

PODCAST CHALLENGE CASE STUDY

Peer chat podcasts offer raw insights into young people’s mental wellbeing experiences and challenges

Background

Improving mental wellbeing is a high priority of the Loddon Mallee region. People living in rural areas face unique challenges like isolation and climate change events, which can contribute to mental health conditions.

These health inequities identified young people in the Murray sub-region as a priority group.

Collaboration

The Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU) supported headspace Echuca with funding to deliver an initiative that supports young people’s mental wellbeing through a prevention focused approach.

This collaboration opportunity came from an existing connection through the local Campaspe Murray Mental Health and Wellbeing Network.

This podcast series addresses emerging mental wellbeing issues from local young people, achieving both headspace and the LMPHU’s objective of a youth led community engagement activity.



Approach

The 2024 Podcast Challenge was scaled up from a previous podcast project in 2023 on gambling and gaming.

Approximately 100 year 11 and 12 Campaspe Vocational Major applied learning students across six schools engaged in an interactive learning experience to create and compete in a mental health series Podcast Challenge.

Students completed two educational engagement workshops, a podcasting ‘how to’ session and recording and filming day consisting of topic interviews with a Mental Health Clinician, Community Topic Expert and School Wellbeing Leader.

“real and authentic talks”

Participating school podcasts and topics

- [Echuca College - Vaping](#)
- [Echuca Twin Rivers Specialist School - Cyber safety](#)
- [Kyabram P-12 College - Bullying](#)
- [Rochester Secondary College - Supporting friends and family](#)
- [St Augustine’s Kyabram - Anxiety and depression](#)
- [St Joseph’s College Echuca - Body image](#)

Outcomes

- Increased student’s mental health literacy, educated them on important mental wellbeing topics and connected them to relevant supports and resources
- The peer chat podcasts offer raw insights into the experiences and challenges faced by young people. These lived experience examples have the potential to inform key settings with clear direction on improvements they can make
- The podcasts are an engaging tool to start important mental wellbeing conversations and decrease stigma on the issues
- Local media promotion and interest at the National headspace Forum to replicate the model throughout Australia

Project Learnings

- The recruitment of schools and aligning schedules to accommodate all sessions had its challenges, unfortunately one school withdrew due to competing commitments
- Being included in the schools’ applied learning program and curriculum assisted with engagement
- Engagement workshops were introduced following a learning from the 2023 podcast project. Although initial student buy-in was slow, the workshops supported foundational knowledge of topics and fostered connections and trust with podcast stakeholders
- Mental health literacy key messages were crucial in fostering successful learning and understanding of topics
- Recording the podcasts at an offsite location created a safe space whereby students felt comfortable to speak honestly on sensitive topics, free from judgement

“Everyone was able to take a piece away from this experience”

Next steps

- The podcasts and supporting flipbooks will be finalised and released by schools, launching the Podcast Challenge
- Each school will be responsible for promoting their podcast and encouraging community to listen to these important conversations around mental wellbeing
- The podcast achieving the highest reach will be announced and presented with podcasting equipment for their school
- Stay tuned for the release of these podcasts via [headspace Echuca](https://www.headspace.org.au/echuca) and hear firsthand on the impact of these mental wellbeing topics on young people

Student participation survey results

- 85% have experienced concerns with one or more of these mental wellbeing topics
- 88% rated an increased understanding of their podcast topic
- 83% rated an increased understanding of the services and supports available for their podcast topic

