



TWO FIFTHS OF 16-24-YEAR- OLDS ARE MANAGING A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER¹

HEADFYRST

SALVATION ARMY YOUTHLINK AND HEADSPACE: HEADFYRST

Salvation Army Youthlink and selected headspace youth mental health centres in Western Sydney are working together to provide the headfyrst program. The collaborative headfyrst project aims to reduce the barriers faced by young people aged 12-25 years in accessing AOD and mental health services in Western Sydney by providing resources, counselling and support to help young people and their families work through their recovery journey. headfyrst is funded by the Western Sydney Primary Health Network.

Ramon* is a 21-year-old Filipino male who was referred to the headfyrst program from the headspace intake stream. Ramon presented with fluctuating moods, anxiety symptoms, and binge drinking tendencies as a result of suffering from grief and loss in the past few years. He attended 12 sessions, including two psychosocial assessments and ten treatment sessions. During the assessment phase, it became clear that Ramon had been suffering from depressive and anxiety symptoms for quite some time and was resorting to excess drinking when socialising as a coping strategy and to escape from reality.

Ramon was committed during his time with headfyrst and identified goals to reduce his drinking behaviours, gain a more stable sense of identity and learn anxiety management techniques. The ten treatment sessions focused on these goals using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Polyvagal exercises for childhood complex trauma and Motivational Interviewing (MI).

Ramon was also connected to the Fyrst program to help him find part-time employment support and enrol in a Youth Work TAFE course. Ramon showed immense insight, sharing that his treatment goals were met and that he felt better equipped to deal with his daily challenges. Upon discharge, he reported he had reduced his drinking to three to four standard drinks when socialising and no longer felt the urge to binge. Ramon felt proud of his progress.

For more information about how WentWest supports Western Sydney, visit www.wentwest.com.au.

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of this client.

1. ABS (2022), National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release>