

PROTOCOL & FACILITATION GUIDE

HEAD2ART

Museum-Based Wellbeing Program for High School Students

A guide for educators, headspace officers, and gallery facilitators



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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HEAD2ART is an eight-week program that brings young people into museum and gallery spaces for creative wellbeing. Each session runs for two hours, delivered once a week at the same time, with refreshments provided throughout. The program draws on museums as safe, non-clinical environments where students can develop emotional regulation skills, engage with and learn from contemporary art, while building connections with peers.

This protocol provides evidence-based guidelines to assist museum professionals, headspace community officers, and high school teachers and counsellors in safely and effectively delivering HEAD2ART to high school students. It supports a trauma-informed approach to student wellbeing through gallery-based inquiry, art engagement, creative making, and reflective dialogue.

WHO IS THIS PROGRAM FOR?

HEAD2ART is designed for high school students experiencing mild to moderate anxiety, stress, or isolation. The program works best with ten to twelve students, allowing meaningful peer interaction while maintaining intimacy. No prior art experience is required. The program suits young people who may feel uncomfortable in traditional counselling or who respond well to hands-on creative activities. Students in crisis or requiring intensive mental health intervention should be referred to appropriate clinical services.



Inquiry-based learning in the gallery, supported and student-centred. Photograph by the author.

LINKS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

HEAD2ART aligns with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework across all five elements.

- **Leadership:** demonstrates school commitment through community partnerships.
- **Inclusion:** provides equitable access for students who may not engage with traditional counselling.
- **Support:** builds capacity for help-seeking and positive relationships.
- **Student Voice:** ensures choice and validates authentic feedback throughout the creative process.
- **Partnerships:** builds collaboration among schools, mental health services, and cultural institutions.

Schools can document HEAD2ART as evidence of effective wellbeing support extending beyond the classroom.

THE NEED FOR MUSEUM-BASED WELLBEING PROGRAMS

Adolescent mental health is a critical public health concern. In Australia, recent research from the headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation (2025) has revealed, in a recent media release, that nearly half of young Australians (49%) are experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress. Traditional clinical settings, while essential, cannot alone meet the growing demand for youth mental health support. Museums and cultural institutions represent an underutilised resource for supporting young people's wellbeing and providing early intervention.

Despite growing recognition of museums' potential to support mental health, evidence-based programs specifically designed for adolescents remain scarce. A thorough review of museum education and art therapy practices for adolescents (Wei, Zhong, & Gao, 2023) identified that there is no museum-based art therapy program for adolescent psychological anxiety, indicating a gap and a need for museum-based wellbeing programs that are sustained, evidence-based interventions aligned with the Student Wellbeing frameworks, which recognise the strong linkages between student safety, wellbeing, and learning outcomes (Education Services Australia, 2018).

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

HEAD2ART was developed through a research project involving three pilot implementations with Lake Macquarie high school students, one each year between 2023 and 2025. The program was designed to address the identified gap by creating a structured, repeatable gallery-based wellbeing program that explicitly aligns with the National Student Wellbeing Framework while drawing on both art therapy principles and museum education approaches.

Key research findings from pilot implementations

Across all three pilots, 'calm' was the primary therapeutic outcome, appearing more frequently than any other emotional descriptor in student feedback. This sense of calm was closely tied to the gallery's environmental setting.

Students explicitly valued creative autonomy over structured activities, and the eight-week duration proved essential, allowing students to move from initial hesitation through to honest self-assessment and critical feedback by the program's end. Mental health measures supported these qualitative findings, with DASS-Y assessments showing reductions in anxiety and stress from pre- to post-program. The weekly empathy mapping process gave students an accessible way to share their experiences, enabling responsive adjustments to the program based on their feedback.

THERAPEUTIC AIMS

HEAD2ART was developed in partnership with headspace Newcastle, Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation, which operates as an enhanced primary care, early intervention service for young people aged 12 to 25 (Rickwood et al., 2019). HEAD2ART sits alongside this service as a non-clinical offering, reaching students who may be showing early signs of emotional difficulty but who have not yet sought, or do not need, formalised mental health support. headspace centres work with mild to moderate mental health concerns, and a sizeable proportion of young people who access headspace present with emerging concerns or identifiable risk factors rather than formal clinical diagnoses (McGorry & Mei, 2018). HEAD2ART works in that same early space, but entirely outside clinical settings, using the museum and gallery as a space where students can engage creatively and build peer connections without the associations that come with formal mental health services.

HEAD2ART addresses isolation, depression, and anxiety through peer interaction and creative expression. Students build practical emotional wellbeing tools and develop relationships with peers and cultural institutions in their community. The program supports participants to self-regulate in a safe, non-clinical space, drawing on museums and galleries as environments that carry none of the stigma students often attach to seeking help.



Inquiry-based learning, exploring the gallery, pilot 1, 2023. Photograph by the author.

EDUCATIONAL AIMS

Participants develop visual literacy skills to interpret and respond to contemporary artworks while learning practical art-making techniques. Students develop creative expression and a personal artistic voice through hands-on practice and an understanding of how art addresses social and cultural issues. The program also encourages collaboration and helps students connect their personal experiences to broader themes in contemporary art.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

HEAD2ART functions as a prototype, with continuous improvement informed by participant feedback. Each session, participants create two artworks: a quick ten-minute check-in response and a longer thirty to forty-minute response to gallery works. Participants engage with both exhibition art and their own studio creations.

FACILITATION TEAM

The same facilitation team should attend all eight consecutive weeks. This commitment matters, as students need a predictable adult presence to feel safe and build trust. The ideal team includes a headspace officer, a museum or gallery educator (and an art therapist, if available), and a school representative. All team members create their own artwork alongside students during art-making sessions, modelling creative engagement

while non-verbally witnessing student work. This parallel practice ensures that art-making is valued, while creating a democratic, non-hierarchical environment. Changing facilitators mid-program disrupts trust-building.



Reflective art-making inspired by the gallery visit. Photograph by a gallery facilitator, 2025.

ENVIRONMENT AND MATERIALS

Select objects or artworks from current exhibitions that provide meaningful themes for engagement and creative response. Provide participants with access to a private gallery space or studio for check-in, discussion, and art-making. Set up materials before participants arrive, choosing supplies that reflect the artworks being viewed. Arrange tables so participants sit facing each other, with shared materials in the middle and on a nearby trolley. Provide refreshments throughout to create a welcoming atmosphere.

WHY EIGHT WEEKS? THE PROGRAM ARC

The eight-week duration allows students to move through a developmental process of building trust, discovering needs, asserting preferences, and developing self-regulation strategies. Pilot research shows that students progress through distinct phases requiring this timeframe.

Weeks 1–2: Recognition and settling

Students orient to the environment, meet facilitators and peers, and establish whether the space feels safe. Sharing is typically minimal as students assess psychological safety and watch to see whether adults will respect their choices.

Weeks 3–5: Experimentation and agency

Students test boundaries and assert preferences, advocating for environmental modifications. Critical feedback emerges as students feel safe expressing honest preferences, and they discover their own regulation strategies through creative process and environmental choices.

Weeks 6–8: Integration and authentic expression

Students demonstrate integrated self-regulation skills and share more deeply about their work. The most honest and nuanced feedback emerges, including constructive criticism. Students may express disappointment about the ending, indicating that a meaningful connection has developed.

Programs shorter than eight weeks may not provide adequate time for this developmental process. Students need the early weeks to establish safety, the middle weeks to experiment with agency, and the final weeks to demonstrate the internalised self-regulation strategies they can carry forward.

HEAD2ART SESSION STRUCTURE

Introduction and setting expectations

Begin with a brief welcome and HEAD2ART introduction. Outline what will happen during the session and emphasise confidentiality. This helps participants feel safe sharing thoughts and creative work.

Warm-up activity

Begin with a simple breathing exercise to help participants settle into the present moment. Invite students to sit comfortably and, if comfortable, close their eyes or lower their gaze. Guide them to breathe in through the nose for four counts, hold gently for four counts, and breathe out through the mouth for four counts. Repeat three to five times. Emphasise that this is optional, and that students can sit quietly if they prefer.

Session one only: ice breaker

For the first session only, follow breathing with experimental mark-making using non-traditional tools like feathers or sticks with ink on watercolour paper. This playful exploration helps participants settle into a creative space without pressure to produce finished artwork.

Session two only: creating group agreements

In the second session, invite students to collaboratively draw up a plan for how they want to run the group. This might include agreements about listening to each other, being respectful, maintaining confidentiality, or how they want to share and give feedback. Students can create this visually using art materials or write it together. Mediated by the facilitators, this student-led process builds ownership and ensures the group structure reflects their values and needs. Display the agreements in the studio space for reference throughout the remaining six sessions.

Check-in through art-making

Introduce the idea of 'here and now' by noticing how students feel in this present moment. Invite participants to create a ten-minute art response that depicts their current state. A variety of materials are available, allowing participants to choose what feels right for their expression. Make clear that the emphasis is not on being a good artist but on expressing what is going on for the student.

Sharing and building connection

Invite participants to show and discuss their check-in drawings. The facilitation team models this first, demonstrating vulnerable sharing and supportive responses. Participants then volunteer to share and nominate the next person, providing agency while maintaining a gentle structure. It is important to emphasise that sharing about their artwork is entirely optional. In the first few weeks, students may choose not to share at all, and this is completely acceptable. As students feel safer over the eight weeks, they typically share more openly and in greater depth. Never pressure students to explain their artwork. Some may simply show their work without verbal explanation, while others may pass their turn entirely. Encouraging students to name their artwork can elicit response and discussion. Song titles can also be useful in helping students access emotions, as music is the one artform that most participants will relate to. This progression from silence to sharing is a natural part of building trust.

Gallery viewing experience

In the gallery, invite participants to view works in silence for a few minutes, allowing exploration beyond first impressions. After quiet contemplation, students work together in small groups and select a work that resonates with them personally, then briefly share about their selection. Gallery staff should resist the urge to step into an educator or tour-guide role. Instead, allow participants to observe, question, and respond to artworks in their own way. Encourage curious, inquisitive viewing and invite comments, but avoid lecturing or explaining what the artwork is about, as this can be overwhelming and may limit students' own interpretations.

Informal connection time

Return to the studio space for refreshments and informal conversation while making art. Refreshments are located at a separate table to encourage interaction and movement. This allows natural social connection and peer support to develop organically.

Extended art response

The headspace officer and gallery educator create their own artwork alongside students during this thirty to forty-minute making time. They work quietly, modelling full engagement with the creative process while non-verbally witnessing students' art-making. This parallel practice again reflects a non-hierarchical, democratic process focused on engagement with the group. After making time, participants are invited to share about their work, but this remains entirely optional. Students may choose to show their work silently, briefly describe it, or pass their turn. Expect minimal sharing in early sessions as students build trust; this is healthy and appropriate. Avoid walking around looking over students' shoulders like an examiner, but do witness and validate students while working alongside them.

Breakout activity

For students who finish their work early or who want to do something else, a table set up with a large sheet of paper, posca pens, and watercolour offers an open-ended, non-directional space. This allows participants to engage in collaborative work at their own pace, often leading to the kind of quiet, sideways conversation that more structured activities do not always make room for.

Closing and self-care

Invite participants to describe self-care activities they might engage in before the next session. This builds awareness of wellbeing strategies and accountability for emotional health. The group then works together to clean up materials.

Evaluation

Students complete an empathy map after each session to capture their thoughts, feelings, observations, and experiences. This allows their voices to be heard and provides valuable information for program improvement.

Session eight only: program evaluation

In the final session, students complete a program evaluation form in addition to their regular empathy map. This gathers overall feedback about their experience across all eight weeks: what worked well, what could be improved, and whether they would recommend the program to others. This summative feedback complements the weekly empathy maps and provides valuable data for program refinement.



Posca pen group collaborative work, a calming activity. Photograph by the author, 2024.

ARTWORK COLLECTION AND STORAGE

Collect and securely store all student artwork for the full eight weeks at the museum or gallery. This allows students to see their creative development over time and provides a body of work for reflection or for an art exhibition at the program's conclusion.

PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY

While this protocol provides structure, facilitators should remain responsive to participant needs and adjust based on what serves the group's wellbeing. The most important elements are creating safety, accommodating individual choice, and maintaining consistent facilitation team presence throughout all eight weeks.

STUDENT VOICES: PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The following quotes come directly from students who participated in HEAD2ART pilot programs, gathered through empathy mapping and exit interviews.

STRESS REDUCTION AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

"It's been good, like it's taken away stress and stuff."

"I didn't feel as upset or anxious as I always am."

"Good, it's relaxing listening to birds and looking at the water."

"I felt happy and calm this time."

CREATIVE FREEDOM AND A NON-JUDGEMENTAL SPACE

"I just like it, it's not really structured. We can do whatever sort of art we want."

"There can be different types, it doesn't have to be perfect and stuff."

"I'm not that great at art, but I didn't feel as judged as I thought I was going to be."

ENVIRONMENTAL CONNECTION

"It's in a good spot too, with the lake, and it's like a very calm spot."

"I love staying outside and not standing in the same place for too long."

GROWING CONFIDENCE

"More confidence in talking about my art. Improving my skills with different mediums."

"Validated."

AGENCY AND AUTHENTIC CHOICE

"I always feel lightheaded while standing in the gallery ... I think we should sit down more."

CONNECTION AND POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

"Very fun to do with friends. I felt happy and was laughing."

"Disappointed this is ending."

"I saw everyone's art and how peaceful everyone was."

These student voices show that HEAD2ART creates conditions for stress reduction, creative expression, environmental connection, growing confidence, agency, and peer relationship building. Students felt safe enough to share honest feedback, including criticism, indicating real psychological safety.



Collaborative group work, supporting social connection, 2024. Photograph by the author.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS FOR MUSEUM EDUCATORS

Step one: Prepare your institution

Gain internal support from your museum or gallery leadership for hosting an eight-week wellbeing program. Identify appropriate gallery and studio spaces that can accommodate ten to twelve students plus facilitators. Confirm availability of the same spaces for all eight consecutive weeks on the same day and time. All participating staff should hold a current Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) registration.

Step two: Select artworks and galleries

Choose artworks or galleries from your collection or current exhibitions that offer meaningful themes for student engagement. Select works that invite personal interpretation; consider works that address identity, emotion, nature, community, or change. Plan for variety across the eight weeks, ensuring students encounter different media, styles, and themes.

Step three: Organise materials and spaces

Gather art materials that reflect the artworks students will explore across the eight weeks. Include a variety of media such as drawing materials, painting supplies, collage materials, and simple sculptural options to support diverse creative responses. Arrange tables so students sit facing each other around one large communal table. Set up a trolley with additional materials for easy access. Ensure adequate seating options, including chairs and cushions. Consider outdoor access points and identify a quiet viewing area or chill-out space within the gallery.

Step four: Meet with facilitation partners

Connect with the headspace officer and school representative before the first session. Allow the school representative three to six months to recruit students. Walk through the gallery and studio spaces together, discussing the flow between areas and identifying potential challenges, and discuss how to facilitate open-ended viewing rather than educational interpretation. Clarify that the core role of the facilitation team is to create space for student exploration, not to teach art history or technique. It is most useful to run an information session or mini program with school staff to support their understanding of HEAD2ART, field questions, and encourage student recruitment.

Step five: Facilitate gallery experiences

During sessions, guide students to artworks with minimal instruction. Invite silent viewing for several minutes, followed by small-group work and a short group discussion with open-ended questions like: what do you notice, how does this make you feel, or what does this remind you of? Value all responses equally. Allow students to select works that resonate personally rather than directing them to specific pieces. Create space for students to have their own experience with art rather than a correct interpretation.

Step six: Create art alongside students

Introduce art-making, demonstrate how to work with the materials, and provide a loose structure and scaffolding, ensuring students understand they can work with the materials as they wish. Make your own artwork during the thirty to forty-minute art-making sessions. Work genuinely and fully, engaging with your own creative process while chatting with students. This models that art-making is for exploration, not demonstration or instruction. Non-verbally witness student art-making through your peripheral awareness while staying focused on your own work. Resist the urge to teach, correct, or direct techniques. Your presence as a co-creator rather than an instructor is essential to the program's therapeutic value; again, avoid walking around examining student progress in an overt manner.

Step seven: Maintain commitment, consistency, and attendance

Attend all eight sessions; your consistent presence helps students feel safe and builds trust over time. If you cannot commit to all eight consecutive weeks, you should not begin the program. Arrange coverage for your other responsibilities during these weekly sessions. Students need to see the same faces each week to develop the safety necessary for creative expression.

Step eight: Support program evaluation

Participate in team briefings and debriefs before and after each session. Share observations about how students engaged with artworks and materials. Be open to adjusting artwork selections or material provisions based on student responses. Review empathy maps with your facilitation team to identify environmental or material changes that might better support student wellbeing.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS FOR HEADSPACE COMMUNITY OFFICERS

Step one: Identify partner organisations

Connect with local museums or galleries and schools in your community to propose a HEAD2ART partnership. Explain that the program combines creative wellbeing support with gallery engagement for young people experiencing mild to moderate anxiety, stress, or isolation. Emphasise the eight-week commitment required from all partners. Seek museums and schools genuinely interested in non-clinical, creative approaches to youth mental health. Bring along examples and testimonials from previous HEAD2ART programs to initial meetings.

Step two: Student suitability

Work with the school representative to review potential participants. The program is designed for students experiencing undiagnosed mild mental health concerns who would benefit from peer connection and creative expression. Students requiring intensive therapeutic support or currently in crisis should be referred to appropriate clinical services.

Step three: Establish safeguarding protocols

Before the first session, meet with all facilitation team members to establish clear protocols for responding to disclosures, distress, or safety concerns. Ensure all team members understand mandatory reporting obligations and know the appropriate steps to take if a student reveals concerning information. Clarify boundaries around confidentiality and when information must be shared. Provide team members with headspace contact information for urgent concerns.

Step four: Set therapeutic boundaries

Understand that HEAD2ART is a creative wellbeing program, not group therapy. Your role is to create safe conditions for student self-regulation through environmental agency, not to provide clinical interventions. Resist the urge to introduce structured mental health activities such as prescribed mindfulness or therapeutic exercises. Trust the program structure and allow students to develop their own regulation strategies through creative engagement and environmental choice.

Step five: Model authentic participation

Create your own artwork during all art-making sessions, working alongside students and engaging in friendly conversation. Join in the creative process rather than monitoring students or preparing interventions, and avoid hovering behind students while they work. This parallel art-making is essential to the program's therapeutic mechanism, showing that adults also use creative expression to support their wellbeing. Share vulnerably when invited during check-in rounds, modelling that honest expression, including struggle or uncertainty, is welcome. Your full participation creates a safe space for students to be vulnerable themselves.

Step six: Allow for student agency

Observe how students express preferences and needs throughout the program. When students express discomfort with activities, advocate for environmental modifications rather than encouraging them to persist. If students request more seating, outdoor time, different materials, or changes to activities, work with the team to accommodate these requests. Within reason and budget, enable advocacy by asking students what snacks they would like for the following week. Recognise that students who refuse prescribed activities or provide critical feedback are demonstrating healthy self-advocacy, not program resistance.

Step seven: Maintain consistent presence

Try to attend all eight consecutive sessions; your consistent presence is essential for students to build trust and feel safe. Students experiencing anxiety particularly need a predictable adult presence to develop the safety necessary for risk-taking and self-expression.

Step eight: Support individual students

Notice individual students who may need additional support beyond the program. If a student discloses concerning information or shows signs of crisis during sessions, follow established protocols to ensure they receive appropriate care. After program completion, work with the school representative to identify students who might benefit from ongoing headspace services.

Step nine: Evaluate and refine

Review empathy maps and program evaluations with the facilitation team after program completion. Look for patterns in what supported student wellbeing and what created barriers. Share learnings with your headspace colleagues to inform future programs. Consider whether HEAD2ART could become a regular offering in your community. Gather feedback from partner organisations about their experience and willingness to continue collaboration.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS FOR TEACHERS

Step one: Identify potential participants

Identify ten to twelve students who might benefit from creative wellbeing support. This group size allows meaningful peer interaction while maintaining intimacy. Look for students showing signs of mild to moderate stress, social withdrawal, or anxiety about school demands. Consider students who appear withdrawn, overwhelmed by academic pressure, have difficulty connecting with peers, or express feelings of not fitting in. Avoid selecting students currently in crisis, with a mental health diagnosis, or requiring intensive mental health support.

Step two: Connect with partner organisations

Reach out to your local youth mental health headspace service and a nearby museum or gallery to establish a partnership. The mental health service provides a trained youth worker, the museum or gallery provides an educator familiar with the collection, and, if possible, an art therapist with master's-level training. All partners must commit to the full eight weeks.

Step three: Seek family consent

Email families of identified students to seek consent for participation. Include an information statement explaining the program's purpose, structure, and expectations. Ensure families understand the program is voluntary, and provide contact information for questions.

Step four: Coordinate school logistics

Arrange for students to leave class during program time. Work with the administration to minimise academic disruption. Organise transportation to and from the museum or gallery as needed. Ensure participating students understand they are responsible for missed classwork and that teachers are informed about the program.

Step five: Attend the planning meeting

Meet with all facilitation team members before the first session to discuss roles and review the session structure. Walk through the gallery and studio spaces to ensure adequate seating, table arrangements, and indoor and outdoor access. Discuss confidentiality protocols, student transitions between spaces, and procedures for when a student becomes distressed or discloses concerning information. Clarify your role as the school representative who helps students feel comfortable.

Step six: Prepare students

Meet briefly with participating students before the first session. Explain the two-hour session structure and emphasise that the program is about exploring feelings through art-making, not creating perfect artwork. Reassure students they can participate at their own comfort level and that the same adults will be present each week. Address logistical questions about transportation, food, or what to bring.

Step seven: Participate actively in all eight sessions

Deliver students to every session; this is essential. Students need familiar faces each week to build trust and feel safe. Help students feel safe in the environment and bridge between school life and the museum. You should be on standby; you do not have to sit in on the sessions, but if you choose to, model engaged participation by creating your own artworks during making time alongside students. The headspace officer and gallery educator also create art alongside students, non-verbally witnessing the student art-making while fully engaged in their own work. Avoid disciplinary or academic teacher roles and function as a supportive adult who learns and creates alongside students.

Step eight: Support students between sessions

If a student seems distressed or mentions concerns, communicate with the mental health worker. Remember that program content is confidential unless a student is at risk of harm.

Step nine: Gather and share feedback

Share relevant observations about individual students with the delivery team, particularly positive changes or ongoing concerns. Participate in brief team debriefs to discuss student responses and plan modifications.

Step ten: Celebrate completion and plan continuation

At the final session, celebrate students' participation and growth. Help students reflect on what they learned and how they might continue visiting the museum, as well as using creative expression and wellbeing strategies. Work with your team if you identify students needing ongoing support through school counselling or community programs like headspace. Consider how HEAD2ART elements might integrate into regular classroom practice, or whether another cohort might benefit. Gather feedback from students and families to inform future improvements.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

HEAD2ART combines art therapy principles with museum-based learning in small group settings. Students engage with original artworks through inquiry-based exploration, creating their own artistic responses without needing to verbalise their feelings. The program takes a strengths-based approach, emphasising student choice and agency rather than focusing on deficits or problems.

The physical environment matters. Gallery spaces with natural light, curated displays, and access to outdoor views create calming sensory experiences. Students report feeling calm in these aesthetic spaces in ways they do not experience in classrooms or clinical settings.

WHY HEAD2ART WORKS

Museums offer something schools and counselling offices cannot: they are perceived as cultural spaces rather than medical ones, reducing the stigma students often feel about mental health support. Galleries and museums are controlled environments that can be calming, safe spaces. Discussing artworks allows students to explore complex emotions through metaphor and projection rather than direct self-disclosure, and this safe distance through art matters for young people still developing emotional language.

Original artworks carry depth and meaning that reproductions or classroom materials cannot match. Museums are also public institutions that students can return to independently after the program ends, building an ongoing connection to cultural resources in their community. The small-group structure, with facilitators working alongside students, creates a flat, non-authoritarian space where judgement has no place.

Research from the pilot programs shows students describing themselves as calm, validated, and confident in these spaces. They appreciate the lack of structure, the outdoor access, and the freedom to create without being evaluated. Some students share deeply about their work; others choose silence. Both responses indicate the program is working.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

HEAD2ART emerged from a collaboration between the Learning team at the Museum of Art and Culture yampang (Lake Macquarie City Council), headspace Newcastle youth mental health service, University of Newcastle researchers, and Lake Macquarie High School wellbeing staff. This partnership shows how museums, mental health services, universities, and schools can work together to support young people in community-based ways that feel different from traditional interventions.

PROGRAM PARTNERS



AN INVITATION

If you work with young people experiencing anxiety, stress, or isolation, consider what HEAD2ART could offer them. The program asks you to trust that students know what they need and will tell you if you create the right conditions. It asks you to make art alongside them, to respect their criticism as valuable feedback, and to show up consistently for eight weeks. In return, you might witness young people discovering that they can regulate their own wellbeing, advocate for their needs, and create beauty even when life feels hard. That seems worth trying.

HEAD2ART shows the potential of museums as therapeutic spaces when gallery education and art therapy are thoughtfully brought together. The program's inquiry-based approach, with its emphasis on student choice, small-group discussion, and creative autonomy, supports wellbeing through calm, connection, and creative expression.

Thank you for your commitment to this important work. May your HEAD2ART sessions be spaces of calm, creativity, and care.

HEAD2ART

A museum-based wellbeing program for high school students.

helenabezzinaarttherapy.com



Developed by Dr Helena Bezzina in partnership with Jo Davies, Museum of Art and Culture yampang; Byron Williams, headspace Newcastle; the University of Newcastle; and Lake Macquarie High School.