

Closing the Gap

Driving change through creativity

Beyond Empathy is an organisation that works with communities across Australia to shift perceptions and generate positive social change. With a strong connection to First Nations communities, their team of artists, mentors, community workers, local practitioners and leaders forms creative partnerships with people in need, empowering and transforming lives in the process. **Beyond Empathy successfully 'pitched' their idea to receive COORDINARE funding from an engaged audience on Pitch Night.**

The Illawarra SHIFT project

Funding awarded to Beyond Empathy led to their Illawarra team offering a unique and inspiring podcast project called SHIFT.

SHIFT – Shaping How I Feel Today – gave young people living in public housing estates in the Illawarra the opportunity to use audio, storytelling, multimedia and live performance to tell stories that stimulate conversations about health.

By providing a creative way for young people to express their thoughts and feelings about health, including the importance of looking after our mental health, SHIFT helped create new pathways to better health and well-being.

“By addressing health and nutrition through storytelling, we were able to have conversations that were authentic for the young people we support.”
Daniel, Beyond Empathy Illawarra Projects Worker



Making a difference

During 2019 and 2020, about 200 young people from 70 families got involved in SHIFT, creating content for more than 40 stories.

As part of the project, Beyond Empathy took young people 'on country', sparking stories and conversations about connection to country and its relevance to health. Hundreds of workshops were run at schools, in halls, outside homes and throughout the community.

Once the podcasts are released later in 2021, the number of people impacted by SHIFT will extend into the thousands.

“Over 200 young people have had opportunities for mentoring, for support, to be creative, to feel valued, to gain new knowledge, and to improve their well-being.” Daniel, Beyond Empathy Illawarra Projects Worker

A life changed

Johnny* graduated in 2019. During his first year out of school, he had no job and wasn't doing any training. Living with his parents in community housing, he wasn't getting out much and was in danger of becoming isolated.

In 2020, Johnny got involved in SHIFT. It became obvious straight away that he had excellent communication skills, as well as leadership potential – all he needed was an opportunity and a bit of encouragement.

During the year, Johnny not only got involved in SHIFT, but also in other Beyond Empathy initiatives. He helped make #swabmob videos aimed at encouraging young people to get tested for COVID-19, and played a key role in several public presentations Beyond Empathy ran using Zoom. He also helped with their Whitebox evaluation activity, interviewing other participants and helping them complete the evaluation questionnaire.

In the last few months, Johnny has achieved an important milestone, securing employment at a local business. No longer isolated at home, his future is looking much brighter.

**not his real name*



By supporting initiatives like SHIFT, COORDINARE is empowering communities to Close the Gap