnerable young people, focusing on youth empowerment through outdoor therapy. Human Nature deliver specialist adventure therapy services in Stream 2.



Lives Lived Well is a not-for-profit organisation supporting people with concerns related to alcohol and other drugs, mental health and other experiences. Lives Lived Well has been the provider of Stream 3 (Aboriginal Resilient Kids), a tailored model for First Nations young people co-designed with Northern Rivers Aboriginal Medical Services Rekindling the Spirit, Bulgarr Ngaru Medical Aboriginal Corporation and Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service.



Beacon Strategies is a health and social services consultancy supporting organisations to plan, design, implement and evaluate their work. Beacon Strategies is the external monitoring, evaluation and learning partner for Resilient Kids, and has developed this evaluation report.

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Introduction

About this report

Sharing back the achievements, outcomes and learnings from year two of Resilient Kids.

During October 2024 to June 2025 (referred to as ‘year two’), the evaluation of Resilient Kids has continued to gather relevant data and facilitate learning.

This *Year two evaluation report* presents a summary of what was delivered and important outcomes and learnings that emerged during this period. Insights come from:

- analysis of activity, client and outcomes data collected by each program provider
- key themes identified in interviews and surveys with young people and their parents/ caregivers, Resilient Kids staff and management, school staff and other stakeholders working with young people in the region.

With the timing of this report coinciding with the planned end of the delivery phase of Resilient Kids in mid-2025, this report comes at a time of transition for the program. The findings from year two of Resilient Kids will be used to consolidate evidence and learning about what has worked in the context of supporting children and young people following climate-related disasters, and inform the design of future programs.

The delivery of most services under Resilient Kids came to an end in June 2025, while some activities were extended to support under-serviced communities until December 2025.

More information about the process of designing Resilient Kids, including reports that summarise the experiences and insights that helped to shape the program, can be found at www.hnc.org.au/resilient-kids.

These insights will contribute to the development of a comprehensive impact evaluation report in early 2026 — this final report will provide a more detailed assessment of the program’s suitability, effectiveness, implementation and sustainability, and offer recommendations to guide future programs.

Resilient Kids involves **three interconnected streams of youth-focused activities.**

Stream 1: Education and skill-building



School-based workshops covering disaster resilience and social and emotional wellbeing

Parent and carer education and resources

Educational activities in vocational and out-of-school settings

Stream 2: Community resilience building



Six local Wellbeing Hubs with spoke services to isolated communities

Counselling and adventure therapy for children and their families

Group activities for social and emotional wellbeing, therapeutic support and parent/carer support

Working together with schools and other services

Community engagement and events

Youth Participation Fund supporting community organisations to deliver youth programs and activities in response to local need.

Stream 3: First Nations initiatives



Culturally sensitive youth mental health support and case management

Safe spaces

Culturally safe recreational and educational activities

Capacity-building for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Workers and other local stakeholders

Community-of-practice to foster local collaboration and integration

A recap of outcomes from Year one

The Year One Evaluation Report available on the [Healthy North Coast website](#) outlines a range of formative outcomes and learnings. It covered the period from initial establishment of the program in mid-2023 through to the end of September 2024.



Key outcomes and learnings from year one included:

- The design of Resilient Kids was guided by the voices and experiences of young people, their families and communities.
- Resilient Kids increased access to a range of wellbeing and resilience supports. Over 5,300 children and young people accessed support in year one.
- Resilient Kids helped to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people by equipping them with the knowledge, skills and tools for resilience.
- Resilient Kids empowered adults as natural supporters of young people, helping to strengthen their ability to engage with kids and offer support.
- The flexibility and diversity of the program helped to expand access to much-needed support and respond to the diversity of young people.
- Wider gaps that exist in the health and social service system weren't able to be addressed by Resilient Kids alone. Fully responding to the wellbeing needs of children, young people, and families requires sustainable support.
- Communities and service systems can better involve and support young people for future disasters across preparedness, immediate response and ongoing recovery.
- Opportunities were identified to strengthen the impact of Resilient Kids, with many adaptations to the program incorporated within each stream.

Outcomes from year two

In year two, Resilient Kids expanded its reach and impact.

Building on the achievements of year one, the program strengthened its reach to support more young people, further developed trusted relationships with local communities, and led to positive outcomes for children and their families.

Key achievements in year two included:

- Stream 3: Aboriginal Resilient Kids fully operational by October 2024, delivering culturally safe support tailored for First Nations children, young people, families, carers, and kinship groups
- Continued growth in interest and engagement amongst local schools for wellbeing and disaster readiness education for their students, including schools in isolated communities
- Continued to deliver tailored, person-centred counselling services and group activities to children, young people and their families through Wellbeing Hubs in Ballina, Casino, Kyogle, Lismore, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah, and outreach into smaller communities of Tabulum, Evans Head and Nimbin
- Expanded the type of support available to meet young people's needs, including access to specialist neurocognitive and mental health assessments, telepsychiatry, art therapy, and specialist counselling services for young people who are neurodiverse or identify as LGBTQ+
- Scaled up referral pathways for adventure therapy, supporting children with significant levels of vulnerability, complexity and/or disengaged from mainstream service settings
- Completed activities funded through the Youth Participation Fund, with eight local community organisations supported to run youth activities focusing on connection, resilience and youth leadership in the context of disasters
- Healthy North Coast and Social Futures jointly hosted a media event marking the first anniversary of Resilient Kids, showcasing outcomes and participant stories to the wider community with local media coverage
- Resilient Kids staff presented insights on supporting young people in disasters to contribute to sector understanding through forums and events
- Brought together representatives from education, health, community and youth advocacy organisations to strengthen relationships across sectors

Stream 1 snapshot

School-based educational programs focused on resilience, social and emotional wellbeing, and disaster preparedness, plus parent and carer support.

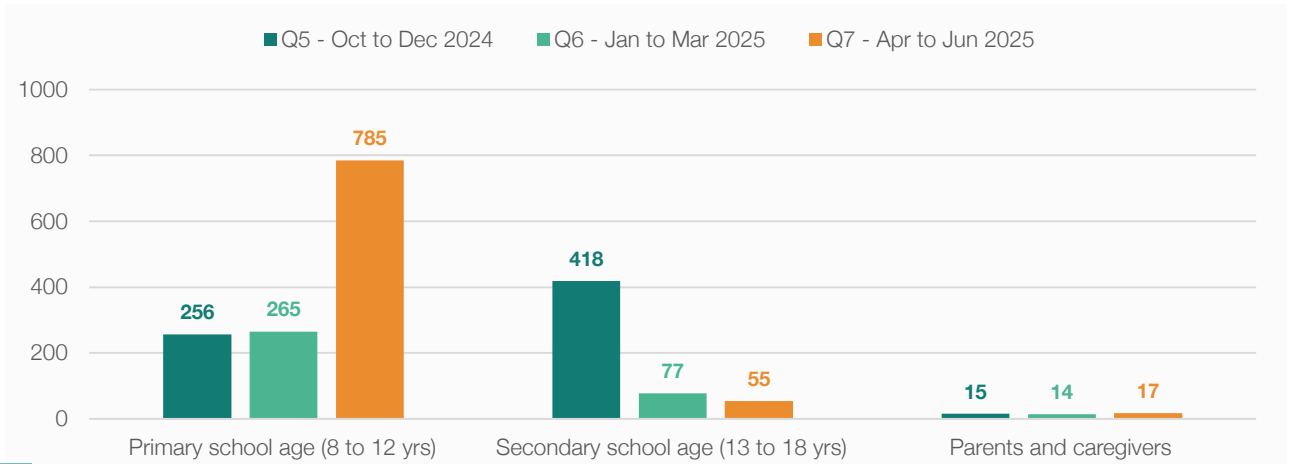


Figure 1 Number of participants in Stream 1 activities by quarter

Activities and outcomes during year two:

43 total education programs delivered

1,856 children and young people participated

31 local schools engaged

16% identified as a First Nations person

45 average participants per program (range of 3 to 104)

15% reported having autism or cognitive disability

72% participants were primary school aged (8-12 years)

83% reported being happy with program

Average post-workshop score reported by outcome area

where 5=strongly agree; 3=neutral; 1=strongly disagree

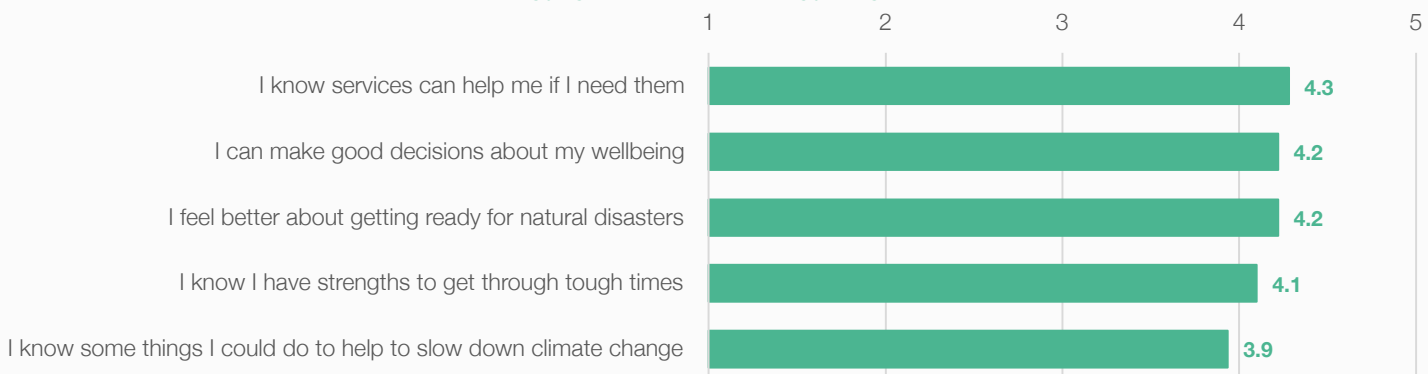


Figure 2 Participant-rated outcomes from Stream 1 activities

Stream 1 snapshot (continued)

Program developments during year two:

- New climate change component added to the Disaster Preparedness Obstacle Course, enhancing awareness of environmental impacts and resilience
- Invited First Nations young people to provide their own Acknowledgement of Country at the start of each session
- Cultural safety elements in evaluation tools revised to improve inclusivity
- Program materials and sessions revised to better engage students in different ways and support varying levels of literacy
- Partnership with local TAFE enabled service delivery to young people who were engaged in alternative education pathways
- Collaboration with Murwillumbah Community Centre's Mission Possible to host the 'Getting Prepared' event, which reached over 250 young people from 10 schools
- Delivered Resilient Parenting sessions to enhance family wellbeing and connection, with staff from Stream 2

What does a workshop look like?



While the design of each session was tailored to each specific schools' context, workshops aimed to share information, education and skills about:

- natural disasters and emergency situations
- climate change
- resilience, including managing difficulties and changes
- wellbeing, including caring for yourself

Delivered by a team of skilled and passionate facilitators in an interactive and engaging style, students worked through a range of developmentally appropriate content, sharing, activities and games — including the Resilient Doughnut, What Fills My Cup, Disaster Obstacle Course and Self-Care Bingo.

Students at a local school completing the Disaster Obstacle Course

Stream 2 snapshot

Counselling, social and emotional wellbeing activities and other therapeutic supports for young people and their families.

Activities and outcomes during year two:

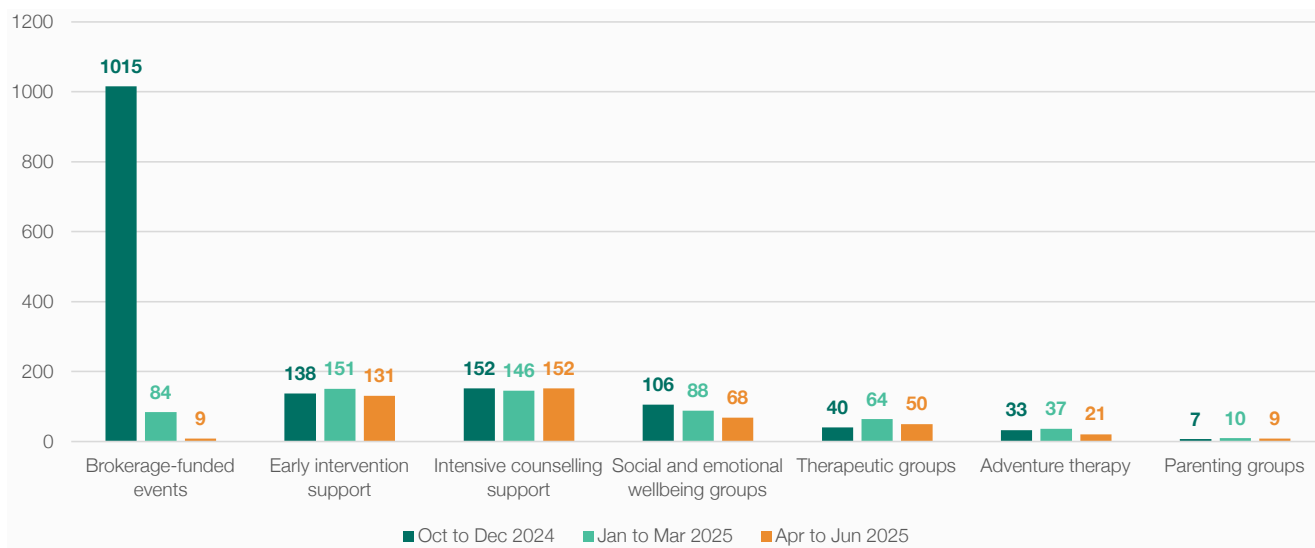


Figure 3 Number of participants in Stream 2 activities by quarter and activity type

Individual cases

351 children and young people received support

56 parents or caregivers participated within a case

2,034 total sessions delivered

5.7 sessions per case, ranging from a min of 1 to max of 40

53% of sessions delivered face-to-face in one of six community Wellbeing Hubs

63% of cases completed as planned (includes goals were achieved, client no longer needed support or client was connected to another service)

Adventure therapy

37 young people engaged in long-term intensive support

612 face-to-face therapeutic sessions completed

566 case management contacts completed

Group cases

16 social and emotional wellbeing groups completed

6 therapeutic groups completed

7 parenting/carer groups completed

168 total sessions delivered

~5 members per group on average

Brokerage-funded activities

24 community events, capacity-building and co-design workshops held

1,108 total attendees at brokerage-funded activities

Stream 2 snapshot (continued)

Characteristics of young people engaged in individual or group support

- 61%** of young people were female, with 37% male and 0.5% intersex
- 5%** were culturally and linguistically diverse
- 35%** were aged 8-11 years, with 34% aged 12-14 years and 29% aged 15-18 years
- 6%** identified as LGBT+
- 13%** identified as First Nations
- 21%** reported having autism, a cognitive or other disability

Young peoples' experiences and outcomes of services

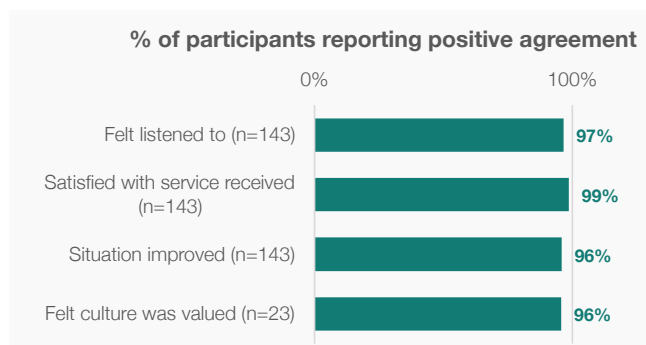


Figure 4 Participant-rated experience of service

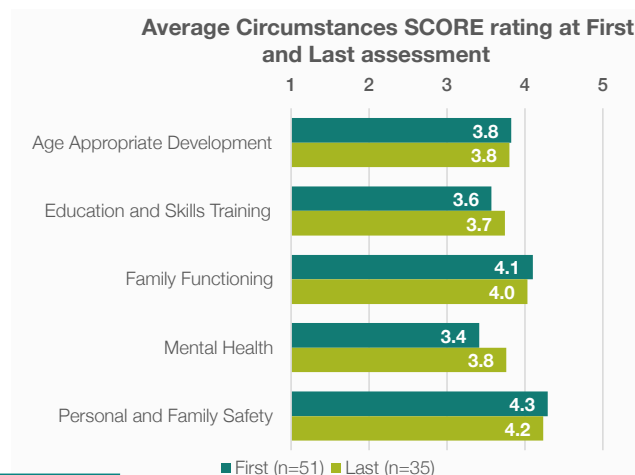


Figure 5 Participant-rated outcomes using Circumstances SCORE

Interpretation note: For Circumstances SCORE, a higher score represents a more positive result, with results along a scale of 1 to 5.

A range of outcome measures were used in Stream 2: the Circumstances SCORE for children aged 8-12 receiving counselling, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for young people aged 13-18, and the Outcomes Star for children engaged in Adventure Therapy.

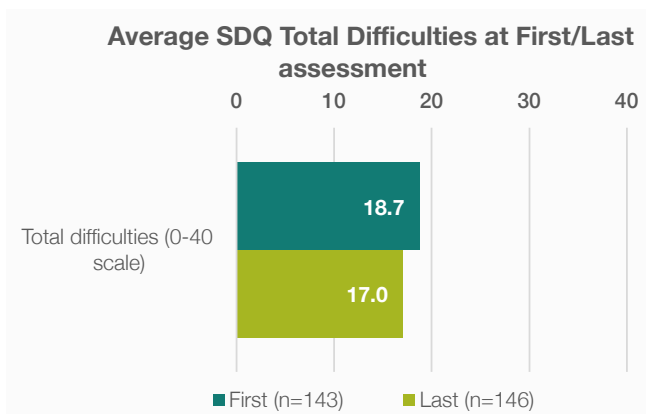


Figure 6 Participant-rated outcomes using SDQ Total Difficulties

Interpretation note: For SDQ Total Difficulties, a lower score represents a more positive result, with results along a scale of 0 to 40.

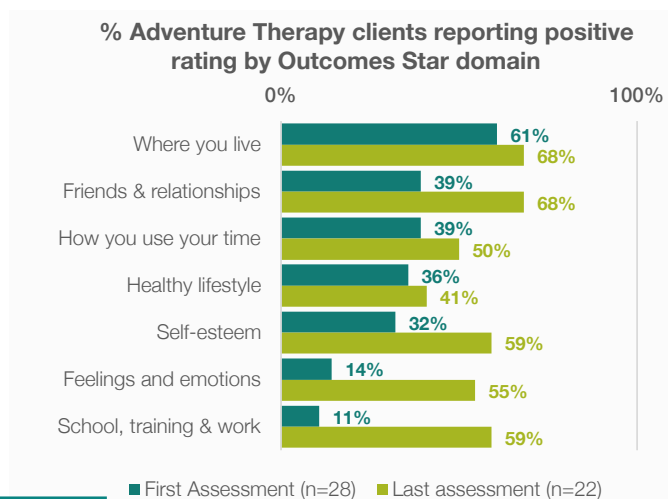


Figure 7 Participant-rated outcomes using Outcomes Star

Interpretation note: For Outcomes Star, a higher score represents a more positive result, with percentages indicating positively framed responses of 4 or 5 along a 5-point scale.

Stream 2 snapshot (continued)

Program developments during year two:

- Hosted or participated in 40 community engagement events, including in-service sessions with local referrers, workforce development, local events and feedback opportunities with young people
- Developed more group programs, including art, grief and loss, anti-bullying, peer sharing, acro yoga, music and surfboard shaping
- Increased frequency and availability of services in existing Hub locations
- Extended reach of the program to the Lower Clarence Valley, with new staff and centres opened in Yamba and Maclean
- Introduced a Family Focused Counsellor role to work with parents and carers
- Established specialist referral pathway with Clinical Psychologist for timely neurocognitive assessments
- Secondary consultations for staff supported neurodivergent young people
- More brokerage-funded assessments enabled quick access to specialist support
- LGBTQ+ inclusion training delivered to schools to build teacher capacity
- Collaboration with Medicare Mental Health expanded referral options



Youth representatives and participating organisations celebrating the one-year anniversary of Resilient Kids

Stream 3 snapshot

Addressing the fundamental emotional, cultural, social and recreational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Stream 3 Aboriginal Resilient Kids was established in September 2024 and was delivered by Lives Lived Well. It aimed to increase First Nations young people’s sense of identity, cultural connection and social-emotional wellbeing, and support access to culturally safe healing approaches.

Over that time, service delivery focused on:

- Culturally sensitive youth mental health support and case management, delivered primarily through face-to-face, place-based services and assertive community outreach
- Development of safe, youth-friendly spaces where children and young people can socialise, study, and relax
- Collaboration with Youth Peer Workers and community partners to develop culturally safe, age-appropriate recreation and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Capacity-building with local stakeholders to strengthen youth-specific and culturally informed practice — including youth workers, education, justice, health, and first response agencies
- Establishment of a Community of Practice to enhance collaboration, coordination, and communication among key agencies

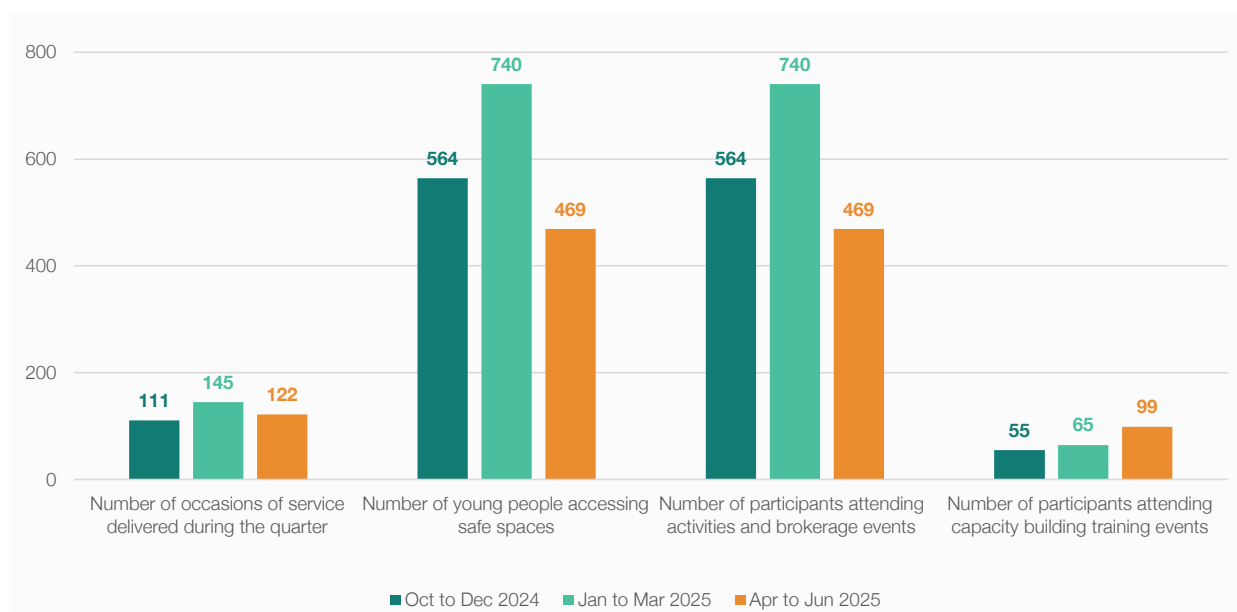


Figure 8 Number of participants in Stream 3 activities by quarter and activity type

Stream 3 snapshot (continued)

187 First Nations young people enrolled in the program

28% participants were aged 8 to 12 years

72% participants were aged 13 to 18 years

100% participants reported they were satisfied (n=30)

100% participants reported that the service was culturally safe

>80% participants demonstrated an improvement through an outcomes measure survey (K5, Quality of Life or Social Connectedness scale) (n=37)

Program developments during year two:

- Collaborated with Acmena Youth Justice Centre to provide weekly 1:1 and group support to assist reintegration into the community post-release
- Service Level Agreement (SLA) established with headspace Grafton, enabling co-location of a clinician two days per week
- Group program at Casino High School engaged 15 boys from Years 8–10 who were at risk of expulsion, achieving strong engagement and successful excursions
- Participated in youth network meetings across the region, including Grafton, Lismore, Clarence Valley, and Richmond Valley
- Supported Police Youth Command in prioritising a Youth Action meeting for Tweed Heads
- Collaborated with Rekindling the Spirit for a youth camp
- Facilitated Fit for Life groups at PCYC in Lismore and Tweed Heads, promoting health and social engagement
- Consulted with Department of Education regarding distance education closures and strategies to support affected students
- Delivered presentation at the Tweed School Link Forum to strengthen interagency collaboration
- Comprehensive Christmas holiday program scheduled to maintain engagement during school breaks
- Partnered with Queer Family Northern Rivers to support LGBTQ+ young people with community connection and gender transition resources
- Supported clients accessing Aboriginal Medical Services appointments to begin neurodevelopmental assessments and diagnoses
- Collaborated with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to assist clients with diagnosis and NDIS registration

Youth Participation Fund snapshot

The Youth Participation Fund was designed to support youth-led or youth-focused activities. Through small grants for local organisations, activities aimed to develop resilience, wellbeing, and connection, particularly for young people who experience barriers and/or vulnerabilities, such as those who are First Nations, identify as LGBTQ+, culturally diverse, and those not engaged in school or education.

Importantly, young people themselves were involved in making decisions about how funding was allocated to ensure the activities responded to what mattered most to young people in local communities.

Youth Participation Fund highlights for October 2024 to June 2025 included:

8	local organisations funded to deliver nine programs	11%	of participating young people were First Nations
\$900k+	amount of Youth Participation Fund funding provided	10%	of participating young people were neurodivergent or had a cognitive disability
1,603	funded activities completed	7%	of participating young people identified as LGBTQ+
537	young people participated in activities	0.5%	of participating young people identified as culturally and linguistically diverse
99%	young people reported they were satisfied with their participation	23%	of participating young people were disengaged from school or education

Example: Community of practice

During a Youth Participation Fund community-of-practice meeting, Mudyala Aboriginal Corporation highlighted the limited counselling options and long wait times for Aboriginal young people in the Lower Clarence Valley.

In response, the Resilient Kids clinical team from Stream 2 collaborated with Mudyala to establish timely referral pathways.

From there, a Resilient Kids Counsellor undertook outreach visits to provide clinical support, facilitate telehealth assessments, and strengthen access to support for this community.

This partnership highlighted the benefits of collaboration in addressing service gaps for those young people who are at risk of missing out on valuable support.

Example: Mission Possible project

Murwillumbah Community Centre's *Mission Possible Project* trained 15 diverse young leaders from Tweed Shire to promote disaster readiness through social media, creative workshops, and community engagement.

The six-part program built emotional and social competence and equipped participants with knowledge on climate change, preparedness, and recovery.

At the 2024 *Mission Possible Expo*, young leaders presented community projects, including art, environmental, and wellbeing initiatives. One standout project was a game designed to help young people express emotions safely.

Stream 1 staff joined sessions where participants explained how the game could be used by psychologists, youth workers, and carers to build emotional literacy. The project highlighted the value of youth-led innovation and meaningful collaboration.



Students participating in an activity as part of the YPF-funded Mission Possible Project

Outcomes for young people

In year two, young people reported building their wellbeing and resilience, connecting with valuable supports, and feeling more equipped to manage difficult experiences.

Making it easy to connect with support

Young people reported feeling safe, supported, and respected during program activities, with opportunities to connect with peers and trusted adults in a positive environment that fostered belonging and stability.

For many young people, Resilient Kids was regarded as the first type of support service that had genuinely met their needs and helped their situation.

" [They] really listened to what I had to say and gave me important skills to help me deal with my problems"

Young person

"I've learnt about the whole counselling thing because I never really knew much about it ... like how I don't know how it feels to me to talk and all that ... it felt better the further it got through, just the more I can talk"

Young person

Engaging kids where they already were

Resilient Kids activities were able to build strong connections with young people and facilitate access to a range of support services by engaging through familiar settings, welcoming events and local outreach

This place-based approach encouraged more participation and help-seeking in young people, overcoming commonly identified barriers such as stigma and anxiety.



Developing strategies to navigate challenges and self-care

Across the broad range of Resilient Kids activities, young people reported increased understanding of their own emotions and behaviours. They developed insight into their relationship with themselves and others, and developed skills and strategies to regulate difficult emotions and work through challenging life events.

These developments were achieved through a diverse mix of approaches, ranging from mindfulness, movement, and creative expression (e.g. art, music) through to more formal counselling, psychoeducation, group work and family-focused therapy.

"I've noticed that I give myself that time to do the thing I love outside of school [and that] has really made me a bit less stressed."

Young person

I'm starting TAFE next term, getting my year 10 certificate, working as well ... [I've] just become a better person ... there's all good things that are happening for me.

I feel like if I didn't have this program, I feel like I'd still sort of be where I was at the start. Probably, you can't tell the future, but I feel like I would have definitely still been still on that road."

Young person

Setting goals and creating plans for the future

Resilient Kids activities provided opportunities for young people to reflect on their strengths and value and imagine the future they want.

They were supported to learn important skills and plan the steps to meet their goals — often these related to relationships with family and friends, school engagement, connecting with hobbies and interests, and building confidence.

Young people developed a greater sense of agency and control over their environment. This equipped them with resilience to face future challenges, including what they can do to prepare for disasters and to address climate change.

Case study

Stream 1: Skill building

In Term 2 of 2024, The Family Centre delivered an educational program at a small, remote school in the region after positive feedback from another local primary school encouraged them to participate.

The participating K–12 school raised concerns around trauma, behavioural needs and low literacy, prompting consideration by the facilitators around accessibility and engagement.

In close collaboration with school staff, Stream 1 created a safe, supportive environment and tailored learning activities to suit students' needs. Around 41 students, many of whom had previously limited access to any support services — participated in sessions that built resilience, self-awareness, and emotional wellbeing skills.

Teacher feedback highlighted strong student engagement, effective facilitation, and positive peer interaction.

Stream 2: Individual support

Jen, a 12-year-old girl, was encouraged by her mother to engage with Resilient Kids to address sleep difficulties, anxiety at school, and challenges forming friendships.

Jen agreed to attend regular sessions with a program worker to explore strategies for managing these concerns.

In early sessions, Jen and her worker created a mandala on canvas and incorporated sewing to produce a completed artwork over six sessions. This hands-on activity provided a calming focus while Jen discussed her worries and developed coping strategies.

Through these sessions, Jen described the 'busyness' she had felt in her head at bedtime. She developed a nightly mindfulness routine to promote relaxation.

To support with management of anxiety, Jen practiced daily affirmations and grounding techniques that she could also use at school.

Jen subsequently reported that her sleep had improved. She joined a school band, which supported her confidence and ability to form new friendships. She actively participated in Resilient Kids social and emotional wellbeing groups, where her confidence and peer connections continued to grow and led to her forming a new friendship group outside of her school setting.

Outcomes for parents and caregivers of young people

Resilient Kids provided valuable support for the broader ecosystem that surrounds young people, leading to stronger family relationships and improved capacity to confidently support and care for kids.

Offering dedicated support to parents

The program focused on the family system by:

- connecting education and resources to parents of school students through Stream 1
- making dedicated support available to wider families in Streams 2 and 3

Parents and caregivers were supported to develop a fuller understanding of their child's needs, apply helpful strategies at home, and to gain insight into how they can be a more effective parent.

Parents commonly identified the lack of available support for them in their parenting role, and Resilient Kids was often the first instance of thoughtfully reflecting on their role and ability as a parent.

"The openness, the communication style, being able to have a space with my eldest that we could have discussions without it escalating ... that dynamic within my household has definitely gotten a lot better"

Parent of a young person

"I'm learning as well at the same time, I have my own therapy going on, so I'm doing somatic therapy and therapy and learning about self-regulation and that information I can help with my kids"

Parent of a young person

Working together on supportive environments and strategies

The program created a supportive environment for families to navigate through their unique challenges. This covered difficult topics such as emotional dysregulation, problematic behaviours, family conflict, trauma and loss.

Strategies and tools aimed to normalise the process of seeking professional support, modelling effective engagement with young people, and in lightening the load experienced by parents.

Case study

Resilient Parenting

A “Resilient Parenting” program was developed following collaborative planning between The Family Centre and Social Futures.

The 'Resilient Parenting' program provided a safe, supportive space for 8–10 parents and carers to share experiences and build skills to strengthen family relationships.

Sessions encouraged curiosity, reflection, and the practical application of tools between meetings.

Participants reported finding the weekly tools and follow-up discussions most beneficial.

Parents engaged openly, identified areas for growth, and committed to implementing strategies to support change within their families.



Outcomes for communities

Through a collaborative and place-based approach, Resilient Kids created connections and built up the capacity within local communities to support young people.

Addressing existing gaps in support for young people

Resilient Kids provided much-needed resourcing and availability of support across the region where there are significant gaps in services suitable for young people.

Reflections from key stakeholders have identified the ongoing level of unmet need in relation to mental health and psychological support for young people and the considerable complexity of presentations, particularly in smaller, outlying communities across the region.

Program staff and management reported that this level of need only emerged by being embedded within these communities, and was often relating to young people who were not in contact with other support services and missing out on the support they need.

"We didn't realise the level of trauma experienced by students.

This project has enabled the young people to share their experiences and build resilience. It opened a door for us to see what the children are going through and look at ways of supporting in the process of healing"

Local school

"[We] started a community BBQ that all the families started coming to of a Friday afternoon ... that trust, knowing that we would come, I think families love that ... I think it really did build trust and that dropped a bit of that stigma around mental health. We were having chats with young people and they don't even realise they're having a session."

Stream 3 Aboriginal Resilient Kids staff

Building capacity within the service system

Resilient Kids contributed to the capacity and capability of the local service system through a focus on inter-agency collaboration, facilitating communities of practice, making workforce training available, and embedding feedback and continuous improvement as part of the program's approach.

Resilient Kids strengthened coordination and integration between existing programs to avoid duplication of services, develop better pathways to care for young people, and jointly deliver activities where appropriate.

Together, this helped extend the benefits of the program beyond Resilient Kids activities. It has also built the knowledge and skills of the local workforce in the region, by sharing knowledge and insights with schools, health services and community organisations so that they are better able to support young people in the future.

"In small communities, it really matters that you're there, you're present, you're engaging with other support services and schools

Our program was really able to do that as soon as we could and that was a real strength because it established a sense of trust"

Stream 2 program staff

"So we wanted to do a group for 16 and 17 year olds [and since then] the facilitator of that group has started their own youth art group

And so that's ongoing in their community, they're working that out themselves.

All the parents contribute a little bit it's totally independent of us.

It's planted that seed for them to build that capacity and know that the kids were gaining so much benefit from [that] peer connection."

Stream 2 program staff

Building capacity within local communities

Resilient Kids worked closely with local communities to develop their own capacity and resources to support the wellbeing and resilience of their young people.

Program staff from across all streams developed trusted relationships with local communities, were visible and proactively engaged through ultra-local events and relationships — rather than relying on a whole-of-region approach.

Prioritising the unique needs of smaller and more isolated schools based on their rurality from Stream 1, together with the hub-and-spoke outreach model of Streams 2 and 3, helped to ensure that local communities shared in the benefits of Resilient Kids in an equitable and locally relevant way.

Lessons learnt

Lessons learnt from delivering Resilient Kids in year two

The program's flexible and diverse offering continued to be critical in responding to the significant challenge of unmet need for supporting young people right across the region.

Key learnings from year two:

- Understanding of disaster impact** Through the experiences of young people and their wider communities, a deeper understanding of the many ways in which they were impacted by the 2022 floods emerged. This includes recognising that while a young person's home might not have been affected, the places and people around them can be disrupted or damaged in ways that can profoundly impact them.
- Flexibility as a design feature** The flexibility of Resilient Kids, compared to many other programs, enabled it to reach young people where they were, engage without restrictive session caps or eligibility criteria, and to adapt the program's offering to what young people are seeking.
- Navigating short-term funding** As the program neared its scheduled end date, many community members, stakeholders and program staff raised the dilemma that can emerge when short-term funded programs that are meeting a genuine need within communities come to an end. This can cause disappointment and mistrust of services in future. While funding constraints are generally systemic and difficult to overcome, continuing to show up in local communities is critical for building and maintaining trust.
- Avoiding duplication** There are a range of other support services and school-based education activities that are working in different parts of the region. There is a need to work in a coordinated way to avoid duplication and to ensure that support is available where it's needed.
- Meaningful outcome measurement** The outcome measures used in the program show modest improvements in young people's outcomes on average. This wasn't always reflective of the significant positive impact observed by program staff working with individual young people and their families. Measures that focus more on wellbeing and resilience and relevant to the experiences of young people may be more meaningful in this context.

Resilience in action

Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred presented both a significant challenge but also unique resilience-building opportunity for Resilient Kids providers and the young people they were working with.

Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred made landfall on 7 March 2025, crossing the mainland between Maroochydore and Bribie Island in Queensland. The nature of the weather system and its movements brought heavy rainfall, flash flooding, and damaging winds across the North Coast region over several days. It impacted many of the communities previously impacted by the 2022 floods, placing additional strain on communities still in recovery. This accumulation of significant anxiety, trauma and loss is known to compound the impact that people experience in subsequent disaster events.

Program staff and management across Resilient Kids mobilised quickly to offer both psychological and practical support to young people and their families in the lead up to and following the event. This included:

- proactively checking in with clients
- developing and distributing a resource called Weathering the Weather, which offered wellbeing strategies and information on available supports for young people
- continuing to deliver much-needed support remotely
- assisting families to develop emergency plans and explore safe alternatives for young people to stay with relatives or friends rather than in evacuation centres
- facilitating a smooth return to school despite heightened anxiety

The experience generated valuable insights into how the program's flexible and embedded model can be activated within the different stages of a disaster event, even while navigating logistical challenges for team members who also live in the affected area.

"For one young person who went through the 2022 floods, in the lead up to Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred he was pretty frightened. I had lots of chats with him about it, gave him a disaster box, I went and saw him probably 12 hours before the disaster was going to hit, and then was messaging him a lot, like every day of it ... His reflection at the end of it was 'I felt so much safer that whole time because I knew there was someone that was going to be there'."

Stream 2 program staff

Francesca's experience

Francesca, a 12-year-old girl, and her family were severely impacted by the 2022 floods, enduring a drawn out and traumatic rescue from the roof of their Lismore home.

When rescued, Francesca was devastated by the loss of leaving behind family pets who were not able to travel with them in the rescue boat. The event left Francesca experiencing overwhelming emotional and physical sensations, and caused long-term disruptions such as using non-speaking communication, sleep disturbances, heightened anxiety, disrupted learning and development, and difficulty concentrating at school.

Following the 2022 flood, Francesca received ongoing support through Resilient Kids, including one-on-one counselling and group therapy, and was diagnosed with trauma-related anxiety.

When Cyclone Alfred approached, her trauma symptoms resurfaced, but access to telehealth support allowed Francesca to engage in therapy, revisit coping strategies, and create a safe space for herself and her cats. Francesca reported that having immediate support available in her home, engaging in talk therapy and art therapy and revisiting her family's emergency action plan were all helpful – *“it helped me calm down and express my feelings. And it made me think of our strategies we did.”*

As a result, Francesca's anxiety decreased, her coping skills improved, and she gained confidence and resilience in navigating climate-related disasters.



Looking forward

As the program wrapped up, the focus was on successful transition planning, consolidating learnings and sharing widely to support disaster-impacted young people in future.

1

Community Disaster Resilient Assessment

In collaboration with a range of perspectives on young people and disaster resilience, this second round of the assessment will explore how young people can be better involved, prioritised and supported across the stages of disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

2

Service delivery completed

By the end of 2025, all remaining Resilient Kids activities were completed, with existing staff and management working closely with the young people and families they support on transition planning and connecting with suitable services and resources to enable ongoing support.

3

Final data collection and analysis

A final wave of data collection activities will seek to gather remaining experiences and insights of key stakeholders involved in Resilient Kids, with all data sources being analysed and synthesised to develop the overall program findings and implications.

4

Release of Impact Evaluation Report

In mid-2026, Healthy North Coast is anticipating releasing the final evaluation report of Resilient Kids, which will take a comprehensive view of all outcomes and learnings across the entire program.

This will be supported by a range of communications activities and strategies that aim to share what has been learnt and contribute to the emerging evidence base around supporting the resilience of young people resilience in the context of climate-related disasters.



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