



Moments of impact

Local Peer Work stories

Youth Reference Group camp

In April 2025, members of the South Eastern NSW Peer workforce were invited to speak at the annual headspace Youth Reference Group camp, an event attended by over **80 young people** from headspace services across the region.

The camp provides space for leadership, learning, planning and connection, and this year's inclusion of Peer Work marked a significant moment in opening new pathways into the mental health sector for young people with lived and living experience.

"As a young person I was deeply impacted by experiences of mental ill-health. My family tree was wrapped up in mental ill-health and a number of tragedies, and I experienced my own debilitating challenges with keeping well, presenting to services for the first time at the age of 10.

I was repeatedly let down and longed for more compassionate care. It was clear to me I wanted to work in and contribute to the mental health sector.

But at the time, the only pathways I was aware of were disciplines like psychology and social work, I hadn't heard of Peer Work. I didn't know what a Peer Worker was.

When I finally discovered Peer Work it felt like coming home. It was the first time I'd seen a professional role where your life experience wasn't just relevant, it was the core qualification.

All the things I had been through, that I thought were barriers to the life I wanted, started to look more like bridges to new opportunities and transformed the way I viewed myself."

*- Courtney Cross,
Program Lead, Regional
Peer Workforce, COORDINARE -
South Eastern NSW PHN*

