



**act  
belong  
commit**

**Mentally  
Healthy Schools  
Case Studies**

# Contents

About Act-Belong-Commit	2
Bringing Mentally Healthy Schools to Life!	3
Act	3
Belong	3
Commit	3
Mentally Healthy Schools Program	4
Primary Schools	5
Atwell Primary School	5
Clarkson Primary School	6
Cooinda Primary School	7
Secret Harbour Primary School	8
High Schools	9
Armadale Senior High School	9
Kalamunda Senior High School	10
Karratha Senior High School	11
Melville Senior High School	12
Mount Lawley Senior High School	13
How Can My School Get Involved?	14
Our Impact	15
With Thanks	15

## About Act-Belong-Commit

*Being active, having a sense of belonging and a purpose in life all contribute to happiness and good mental health.*

Act-Belong-Commit is a comprehensive mental health promotion campaign encouraging individuals to take action to protect and promote their own mental wellbeing, as well as encouraging organisations that provide mentally healthy activities to promote participation in those activities.

In essence, Act-Belong-Commit aims to increase individual and community wellbeing by increasing and strengthening connections between community members. We achieve this by encouraging participation in family, community events and organisations, and increasing collaboration between community organisations that offer activities conducive to good mental health and wellbeing.

The A-B-C guidelines for positive mental health provide a simple approach we can all adopt to become more mentally healthy.

## Our Vision

A society that values mental health and where everyone has the opportunity to be mentally healthy.

## Our Mission

To enhance population mental health by creating supportive environments that strengthen individual and community resilience.

# Bringing Mentally Healthy Schools to Life!

Many mental health problems and disorders have a peak age onset in childhood or adolescence, therefore teaching mentally healthy behaviours early in life helps to increase confidence, resilience and self-esteem and reduce the chances of a young person developing mental health problems when they are older.

Keeping mentally and physically active, having good friends, helping others and learning new things not only builds self-esteem and confidence, but can reduce stress and help with academic outcomes.

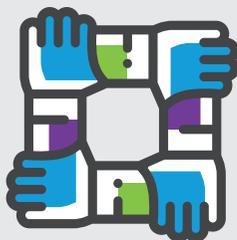
Schools have emerged as having a significant role in mental health promotion for children and adolescents since young people spend almost half their waking lives at school.

The school setting is ideal for the Act-Belong-Commit campaign as there are many opportunities for students to be active, develop a strong sense of belonging and add meaning and purpose to their lives.



**Act**

Do something



**Belong**

Do something with someone



**Commit**

Do something meaningful



# Mentally Healthy Schools Program

The Mentally Healthy Schools Program provides a framework to embed the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign within the classroom, school environment and the whole school community in order to boost the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff and prevent the onset of mental health problems.

The Mentally Healthy Schools program aims to:

- Encourage young Western Australians to adopt mentally healthy behaviours early in life
- Build resiliency so they cope better with problems and stress
- Reduce stigma around mental illness and increase openness about discussing mental health
- Build the capacity of school staff to create mentally healthy school environments
- Foster partnerships between schools and their communities.

"A sense of belonging and acceptance can only lead to happy and content people in the workplace or school. Our kids and families do it tough and the Act-Belong-Commit program and philosophy very often fills many voids."

*Principal, Orelia Primary School*



Mentally Healthy School



# Primary Schools

## Atwell Primary School

Atwell Primary School joined the Mentally Healthy Schools Program to promote and increase student, parent and teacher awareness of what it means to be mentally healthy, as well as the steps they can take to achieve this.

The aim of implementing the Act-Belong-Commit campaign was to support students' mental wellbeing and to increase and reinforce the importance of participating in mentally healthy activities, both in and out of school. We also saw the opportunity to upskill teachers in mental wellbeing and to network and build partnerships with other schools throughout WA.

Through embedding Act-Belong-Commit into our school community, we have placed an increased focus on student mental wellbeing. This has been in everything from the development of events and programs through to incorporating messaging into our newsletter, teacher professional development, and various activities such as our before-school fitness and Act-Belong-Commit Poster Competition.

In 2017, we decided to focus on mindfulness as a way to support students experiencing anxiety and as a way to help them build and develop their resilience skills. As a result, teachers have adopted mindfulness-based activities to use in the classroom on a daily basis.

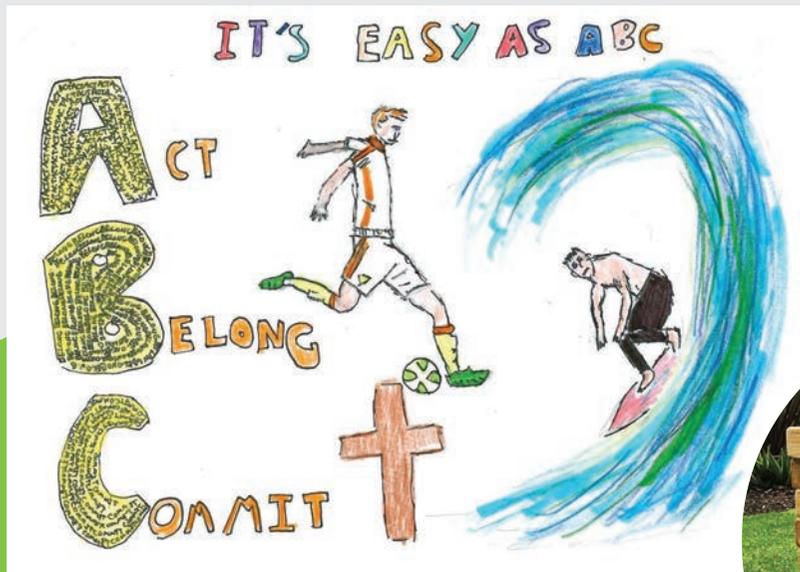
Our school prides itself on running programs and events that support the Act-Belong-Commit message, such as NAIDOC Week, Healthy Breakfast, Activate Atwell and Harmony Day. Our next whole school event supporting the Act-Belong-Commit message will be the Atwell Primary School Wellness Day where over 700 students will take part in a mindfulness-based yoga class run by a professional yoga teacher, as well as mindfulness-based activities within the classroom.

**Within this short period, awareness has grown amongst the school community – inclusive of students, teachers and parents.**

Students have pledged to take on a more active role in mentally healthy activities, and teachers have had increased opportunities to discuss mental health and mental illness, taking steps to support not only students, but colleagues too.

We look forward to seeing how we can further network with other schools and reach parents and the community.

**“The importance of participating in mentally healthy activities has been reinforced, with students making individual pledges to take on a more active role to participate in these types of activities.”**



## Clarkson Primary School

Clarkson Primary School recognised the need to engage in conversations with students about mental health, as well as practical ways to become more mentally healthy. The Act-Belong-Commit framework provided the tools, language and well-known branding to do this well.

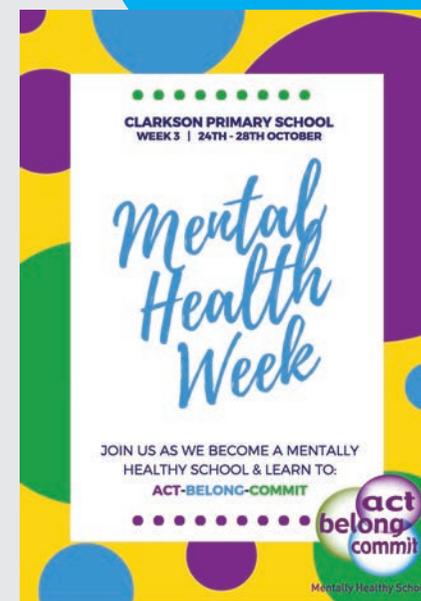
By becoming a Mentally Healthy School, we were inspired to start an annual Mental Health Week event at Clarkson Primary School, joining other schools around the nation for 'Mental Health Week' held in October each year.

We formed an 'Act-Belong-Committee' of dedicated staff who took up the mantle of organising Mental Health Week, consisting of in-class lessons on mental health, whole school activities and organised lunch-time activities.

Each activity provided the opportunity to teach students practical ways of becoming more mentally healthy and for children to be able to implement strategies to look after their own mental health – strategies our students will be able to carry throughout primary school, their teen years and even into adulthood.

By providing inspiration, support, signage and merchandise, the Act-Belong-Commit team helped to make our Mental Health Week a success. Several businesses and organisations also supported us during the week, offering to donate goods, run activities or provide information about their services.

We have expanded our scope for Mental Health Week, and in the future will likely be engaging with an organisation to provide in-class lessons to our Year 6's on increasing the understanding of the impact of mental illness, as well as fostering support for children who live with a parent with mental illness.



**Our vision for seeing our school become more mentally healthy is coming to life.**

We see our students becoming more aware of their emotions and mental wellbeing. We are also continuing to encourage our teachers and parents to have conversations with their children about how to manage their emotions as well as exploring ways to promote mental health and wellbeing.

We are hopeful that the Mentally Healthy Schools Program will continue to enable schools like ours to continue towards building a more mentally healthy community.

"Our vision for seeing our school become more mentally healthy is coming to life. We see our students becoming more aware of their emotions and mental wellbeing."



## Cooinda Primary School

All communities can benefit from the promotion of the Act-Belong-Commit message, simply by raising awareness of the importance of mental health and providing ideas and opportunities about how to achieve this.

We saw the Act-Belong-Commit Mentally Healthy Schools Program as a great way to complement and enhance the mental health initiatives already implemented in our school and wider community. The Act-Belong-Commit message brought a new approach and vigour to good mental health promotion at Cooinda, whilst sitting perfectly under the KidsMatter umbrella.

With the aim to nurture the mental health of our students, each year we nominate a group of senior students to fulfil a leadership role titled the 'Act-Belong Committers'. This provides them with the opportunity to develop their sense of belonging and commitment. We provide additional recognition to students at our assemblies, where we present an award to a student or school party who has demonstrated act, belong or commit qualities. We have also provided our students with cultural activities supporting inclusion and belonging, along with new fixtures in the school supporting good mental health, which the whole school community and visitors can enjoy.

We regularly invite school staff to take a break from our fast-paced work environment to recharge and relax at gatherings promoting kindness and paying it forward in association with the Act-Belong-Commit message.

**Our partnership with Act-Belong-Commit has provided new life to our existing efforts to support good mental health in our school. It has also provided our school with many contacts we can continue to liaise and connect with.**

In liaison with community agencies and local businesses, we developed and built an R U OK? Conversation Corner at our school. We created Act-Belong-Commit signs, which we installed in the corner to encourage school community members to use the area to connect, chat and have fun. We also encourage our volunteers to use this area, as we felt it was tranquil and good for the soul!

The regular information our school has received in regards to mental health promotion and opportunities has been highly valued, and having signage

around the school promoting the Act-Belong-Commit message continues to add extra support to the promotion of being mentally healthy.

Since becoming a Mentally Healthy School, we have developed tangible and intangible opportunities and creations, which have assisted the mental health of our school community. All of these opportunities have been advantageous in our outcomes and made possible the positive growth in our Act-Belong-Commit Mentally Healthy School!

*"We chose a group of senior students to have a leadership role titled, the 'Act-Belong Committers'. This gave more students the opportunity to develop their sense of belonging and commitment, hence supporting their mental health and has continued each year since."*



## Secret Harbour Primary School

**Prior to 2014, Secret Harbour Primary School had a number of services and processes to support students; however, they operated separately allowing gaps to develop in delivery and interpretation of use.**

We needed an overarching focus to ensure continuity and to better target student mental health and wellbeing. As a result, we determined that Mental Health was a priority and decided to participate in the Mentally Healthy Schools Program.

Our first target included extending whole of staff knowledge of support networks and strategies to help children experiencing mental health difficulties, actively promoting opportunities for parents to connect with each other to develop support networks and providing our families with explicit information on our school's approach to social and emotional learning and the Act-Belong-Commit message.

Since embedding the Act-Belong-Commit message within the school, we have implemented and participated in a number of activities and events that link to each of the three Act-Belong-Commit domains. Our music teacher has taken the Act-Belong-Commit message to heart, creating a Ukulele group through the Act-Belong-Commit 'New Life Instrument Program', and our annual participation in the One Big Voice truly reflects the

Commit message with their year-long dedication to the choir.

With support from Act-Belong-Commit, Healthway, the Heart Foundation and the Department of Transport, we created a *"Walking School Bus"* to start a regular walking group for families and staff. The aim was to develop support networks and connections for parents, as well as promoting healthy habits, building stronger relationships amongst staff and families and informally fostering collegial support for the program. Additionally, we have facilitated parent workshops focussing on a number of mental health and wellbeing topics and benefited from a variety of new initiatives suited to a range of interests such as sporting, mindful and musical events.

We have run Professional Development sessions and workshops on Mental Health and Wellbeing for whole school staff over a number of Staff Development Days. These sessions improved and developed our shared understanding of the Act-Belong-Commit initiative, built confidence and knowledge and improved focus for staff. Our efforts

and achievements resulted in Secret Harbour Primary School winning the Act-Belong-Commit Primary School category award in 2017.

Being a part of the Mentally Healthy Schools Program has helped us establish a Wellbeing Team, consisting of enthusiastic staff who meet regularly to set key directions, consult and form targets for action. They have gone on to create our 'Wellbeing Whisper', a school publication produced each term aimed at providing tips on keeping mentally, physically and emotionally healthy.

We are always researching and implementing new ideas to improve the health and wellbeing in the school community and look forward to further working with the Act-Belong-Commit team to achieve this.

"Our efforts and achievements resulted in Secret Harbour Primary School winning the Act-Belong-Commit Primary School category award in 2017."



# High Schools

## Armadale Senior High School

**Our school was experiencing many presentations for mental health difficulties and self-harm. We wanted to take a positive, proactive approach to reduce these and to better equip students with skills to be mentally healthy and to improve students' social-emotional outcomes.**

We identified Act-Belong-Commit as a positive evidence-based campaign that could be implemented throughout the school and that would fit well within the school's ethos. It was also a good fit for our strategic goals in increasing positive engagement and developing a more proactive and preventative approach to students' mental health.

Through embedding the Mentally Healthy Schools Program across a variety of different systemic, educational and event opportunities, students across all year groups have developed a shared understanding of how to keep mentally healthy.

**Since becoming an Act-Belong-Commit partner, we have reviewed the mental health literacy information delivered in our Health program to focus more on embedding the Act-Belong-Commit message and resources.**

This has led to our Health and PE teachers embedding the language and principles of the Act-Belong-Commit message across their department and curriculum. Our student services are also focussing on engaging students using the Act-Belong-Commit message.

Our Student Council has taken an active role in promoting the Act-Belong-Commit message, committing to peer mentor programs and increasing their presence within the school community.

Regular promotion of the message through assemblies, school events and an annual mental health expo has been undertaken. We have held several extremely successful Mentally Healthy expos at the school as well as targeted expos for senior school students, with a significant portion of the content around the Act-Belong-Commit message.

The Act-Belong-Commit team has attended inter-agency collaborative meetings looking at improving overall mental health outcomes, and new groups such as a school band, geek club, games club and homework club have been established and thrived. The school has also run competitions with an Act-Belong-Commit focus and delivered staff training on self-care using the Act-Belong-Commit message.

We have seen a strong response from student surveys indicating their knowledge and level of confidence in using the Act-Belong-Commit principles to manage their own mental health.

**“New groups such as school band, geek club, games club and homework club have been established and thrived.”**



## Kalamunda Senior High School

**Mental health issues have become prevalent in the lives of teenagers over the past decade, and as a high school, we believed it was important to find ways to increase the positive health of our students.**

By joining the Mentally Healthy Schools Program, our school endeavoured to minimise the number of students who were presenting to student services with mental health problems.

Since becoming involved in the Act-Belong-Commit campaign, we have provided staff with professional development around keeping mentally healthy using the Act-Belong-Commit framework, which has allowed them to examine their own behaviours and look at areas they could improve on to assist in keeping themselves mentally healthy. The school also has utilised the Act-Belong-Commit Youth Connectors

workshops to provide peer support to each other in times of need.

Events such as musical performances and drama productions are branded with Act-Belong-Commit to demonstrate to the school community that being involved in such events is one way to stay mentally healthy, and we have run a number of mental health expos and mental health weeks allowing the message to be delivered to our students. Events such as the Blackwood Marathon, swimming and athletics carnivals are also linked to the campaign and demonstrate that physical activity is important for your mental health.

**The Act-Belong-Commit message is a simple but effective way to increase positive mental health and help prevent poor mental health outcomes in our students.**

We have included tips on staying mentally healthy in school newsletters over the past few years, providing parents with ways to help not only their children, but also themselves to stay mentally healthy. Act-Belong-Commit templates for local newspapers have been utilised to provide the broader community information regarding the Act-Belong-Commit message.

Act-Belong-Commit has provided the Student Services team with a tool to discuss ways students can easily look after their own mental health and stay mentally healthy. Tools such as weekly planners allow conversations with students to be channelled into discussing ways of helping to stay mentally healthy using the Act-Belong-Commit framework.

Act-Belong-Commit is an ongoing inclusion in our school, and although we have annual projects we endeavour to keep the message at the forefront of our values. The Act-Belong-Commit message further compliments one of our school values of 'Community', highlighting the importance of helping others.



"Act-Belong-Commit is an ongoing inclusion in our school, and although we have annual projects, we endeavour to keep the message is at the forefront of our values."



## Karratha Senior High School

**As a large high school in regional WA, we wanted to find a whole school and community program that would promote student wellbeing and was simple and effective to embrace.**

As a school, we are open and transparent about how mental illness can impact on individual students, families, staff and community members. We also believe there is a strong link between a successful education and a students' mental health and wanted to do the best we could for our students.

By embracing the Act-Belong-Commit message, we have actively promoted the importance of mental health promotion through our school Facebook pages, messages on our electronic notice boards around the school, focus talks by our Year Co-ordinators and monthly newsletters with full colour page promotions on how to be active, belong to a group or commit to a cause.

At whole school events such as the Swimming carnival and Athletics carnival, we have involved the whole school in various activities to promote being active and belonging to a faction group within their year group. For example, basketball, volleyball and futsal run alongside the pool at the swimming carnival, which encourages all students to participate in an activity.

By partnering with Act-Belong-Commit, we've been able to use their resources to promote the Act-Belong-Commit message in workshops, the first being a conference for Year 6 students to prepare them for high school, the second being for Year 10 students as they prepared for Senior School.

At our second parent night, the Student Wellbeing Department promoted the message of a mentally healthy school by having a colouring in table for students, a Wheel of Wellbeing Game and table tennis alongside whole school activities.

In partnership with Act-Belong-Commit, staff have spoken to our students at year assemblies and promoted competitions such as PhotoVoice, which allow students to express themselves in a creative way and provide further opportunities to participate in mentally healthy activities.

**We have found Act-Belong-Commit an accessible message to embed into the Health Curriculum across the whole school and into school events.**

It has been easy to promote the Act-Belong-Commit message across the whole school for staff, students and parents. Through promoting the Act-Belong-Commit message, demonstrating its effectiveness and getting support from the Act-Belong-Commit team, we are seeing students' and staff becoming more positive and resilient – both mentally and physically healthy.

As we place a priority on the importance of student wellbeing and mental health, we now have three Wellbeing Co-ordinators, six Year Co-ordinators and two Student Support Officers in place.

Moving forward, our aim is to involve more support staff in using the mental health messages as an embedded part of the newly created staff wellbeing committee.

“By promoting the Act-Belong-Commit message frequently, we are seeing students and staff become more positive, resilient and mentally healthy.”



## Melville Senior High School

**We feel strongly that government, local agencies and schools need to and can do more for the mental health of our teens, the next generation.**

The statistics within our school were rising in regards to mental health issues and although we cannot solve the myriad of issues that cause the problems, we believed we could educate to minimise some of them. We wanted something to complement our existing Health Curriculum and provide students with strategies to improve or maintain their mental health with a positive approach.

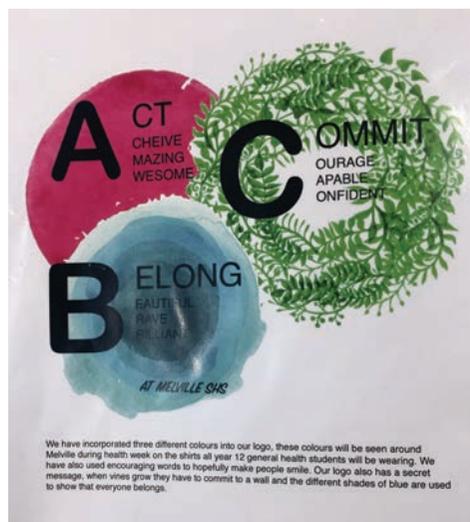
Act-Belong-Commit provided us with the resources to educate staff and students on the campaign, and over the course of 2017, we focused on getting the message to students through our Health curriculum and annual Health Week event.

In Term 3, we held an introductory Act-Belong-Commit Health lesson for all Year 7-10 students to introduce them to the message, analyse their level of commitment to the areas and provide some strategies to improve their mental health.

We also ran Act-Belong-Commit Health Week six weeks later with a focus on positive mental health, which brought mental health to the forefront within the

school community. This culminated in the Act-Belong-Commit Athletics Carnival, which gave students a chance to actively participate and increase their sense of belonging.

We created a committee of teachers and administration to identify what we were already doing to improve our students and staff's mental health and wellbeing and what we wanted to implement. From there, a separate staff wellbeing committee was formed.



**"93% of students know why it is important to look after their mental health and 90% know some ways of how they can do so."**

**We couldn't have implemented the positive mental health message into our health curriculum and wider school without Act-Belong-Commit.**

We have successfully raised the profile and importance of mental health through this program and partnership. A survey of students from Year 7-12 at the end of Term 3 showed that 93% of students understood the importance of mental health and that 90% know how they can improve it. Staff have also commented on how Act-Belong-Commit Health Week brought a sense of community and togetherness.

We have been granted funding from the government to allocate time to coordinate the mental health program in the school, as opposed to doing it within DOTT time or out of school hours – this has been a huge benefit to

the coordination of the program within our school.

In 2018, we will be adding three weeks of Health Curriculum for Year 7's and 5 weeks for Year 8-10, and will again run Health Week and the athletics carnival. We are also hoping to establish a student group for advice, opinion and assistance with implementing the Act-Belong-Commit message.

## Mount Lawley Senior High School

**We joined the Mentally Healthy Schools Program in 2014 as we were keen to promote and raise awareness of the importance of good mental health in our school.**

We wanted to take a whole school approach and work with a program that was recognised, accessible and credible with ALL members of the school community, regardless of background, age or ethnicity.

The first step we took was to establish a Student Wellbeing Committee to help drive the Act-Belong-Commit message within the school community. This committee is student driven with guidance and support from the Healthy Active Coordinator. This group arranged lunchtime activities, information stands and promotions for mental health days and they encouraged involvement of all year groups.

We promoted the Act-Belong-Commit in assemblies, newsletters and on social media. We also presented Act-Belong-Commit prizes for involvement, volunteering, random acts of kindness and generally embodying the Act-Belong-Commit principles. Year 7 students took a whole term to focus on the program and follow the lessons and activities worksheets to promote positive mental health and Act-Belong-Commit.

We provided staff with similar opportunities to boost their mental health and wellbeing through staff competitions, health newsletters and mental health promotions.

We also established a fortnightly "Act-Belong-Commit" Coffee Club as an informal way for parents to get involved with the school and help with events like Year 7 orientation and the second-hand uniform sales.

**This partnership has been the catalyst to focus on mental health within our school community.**

A partnership with such a large campaign has been incredibly positive for our school. The resources, and support we have received has been exceptional and ensured that this program and the importance of good mental health can be promoted easily into the school community. Our students have really embraced the importance of mental health and the Act-Belong-Commit program.

"This partnership has been the catalyst to focus on mental health within our school community."



# How Can Our School Get Involved?

**Any primary or secondary school in Western Australia can become a Mentally Healthy school! All you need to do is contact us for a chat to learn more!**

By becoming an Act-Belong-Commit partner, schools receive access to a range of resources, merchandise and signage. They also receive assistance from a dedicated Program Coordinator to assist with planning projects and events, publicity, grant application writing, and training in Act-Belong-Commit message delivery.

The great thing about the Mentally Healthy Schools Program is how flexible and adaptive it is. Each school decides how promotion of the Act-Belong-Commit principles are implemented within their school community, and there are options for different needs, demographics, resources and capacities.

To find out more about the program or how your school can become more mentally healthy, contact us on **08 9266 4648** or **info@actbelongcommit.org.au**.

## What Are the Benefits?

- FREE to sign-up
- Flexible and simple to implement
- Positive and encouraging message
- Receive \$150 worth of Act-Belong-Commit merchandise annually
- Reduces stigma
- Increases resilience



# Our Impact (2014 to 2017)

A recent evaluation of the Mentally Healthy Schools Program shows it is making an impact in changing the way students and staff think – and talk – about mental health.

The Mentally Healthy Schools Program has made significant progress in encouraging young people to talk about mental health, in reducing stigma around mental illness, and in increasing staff and student participation in mentally healthy activities.

“It works, if even just a few students remember and take on the Act-Belong-Commit message from every school, the world can be a much more mentally healthy place!”

*Suzie Barnes, Mount Lawley SHS*



**53,843**

reach of the program  
(aged 6-18 years)



**585**

teachers trained in  
Act-Belong-Commit and  
mental health promotion



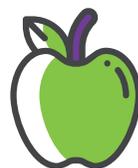
**68**

partner schools



**86%**

of students at follow-up were  
aware of Act-Belong-Commit  
(62% at baseline)



**92%**

of staff at follow-up were aware  
of Act-Belong-Commit  
(77% at baseline)

## With Thanks

Matthew Brennan-Jones, School Psychologist, Armadale Senior High School

Kia Perry, Health Committee Leader, Atwell Primary School

Laura Butshiire, School Chaplain, Clarkson Primary School

Megan Cooper, Teacher, Coinda Primary School

Jennifer Edmonds, School Psychologist, Kalamunda Senior High School

Gina Martinovich, Level 3 Wellbeing Coordinator, Karratha Senior High School

Lesley McNeil, Lower School Health Coordinator, Melville Senior High School

Suzie Barnes, Healthy Active Coordinator, Mount Lawley Senior High School

Merinda Smith, Wellbeing Coordinator, Secret Harbour Primary School

## Contact Details

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### Funding



### Support

