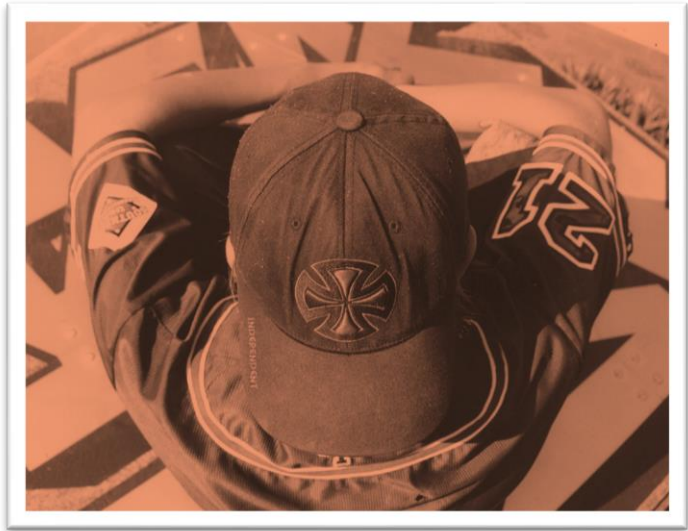


Mater Young Adults Health Centre Brisbane

Case for support

There have never been so many young people on the planet as there are today. In Australia there are approximately 3.2 million young adults aged between 16 and 25. Health and wellbeing during adolescence and young adulthood is vital in the successful transition to adult life. Completing an education, transitioning to employment and forming life-long relationships all occur in the vital years of adolescence and young adulthood.



75% of all mental illness will present before age 25* and the median age for substance use disorders is 20.

*gov.uk

Currently, large numbers of young people with chronic illness fail to transition successfully to adult services. Health services typically target paediatric or adult populations and don't meet the unique developmental needs of young people. Mental health concerns often exacerbate these health conditions and young people often turn to drugs and alcohol. New services and innovations are needed to meet the growing numbers of young people with chronic health conditions, mental health and substance use concerns.

Mater Young Adults Health Centre Brisbane

Some young adults can find life pretty tough, and experience mental and physical health challenges requiring specific care.

The Mater Young Adults Health Centre Brisbane (MYAHC) is the first of its kind in Australia that is specifically for young people. MYAHC provides care for young people with serious chronic health conditions, mental health issues and problems with substance use. It is a world leading service that improves the lives of young people by providing excellent clinical care that integrates research, training, and consumer feedback.

We are now looking to expand our services, especially to communities of need and use what we have learned to improve the lives of young people in Queensland.

This is our next generation of workers, parents, teachers and leaders. We see them as an asset to be valued not a problem to be fixed. Helping young people now will see rewards into the future!

Young people often come to health services with many layers of complexity impacting on their health. Many young people we see may not have supportive adults in their life, stable accommodation or the financial means to get to hospital or pay for medication. Those that do may be struggling to find a service that can be flexible around work or study commitments or provide care with people their own age.

Programs and services at MYAHC

MYAHC has developed a range of innovative services focused on the unique health care needs of young people. The Centre seeks to integrate these services to ensure young people can easily access a range of services and are supported on the pathway to recovery and success. These include:

- **Clarence St** a free, confidential service supporting young people to make positive changes to their alcohol and other drug use; including onsite vocational training, therapeutic group work, recreational activities, and support to prepare for work and a community outreach team provides specialist youth work to individual young people and their families. Where a young person needs more intensive support the residential program can provide a safe withdrawal from substances for up to 5 young people at a time.
- **The Young Adult Medical Ward** is the only ward of its kind in Australia and provides a youth friendly environment with specialist medical and nursing staff.
- **Mater Young Adult Outpatient Clinics** provide a youth friendly environments with specialist medical and allied health staff designed to meet young adult health care needs.
- **Family and Youth Counselling Service** is a face to face counselling service for young persons (as well as victims and families) referred by the Youth Justice System. The service works with young people using restorative justice principles. The young person attends a Youth Conference as an alternative to court.
- **Young Adult Support Unit (YASU)** is a specialist multi-disciplinary team providing mental and emotional health support for young people with chronic medical conditions. One on one and group programs, including THRIVE – a 6 week activities and life skills program.
- **The Health Advisory Legal Clinic (HALC)** offers free legal help to young adults who cannot afford a private lawyer and whose legal issues, such as eviction, debt and government agencies issue impacts their health. LawRight operates HALC with the support of law, social work and medical students.

Paul's story

Paul was struggling with addiction. Addiction meant Paul struggled to maintain work, education, and a social life. Sleep became difficult, work fell by the wayside, friends and family either walked away or were pushed as the drug use escalated.

It didn't take long for Paul's life to spiral out of control. Eventually, the drugs became the priority.

It wasn't until he hit rock bottom, isolated from family and friends, without a job, and his health heading down hill that Paul looked for help.

He found it at Clarence Street; a free, confidential service for young people looking to change their alcohol and drug use. Clarence Street, as part of the Mater Young Adults Health Centre Brisbane (MYAHCB) includes a day program offering vocational training, therapeutic group work, recreational activities and support to prepare for work.

After receiving the support he needed, Paul turned his life around. He overcame his addiction, and joined the Youth Embassy program at MYAHCB, working with Youth Consultancy, and the Clarence Street Executive to represent the voice of young people and provide feedback on the services and programs offered, to better support more youth in need.

Suicide remains the leading cause of death for people aged 15-24** and young people with chronic health conditions report higher rates of illness-related distress and have significant rates of mental health disorders, particularly depression and anxiety.

**aihw.gov.au

Mater also runs one of the first mental health in-hospital services for young people in Queensland. This Emotional Health Unit consists of:

- **The Amanda Flynn Clinic** – is the only private inpatient mental health facility in Queensland that caters specifically to young adults and accommodates up to 12 people. It was created thanks to the generosity of Peter Flynn of the Amanda Flynn Foundation.
- **Recovery College** – the first of its kind in Queensland, this college assists young people in recovering from mental health issues; choosing the modules that relate specifically to their needs, to help on their personal roads to recovery.
- **Consulting suites** – provide a range of services for patients requiring mental health assessment, treatment and follow-up for depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns.

Next steps

MYAHC is a world leading service providing a unique suite of specialised care programs tailored for adolescents and young adults to address their emotional, social and developmental needs.

We are keen to expand our services, especially in communities of need, using what we have learned and using the expertise and experience of the clinicians at the MYAHC. This is an exciting opportunity to provide services where there are little supports or services currently available.

Research highlight

For young people dealing with the double burden of IBD and depression, things can be particularly tough. But Mater researcher Dr Tatjana Ewais is working hard to help these young adults.

Her study is exploring whether mindfulness and cognitive therapy can be used to complement traditional IBD treatments used across Mater and beyond.

This project is the first randomised clinical trial of mindfulness therapy in adolescents and young adults with IBD, and the first to measure inflammatory markers and brain neuroimaging changes in response to mindfulness therapy in IBD.

Angela's story

Diabetes affects every aspect of life. For Angela, diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at just 11 years of age, pricking her finger to monitor her blood sugar, and injecting herself with insulin has been a part of daily routine ever since.

Every decision Angela makes in a day affects her blood sugar levels, from what she eats, how she exercises, how well she sleeps, and even her emotional state.

Learning how to manage her condition has required a sense of humour, a strong outlook, and a willingness to deal with the ups and downs of life with a chronic disease.

Angela has accessed specialist care at the Mater Young Adult Outpatient Clinic, whose services are specifically tailored to support 16 to 25 year olds.

The Young Adult Support Unit (YASU) provides mental and emotional support for young people with a chronic illness and has helped Angela develop a support network and meet more people in the type 1 diabetes community.

This connection has helped Angela realise she is not alone, and with support from friends, family and her new networks she has successfully navigated her way through the health system, secured employment and can continue to live her dreams.