

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING Client Handbook



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Developed by North West Community Services
Version Approved September, 2025

ABOUT US

North West Community Services Inc (NWCS) has been providing services and programs for the local community since November 1977. Our mission is “Building a Stronger Community Together” with the aim of creating a safe, harmonious, connected, and informed community.

We have a long and proud history of working with local people and local services to improve life opportunities, build social cohesion, promote belonging and inclusion. Central to our approach is the commitment to innovation, providing high quality services with a strength based approach and building positive relationships and trust with our community. Our work is underpinned by our values of Respect, Integrity, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equity.

We have a proven history of community engagement, community development, negotiating In Reach services, and offering outreach programs.

We provide a wonderful array of group activities, with a focus on social, health and wellbeing, along with community events. We provide an aged care program and NDIS services.

We aim to build strong relationships with local service providers, identify emerging needs and trends and strive to find solutions together to address unmet needs.

We offer a range of client centered services, including emergency relief, therapeutic case work and counselling. We provide outreach services to other agencies including schools, and offer life skills programs.

OUR VISION, OUR PURPOSE AND OUR VALUES

OUR VISION

*Building a stronger community together
a safe, harmonious, socially connected
and informed community.*

OUR PURPOSE

WE WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY:

- Improving wellbeing and empowering individuals and families to live independently as a part of the community.
- Supporting individuals to make their own positive lifestyle decisions.
- Providing high quality services, facilitating localised innovating solutions, and advocating for the community.
- Harnessing community strengths to enhance community cohesion.
- Concentrating resources in our community to help build social inclusion and reduce marginalisation.

OUR VALUES

OUR VALUES AND BELIEFS CENTRAL TO ALL WE DO AT RIVERSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE ARE:

Respect - we treat others as we would like to be treated. We honour each other's strengths, potential, experiences, views, time and contributions.

Integrity - We are honest, authentic, transparent and accountable in our work.

Inclusion - We welcome and include all.

Sustainability - We operate effectively to support and maintain the highest standards and remain functional for the community.

Equity - We treat each person as an individual and apply fairness and justice to all we do.

OUR SERVICES

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing program offers two key services:

CASE MANAGEMENT

We provide comprehensive case management that includes assessment, planning, and coordinating services to address your specific needs. This may involve helping people navigate the often complex social service system.

We can assist with access to essential resources and services such as financial aid, employment services, housing or healthcare.

ADULT, YOUTH AND CHILD COUNSELLING

Our counselling service provides a holistic, trauma informed approach to supporting adults, young people and children. We take a client centered, strengths based approach that is respectful and supportive of clients and their families.

Interventions used are individualised and developmentally appropriate, this includes expressive therapies such as Art Therapy, Play Therapy and Sand Tray Therapy.

REFERRAL AND INTAKE PROCESS

Initial inquiry made by client or service provider

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graph TD; A[Initial inquiry made by client or service provider] --> B[Telephone intake completed by counsellor with referrer and client, service overview and documents provided]; B --> C[NWCS assessment and allocation process facilitated, client allocated to NWCS counsellor or referred to specialist service]; C --> D[Client and referrer informed of outcome, initial appointment with allocated counsellor booked or referral completed];
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Telephone intake completed by counsellor with referrer and client, service overview and documents provided

NWCS assessment and allocation process facilitated, client allocated to NWCS counsellor or referred to specialist service

Client and referrer informed of outcome, initial appointment with allocated counsellor booked or referral completed



“ONLY WHEN WE ARE BRAVE ENOUGH TO EXPLORE THE DARKNESS WILL WE DISCOVER THE INFINITE POWER OF OUR LIGHT.” BRENE BROWN (2016).

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



At NWCS we strive to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.



Our services are designed to reflect your social, cultural, language, religious, spiritual, psychological and medical needs.



We tailor our services and programs to be inclusive of individual needs and sensitive to clients from culturally and linguistically diverse background, as well as those who identify as First Nations.



NWCS aims to be inclusive of diverse communities, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.



We respect and value each client as an individual and acknowledge the uniqueness of everyone

ADVOCATES AND SUPPORT PEOPLE

You have the right to use an advocate of your choice during your interactions with our services. An advocate may be a family member, friend or another organisation who, with your permission, can represent your interests and ensure your needs are met.

If you wish to appoint an advocate, please inform us in writing of the person you would like to appoint. You have the right to change your advocate any time. A list of advocacy services is provided below if you prefer to use an external organisation.

**MULTICULTURAL
DISABILITY
ADVOCACY
ASSOCIATION
OF NSW**

10-12 HUTCHINSON
ST, GRANVILLE
2142 NSW

1800 629 072

**OLDER PERSONS
ADVOCACY
NETWORK**

ENQUIRIES@OPAN.
COM.AU

1800 700 600

**CHILDREN AND
YOUNG
PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITY**

CYDA.ORG.AU

1800 222 660

**SENIOR RIGHTS
SERVICE**

LEVEL 4, 418A
ELIZABETH ST,
SURRY HILLS NSW
2010

1800 424 079

**ADVOCACY
HOTLINE**

MONDAY-FRIDAY
8:30AM-5PM

1300 135 627

ABSEC NSW

21 CARRINGTON RD
MARRICKVILLE,
NSW 2204

(02) 9559 5299

PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT

We respect your privacy and keep your information safe.

Here's what you need to know:

What we collect

- Your name, contact details, and date of birth
- Information you share with us in sessions
- Sensitive information (e.g., health, family, cultural background, or beliefs)

Why we collect it

- To give you the right support and services
- To meet our duty of care and legal obligations
- To communicate with you about appointments or services

How we collect it

- From you (in sessions, forms, emails, texts, or calls)
- From intake and referral forms
- From other professionals, only with your consent

How we store it

- Secure locked files and password-protected systems
- Access limited to authorised staff
- No unnecessary details kept

Who we share it with

- We don't share without your consent
- Exceptions: if the law requires it (e.g., risk of harm, court order, mandatory reporting)
- We do not send your information overseas

Your rights

- Ask to see the information we hold about you
- Request corrections if something is wrong
- Be informed if a privacy breach affects you

PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT

Your right to privacy encompasses confidentiality. Information discussed during our sessions is confidential and may not be shared with anyone without your written permission, except when legally obliged:

- To report a serious and imminent threat to the life, health or property of yourself or another,
- To report any abuse or neglect experienced by a young person under the age of 18 years, and/or
- To release client records when required by court order.

Confidential written records are maintained to reflect the issues and goals identified in sessions. Records are kept securely for seven years, and for seven year after the age of 18 for minors.



MANDATORY REPORTING

As North West Community Services delivers welfare, education services to children and young people under 16 years of age, it is seen as a mandatory reporter under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. This means our staff, volunteers and board members are designated mandatory reporters.

The person making the report must complete the Online Mandatory Reporter Guide which determines whether a report needs to be made. The Decision Report is printed and placed on file for future reference.

If the guide determines the risk is reportable, the Child Protection Helpline on Ph: 13 21 11 must be contacted and the appropriate information supplied.

ANYONE CAN MAKE A REPORT

THE HOTLINE IS OPEN 24/7, 7 DAYS A WEEK

NSW CHILD PROTECTION HELPLINE: 13 21 11

WHEN DO WE NEED TO REPORT?

-  A sexual offence against a child
-  Sexual misconduct with or in the presence of a child
-  Ill-treatment of a child
-  Neglect of a child
-  An assault against a child
-  Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
-  An offence under section 43B (failure to reduce or remove risk of a child becoming a victim of child abuse) of the crimes act 1900
-  An offence under 316A (concealing child abuse offence) of the crimes act 1900





“THE ACT OF REVEALING ONESELF FULLY TO ANOTHER AND STILL BEING ACCEPTED MAY BE THE MAJOR VEHICLE OF THERAPEUTIC HELP.” IRVIN YALOM (2008).

YOUR RIGHTS

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE AND RECEIVE QUALITY SAFE CARE IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT THAT MEETS NATIONAL STADARDS

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SHOWN RESPECT, DIGNITY AND CONSIDERATION REGARDLESS OF CULTURE, IDENTITY OR BELEIFS

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION, ADVICE AND TREATMENT THAT MEETS YOUR NEEDS

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED ABOUT SERVICES, TREATMENT AND COST IN A TIMELY AND OPEN MANNER IN WORDS YOU UNDERSTAND

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE AND MAKE A COMPLAINT AND HAVE CONCERNS ADDRESSED PROMPTLY AND WITH TRANSPARENCY

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY AND CONFIDENAILITY OF YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE DECISIONS ON YOUR CARE AND HAVE YOUR CONCERNS ADDRESSED IN A PROMPT MANNER

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT RECEIVE CLEAR INFORMATION ABOUT LIMITATIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE INCLUDED IN DECISIONS AND CHOICES ABOUT YOUR CARE

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS



STANDARD 1

Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture



STANDARD 3

Families and communities are informed and involved



STANDARD 4

Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

STANDARD 2

Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously



STANDARD 5

People working with children are suitable and supported



STANDARD 6

Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused



STANDARD 7

Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training



STANDARD 8

Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur

STANDARD 9

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved



STANDARD 10

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

United Nations Convention on

The Rights of the Child

In 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was created as a commitment to help all children and young people feel safe, supported and valued. It has since been signed by nearly every country in the world. Together, we can use these rights to make sure that every child and young person in Australia can learn, play, grow and live safely.

Article 1

Everyone under 18 has these rights.

Article 2

All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, what gender they are, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 3

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Article 4

The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family to protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.

Article 5

Your family has the responsibility to help you learn about your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.

Article 6

You have the right to be alive.

Article 7

You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognised by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

Article 8

You have the right to an identity – an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.

Article 9

You have the right to live with your parent(s), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.

Article 10

If you live in a different country than your parents do, you have the right to be together in the same place.

Article 11

You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.

Article 12

You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

Article 13

You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 14

You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

Article 15

You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

Article 16

You have the right to privacy.

Article 17

You have the right to get information that is important to your well being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.

Article 18

You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.

Article 19

You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

Article 20

You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.

Article 21

You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.

Article 22

You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.



Article 23

You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life.

Article 24

You have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

Article 25

If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

Article 26

You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

Article 27

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

Article 28

You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

Article 29

Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

Article 30

You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion – or any you choose. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

Article 31

You have the right to play and rest.

Article 32

You have the right to protection from work that harms you, and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

Article 33

You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

Article 34

You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

Article 35

No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

Article 36

You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

Article 37

No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel and harmful way.

Article 38

You have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

Article 39

You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected, or badly treated.

Article 40

You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.

Article 41

If the laws of your country provide better protection of your right than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

Article 42

You have the right to know your rights! Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.

Article 43 to 54

These articles explain how governments and international organisations like UNICEF will work to ensure children are protected with their rights.



NAPCAN PREVENT CHILD ABUSE PROJECT
www.napcan.org.au

Every child,
in every community,
in every country,
needs a fair go.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

To help us provide the best service possible, we ask that you:

- **Participate in Your Care:** Engage actively in planning your care and setting your goals.
- **Follow Agreed Instructions:** Make an effort to follow treatment plans and guidance.
- **Communicate Changes:** Inform us about any changes in your condition or circumstances.
- **Keep Appointments:** Attend scheduled sessions, or notify us in advance if you need to reschedule.
- **Be Courteous:** Treat our staff and facilities with respect.
- **Speak Up:** Notify us if you ever feel unsafe or uncomfortable during any aspect of our service.
- **Share Your Needs:** Inform us of any cultural, religious, or health needs so we can provide appropriate support.
- **Respect Boundaries:** Understand and maintain professional boundaries with staff.



WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

Our dedicated team at NWCS is committed to upholding the highest standards of care and professionalism. To support our mission and ensure client safety and well-being, our staff members are expected to:

- **Maintain Professionalism:** Uphold NWCS's core values of Respect, Integrity, Inclusion, Sustainability, and Equity in all interactions.
- **Confidentiality:** Protect client information rigorously, ensuring that all records are kept secure and only shared with appropriate consent or as legally mandated.
- **Clear Communication:** Provide clear, compassionate, and accessible information to clients, ensuring they understand their care process and rights.
- **Timely Response:** Respond promptly to client inquiries, feedback, and emergencies, including reporting any concerns as required by mandatory reporting laws.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Recognise and respect cultural, linguistic, and individual differences, adapting approaches to meet each client's unique needs.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Engage in ongoing training and professional development to stay current with best practices in mental health and wellbeing.
- **Collaboration:** Work effectively as part of a multidisciplinary team, sharing insights and coordinating care to ensure a seamless experience for clients.
- **Feedback and Self-Reflection:** Actively seek feedback from clients and colleagues, and reflect on personal practices to improve service quality continually.
- **Ethical Practice:** Adhere strictly to ethical guidelines and NWCS policies, ensuring all interventions are client centered, trauma-informed, and evidence-based.

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

Your feedback helps us improve our services. If you have concerns or suggestions, please share them with us:

Feedback:

- Offered informally to any staff member.
- Recorded and used to refine our practices.

Complaints:

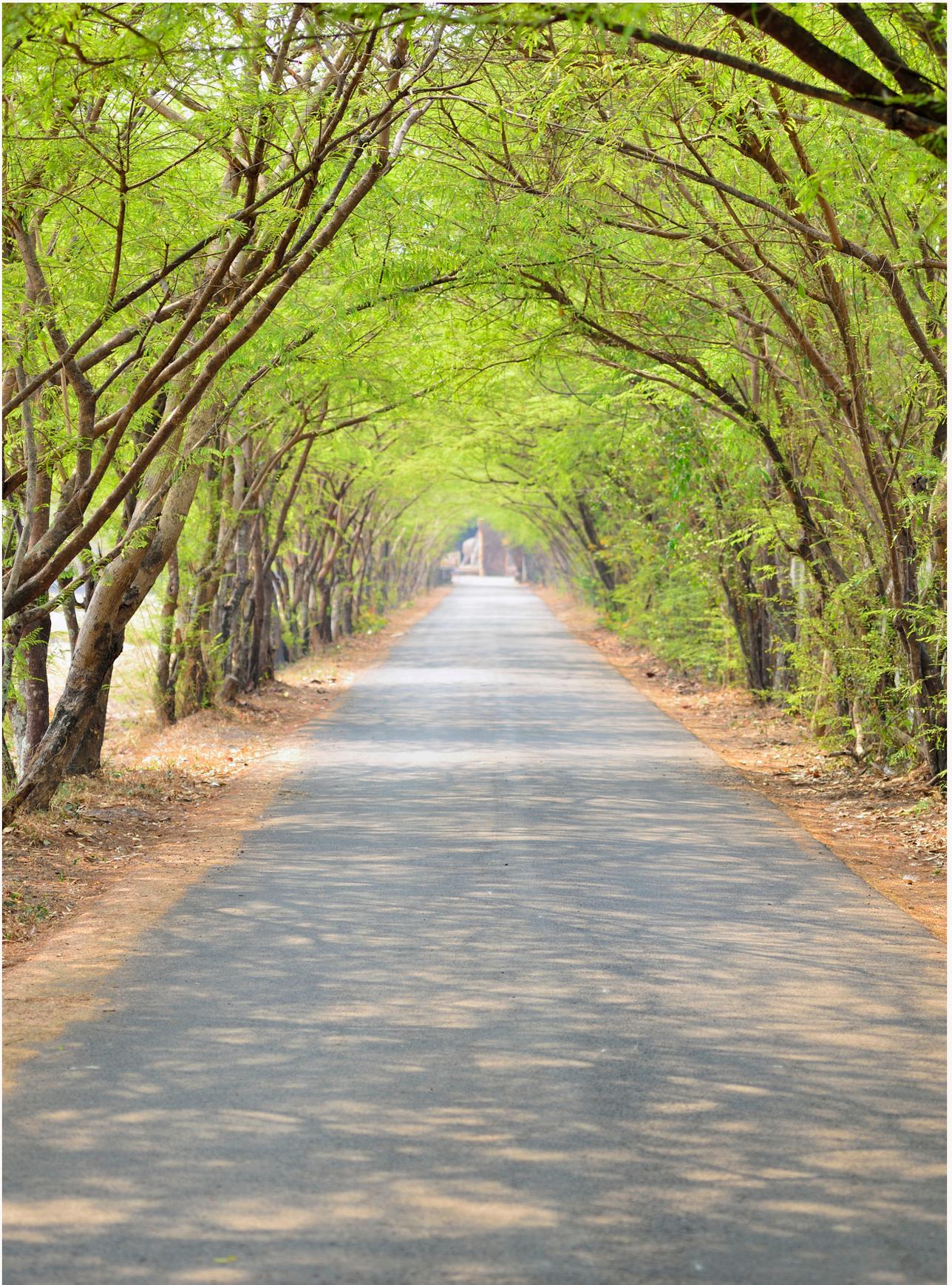
- Can be made in writing, verbally, or by email.
- Will be addressed promptly by the relevant team leader or, if necessary, the CEO.
- You have the right to have a support person with you during the complaint process.

Contact:

- Email: reception@nwcs.org.au
- Phone: (02) 9627 3622
- MHW Team Leader: vsokalik@nwcs.org.au
- NWCS CEO: ceo@nwcs.org.au

All feedback and complaints are taken seriously and will not affect the quality of service you receive.





“THE GOOD LIFE IS A PROCESS, NOT A STATE OF BEING. IT IS A DIRECTION NOT A DESTINATION.” CARL ROGERS (2012)

24/7 CRISIS HELPLINES

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 - **Youth Beyond Blue:** 1300 22 46 36

Lifeline: 13 11 14 - **Mental Health Line:** 1800 011 511

13Yarn: 13 92 76 - **LGBTQIA+ Q Life:** 1800 184 527

Men's Line Australia: 1300 78 99 78

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467



"Healing takes time, and asking for help is a courageous step."

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**NORTH WEST
COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.**

Building a stronger community together