



Improving mental health outcomes in South Eastern NSW

Kane's story

For people living in South Eastern NSW, natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic have created an environment of increased stress. In June 2020, COORDINARE – South Eastern NSW PHN (Primary Health Network) partnered with Wellways to deliver NewAccess, a no-cost mental health coaching service developed by Beyond Blue, across the region. Kane's story below highlights the importance of enhancing access to mental health support for people living in regional and rural communities.

In early 2021, escalating COVID-19 cases and restrictions created a climate of anxiety and fear for many Australians. Some parts of South Eastern NSW were impacted by prolonged lockdowns, with the Wollongong and Shellharbour Local Government Areas particularly hard hit.

Although Kane*, a resident of Southern NSW, escaped the worst of the pandemic restrictions and lockdowns, he felt anxious and overwhelmed about COVID-19. He found himself dealing with irrational thoughts that interfered with his day-to-day life and activities.

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of clients have stayed with the program for the full six sessions

4 in 5

people are self-referring to NewAccess due to recommendations from family and friends

66%



have recovered, meaning they no longer have symptoms of anxiety or depression

"I needed help to break some negative thought patterns," explained Kane. "These behaviours were driven by spiralling and irrational thoughts."

To find the help he needed, Kane turned to NewAccess, a six-session mental health coaching service for anyone with early signs of anxiety or depression and/or feeling stressed about everyday life challenges such as work, study, relationships, health, and loneliness. The service is for anyone over 12 years of age in South Eastern NSW, and no doctor's referral or mental health care plan is required.

Kane contacted NewAccess Batemans Bay and was partnered with a coach named Joel. Like all the NewAccess coaches, Joel was trained in cognitive behavioural therapy and available to support Kane via telehealth or in person.

Over the next six sessions, Joel guided Kane through some strategies to self-manage his thoughts and fears.

"I started to keep a record of positive outcomes when I faced my worries. This helped me plan for future situations when I might feel overwhelmed at work, for example," said Kane.

"I think NewAccess is extremely beneficial to people like me. It provides you with the tools to deal with triggering situations before they become too overwhelming."

Kane appreciated the tailored and preventative nature of the program.

"The NewAccess program was quite different to other counselling services I've had. It provided a range of tools that can be applied to any situation," he said.

"I believe this allows the individual to feel in control of the situation and outcomes."

Coach Joel praised the hands-on nature of the program.

"NewAccess gives people practical ways of working through tricky situations and emotional challenges. It's amazing to see so many people, like Kane, benefit so much in just six weeks," said Joel.

Since NewAccess was launched in November 2020, 69% of clients have stayed with the program for the full six sessions and 66% have recovered, meaning they no longer have symptoms of anxiety or depression. Word of mouth is the most common way of finding out about NewAccess, with 4 in 5 people self-referring due to recommendations from family and friends.

To find out more about NewAccess and how you can access the service, visit www.wellways.org/our-services/newaccess, email senswnewaccess@wellways.org or call 1300 921 535.

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**Not his real name.*