

“I NO LONGER  
FEEL LIKE  
THERE IS  
SOMETHING  
WRONG WITH  
ME”

# 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 alcohol and other drugs 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.

Carlos\* is a 22-year-old male who self-referred to headspace with attention difficulties that were impacting his performance at work. An initial adolescent psychosocial assessment (HEADSS) was conducted, and it became clear that he was also experiencing significant difficulties regulating his emotions and managing relationships, had low self-esteem and a history of changed perceptions related to cannabis use.

As a result, Carlos was offered an appointment with the headspace GP who noted symptoms of depression and anxiety and referred Carlos to a psychiatrist for further assessment. The GP also recommended Carlos to the headfyrst program for psychological therapy to assist him with mood difficulties, anxiety, and substance use.

Carlos has attended 12 therapy sessions under headfyrst and is experiencing reduced depression and anxiety symptoms as a result. The initial four sessions focused on building Carlos's self-esteem through cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), as well as dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) skills training to improve his emotional regulation. The following four sessions focused on improving Carlos's symptoms of depression and anxiety through CBT. The final sessions have assisted Carlos in applying these skills

within his home and work life contexts, and helped him explore his own values as he explores changes in residence and plans for work and study opportunities.

In future sessions, the headfyrst team will work with Carlos on relapse prevention skills for cannabis use, and start planning his discharge from the program.

Since taking part in the headfyrst program, Carlos's concentration has improved dramatically. Carlos shared, *"no longer feel like there is something fundamentally wrong with me"*.

He is actively confronting anxiety-provoking situations and reengaging in relationships that he had been avoiding. Over the course of his engagement, Carlos has gained insight into his past, and come to understand how several traumatic events in his childhood may have impacted his emotional experiences. This has helped validate his emotions and encouraged him to be kinder to himself by finding healthier coping strategies.

For more information about how WentWest supports Western Sydney, visit [www.wentwest.com.au](http://www.wentwest.com.au).