

‘Where Can You Go?’ IAR Alignment Trial

headspace Ballarat

Youth Suicide Prevention Project

March 2025

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WESTERN VICTORIA

An Australian Government Initiative

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Acknowledgements



headspace Ballarat recognise and celebrate the diversity of the community within which we work. We acknowledge and respect the Wadawurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of lands that this community consultation was conducted. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and to emerging leaders, and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate, and inclusive.

headspace Ballarat would like to acknowledge those that may have a lived or living experience of suicide or may be experiencing bereavement due to losing a loved one to suicide.

We thank all participants identifying with such experiences for their strength in being part of this consultation and acknowledge that their voice is of great importance to the outcome of this project.



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Resource Overview

The '*Where can you go for Mental Health Support in Ballarat*' is a resource developed by headspace Ballarat to assist in service navigation and expectation management.

The resource uses scaling questions broken up into 5 levels of distress, these levels are based on the 5 levels of support within the IAR-DST to ensure continuity between the youth self-reporting tool and the tool used by clinicians to support decisions during assessment. The tool was designed to provide guidance for young people to access the right service for them sooner.

Alignment Trial

Approach

The trial was conducted to ensure that the *Where Can You Go?* tool was aligned close enough to the IAR-DST to be an effective service navigation and expectation management resource for young people and their natural supporters.

A total of **46** young people (24 under 18yo and 22 over 18yo) participated in this trial, where they rated their own level of distress using the *Where Can You Go?* youth self-triage scale prior to their initial intake support session. Their self-reported scores were then compared to the clinician-assigned IAR-DST scores to assess alignment between the two tools.

Trial Considerations

Nonclinical Conditions

This trial was conducted in a real-world setting rather than under stringent clinical conditions, as its primary goal was to assess the *Where Can You Go?* tool's effectiveness as a non-clinical service navigation and expectation management resource, not as a clinical diagnostic instrument.

Differences in Scales

For usability, the *Where Can You Go?* scale uses whole integers from 1 to 5, while the IAR-DST uses half-step increments (e.g., 3, 3+, 4, 4+).

When a young person was identified as being between two levels of care (e.g., 2-3), their score was averaged to create parity between the scales. For example, a range of 2 or 3 was recorded as 2.5, and 3 or 4 as 3.5

Key Results

N=46	All Young People	-18	+18
Average Variance	-0.4	-0.5	-0.3
0.05	80%	83%	77%
1	93%	88%	95%

- The average variance across all participants in the trial was -0.4, a less than half an IAR-DST level from their clinician's score.
- 80% of young people rated themselves within 0.5 points of their clinician's score, this improves to 93% for young people within one whole IAR-DST level of their clinician's score.
- Variances were slightly more pronounced in those under 18, a full breakdown of data can be found in the appendix.

Distribution of Score Difference

The heat map below illustrates the difference between self-reported scores from the *Where Can You Go?* tool and clinician-assigned IAR-DST scores. It highlights differences across all participants, as well as distinctions between those under 18yo and those over 18yo.

Darker blue tones indicate lower self-reported scores compared to IAR-DST scores, while deeper orange shades represent higher self-reported scores. This visual provides a clear view of the alignment between young people's self-assessments and clinician-assigned IAR-DST score.

Variance	ALL	Under 18	Over 18
1.00	4%		9%
0.50	13%	17%	9%
0.00	20%	21%	18%
-0.50	48%	46%	50%
-1.00	7%	4%	9%
-1.50	2%	0%	5%
-2.00	2%	4%	
-2.50	4%	8%	

Orange indicates scores where young people rated themselves **higher** than the clinicians IAR-DST

Green indicates scores that match between *Where Can You Go* and the IAR-DST

Blue indicates scores where young people rated themselves **lower** than the clinicians IAR-DST

Outcomes

During the Community Insights Project, young people expressed uncertainty about when and where to seek support, highlighting a significant barrier to accessing mental health services. They described feeling lost in the complexity of the system, which often led to hesitation or delays in help-seeking.

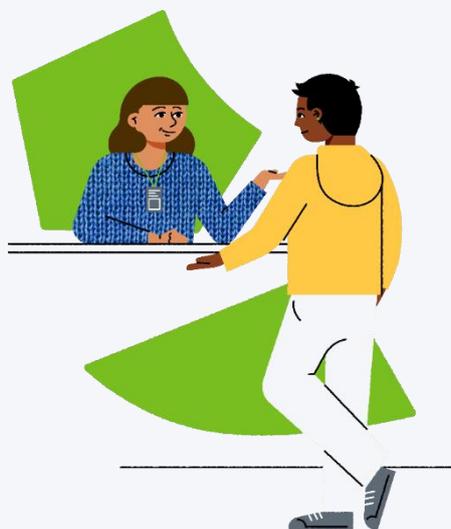
In response, the *Where Can You Go?* resource was developed to bridge this gap between young people and mental health services. It aimed to support young people and their carers by simplifying the process of identifying and accessing suitable mental health supports. The tool also provides a shared framework that aligns consumer self-assessment with professional referral pathways, using the *Ballarat Mental Health Service and Referral Guide* as a key reference point.

Usage by Young People and their Natural Supports

The narrow average difference of just -0.4 between young people's self-reported scores and clinician-assigned IAR-DST scores demonstrates that the *Where Can You Go?* tool effectively fulfils its intended purpose as a service navigation and expectation management resource. This alignment suggests that young people can reliably assess their own needs, contributing to more accurate and efficient referrals.

Usage by Wellbeing and Non-Wellbeing Professionals

While further trials would be needed to explore its potential for clinical use by wellbeing professionals in determining referral pathways, these initial results reinforce the tool's value in the *Ballarat Mental Health Service and Referral Guide*. The tool not only helps demystify the mental health system for young people and their natural supporters but also strengthens the consistency and clarity of service identification and cross sector referral processes.



Appendix

Below is the full data range and breakdown by sorted by age.

Client Age	'Where Can You Go' Score	IAR-DST	Variance
12	3.0	3.5	-0.5
12	3.0	3.5	-0.5
12	2.5	2.5	0.0
13	4.0	3.5	0.5
13	2.0	2.5	-0.5
13	2.0	2.5	-0.5
13	3.0	3.5	-0.5
13	3.0	3.5	-0.5
13	2.0	2	0.0
13	3.0	3.5	-0.5
14	1.0	3.5	-2.5
14	2.0	2.5	-0.5
15	3.5	3	0.5
15	2.0	4	-2.0
15	2.5	2.5	0.0
15	3.5	3	0.5
15	3.0	3.5	-0.5
15	3.0	2.5	0.5
16	2.0	4.5	-2.5
16	2.5	3.5	-1.0
17	4.0	4	0.0
17	2.5	2.5	0.0
17	2.0	2.5	-0.5
17	3.0	3.5	-0.5
18	3.0	3.5	-0.5
18	2.0	2.5	-0.5
18	3.0	3.5	-0.5
19	2.5	2.5	0.0
20	2.5	2.5	0.0
20	2.5	3.5	-1.0
20	2.5	2.5	0.0
20	2.0	2.5	-0.5
20	3.0	3.5	-0.5
20	3.0	3.5	-0.5
20	3.5	4.5	-1.0
21	3.0	3.5	-0.5
21	4.0	4.5	-0.5
21	4.0	3.5	0.5
22	3.0	3.5	-0.5
22	3.0	2.5	0.5
23	3.0	3.5	-0.5
23	3.5	2.5	1.0
23	1.0	2.5	-1.5
24	2.5	2.5	0.0
24	3.5	2.5	1.0
24	4.5	5	-0.5

Orange indicates scores where young people rated themselves **higher** than the clinicians IAR-DST

Green indicates scores that match between *Where Can You Go* and the IAR-DST

Blue indicates scores where young people rated themselves **lower** than the clinicians IAR-DST

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