

GREATER DANDENONG YOUTH NETWORK 2025

Minutes

Meeting Theme: Self Care and Managing Burnout for Youth Workers

Thursday 12 February, 9.30-11.00am

Meeting Format: Face to Face

Greater Dandenong City Council, Level 2 Meeting Rooms

225 Lonsdale St, Dandenong VIC 3175

Acknowledgement of Country	9.30am
Welcome and Introduction	9.35-9.40am
<p>Keynote Presentation: headspace <i>Mika Former, Team Leader for Intake and Brief Intervention, headspace Dandenong</i></p> <p>Understanding Occupational Hazards in Helping Professions Working in support, community, and client-facing roles brings deep purpose—but it also exposes workers to very real occupational hazards. These are workplace injuries, not personal shortcomings or failures.</p> <p>Key Occupational Hazards</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Burnout - A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress. It often shows up through fatigue, irritability, reduced motivation, and feeling overwhelmed. 2. Vicarious Trauma - The cumulative impact of hearing trauma stories, which can subtly (or significantly) shift your worldview, sense of safety, and beliefs about people. 3. Compassion Fatigue - Often described as <i>the cost of caring</i>, this is the depletion that comes from consistently supporting people in distress, even when you deeply value the work. 4. Moral Distress - The pain of knowing the right or ethical action to take, but being prevented from doing so due to policies, systems, or resource limits (e.g., funding, waitlists, lack of services). 	9.40-10.10am
<p>Tactical (Individual) Self-Care These are small, intentional strategies that help protect your wellbeing and create boundaries between you and the work.</p> <p>Transition Rituals Create a psychological "airlock" between work and home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A specific playlist or podcast • A short walk before heading home • Changing clothes immediately after finishing work <p style="padding-left: 20px;">These act as cues that you're shifting out of the worker identity.</p> <p>Active Diffusing (Quick Regulation) Take a 5-minute nervous system reset between clients or tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Box breathing • Shoulder rolls or stretching • Getting up and stepping outside <p style="padding-left: 20px;">These small resets prevent stress from compounding across the day.</p> <p>Professional Boundaries Be clear about where your responsibility ends. You can care deeply without absorbing everything.</p>	
<p>Collective Care & Team Support Wellbeing isn't just an individual responsibility—healthy teams reduce burnout and improve resilience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask permission before unloading heavy or graphic content onto a colleague. • Use meetings to celebrate small wins, not only discuss problems. • Reduce isolation—loneliness is a known burnout trigger. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take real breaks away from your desk; normalise saying, “I’ve had a heavy day.” • Encourage mental health days and model it from leadership down. 	
<p>Professional Infrastructure Matters</p> <p>Organisations must support staff through structures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAP (Employee Assistance Programs) • Clinical or professional supervision • Regular internal check-ins • Ongoing training and development opportunities 	
<p>The ‘One Percent’ Commitment</p> <p>Small, consistent changes can prevent bigger problems later. Choose one manageable action, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 10-minute walk during lunch • Leaving on time twice a week <p>Remember: If you can’t advocate for your own wellbeing, how can you effectively advocate for others?</p>	
<p>Supporting team wellbeing: table discussions</p> <p>Working together in table groups to explore how we support the wellbeing of the teams we work with, and strategies we may consider adopting based on this morning’s learnings.</p>	10.10-10.20am
<p>Local Expert Panel</p> <p>Local experts will reflect on insights from table discussions and answer questions from the room.</p> <p>Mika Former - Team Leader, Intake & Brief Intervention – headspace Dandenong Vimbayi Kagonda - Community Development Worker – Dandenong Mental Health & Wellbeing Local (Mind Australia) Madeleine Power - Team Leader – Engagement & Participation, Youth & Family Services, City of Greater Dandenong</p> <p>Table Conversation Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stigma paradox: while the sector works to reduce stigma for young people and clients, workers themselves often feel pressure to be “strong” and not have mental health struggles. • The discomfort of working within systems that have limitations. • The importance of being open and transparent with clients about what you <i>can</i> and <i>cannot</i> do. • Self-care is both workplace and personal— it’s a way of living, not a once-off activity. • Staying present requires different strategies for different contexts. <p>What support or advice would you offer to someone without strong organisational or team support?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use supervision intentionally— come prepared with ideas and reflections. • Acknowledge that many factors are out of your control; be strategic and pick your battles. • Workplaces vary, so focus on what <i>you</i> can influence. • Slow down when needed, prioritising quality over quantity. • Reflect on what you can and cannot control, and work from what is directly in front of you. • Find colleagues—formal or informal—who may be experiencing similar challenges. • Be open and honest about what you’re finding difficult. • Build your own small community of support where you feel safe to unpack the work. • Prioritise ongoing self-care so you build the internal strength needed to face difficult situations. • Maintain practices consistently, not only when things feel overwhelming. <p>Reflective Practice – What does this look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use structured supervision to stay focused and purposeful. • Make it strengths-based: start with what is going well, successes, and what you’re proud of. • Use this grounding to guide learning, challenges, and next steps. • Weekly co-reflection sessions open to staff across the organisation and facilitated internally. • Multiple structures: fortnightly supervision and several team meetings focused on reflecting on recent work. Using these spaces to pause, look back, and assess what can be improved or celebrated. 	10.20-10.35am

<p>Medium Grants Program</p> <p>Applications to Council’s Medium Grants Program are open from Tuesday 10 February and close at 11.59pm Tuesday 10 March. The Medium Grants Program offers one-off grants of up to \$10,000 to individuals and non-profit community organisations to deliver projects in the fields of community development, climate change, arts, and festivals and events.</p> <p>We also encourage you to discuss your application with a Community Funding Officer. Schedule an appointment time via the team Bookings page. We have both face-to-face and online meeting options available. Further information is also available on Council's Community Grants website.</p> <p>If you have any questions or require further advice and support in relation to your application, then please contact the Community Development Funding Team at commgrants@cgd.vic.gov.au or 8571 1432.</p>	<p>10.35 – 10.40am</p>
<p>Network Information Sharing</p> <p>An opportunity for network members to introduce themselves and share a brief program / service update:</p> <p>Dandenong Youth Crime Forum - This forum proposes to provide a localised, comprehensive view of the issue of youth crime. By sourcing and presenting locally available data, attendees will explore the challenges and underlying causes of youth crime in our community.</p> <p>This forum is intended for leaders, decision-makers and senior practitioners working in the youth sector in the Greater Dandenong area. This includes representatives from local non-government organisations, law enforcement, community groups, policymakers, and subject matter experts. This forum is <i>not</i> intended as professional development for frontline practitioners working with young people.</p> <p>Register here: https://events.humanitix.com/youth-crime-forum-dandenong</p> <p>#APuffAintTuff – anti-vaping health promotion campaign created by our 2025 Young Leaders. Posters will be mailed to all local schools, services upon request. All campaign materials available on our website: https://youth.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/projects/apuffainttuff</p> <p>Youth Leadership Collective – Networking skills workshop for young people – build connections that count. Running next Tuesday 25 February, 5.30 – 7.30pm at Dandenong Civic Centre. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased via Humanitix: https://events.humanitix.com/networking-skills-workshop</p> <p>Women in mentoring – Supports women and non-binary aged 12 - 25 people facing criminal charges, at risk of offending or in contact with the legal system, and are identified as needing additional support to improve their outcomes. Volunteer mentors meet with young people. Currently recruiting mentors. Go to website for more information – https://www.womenandmentoring.org.au/</p> <p>YSAS/headspace/Family Life – YSAS Dandenong, in partnership with Family Life and headspace Dandenong, invite parents and caregivers to a free parenting program designed to support you on your parenting journey. Who it’s for: Parents and caregivers of children and young people aged 0–25 years Where: Dandenong YSAS Youth and Community Hub, Level 3, 26 McCrae St, Dandenong When: Evening sessions from 5:30–7:00pm Program: Six sessions across 2026, each exploring different topics</p> <p>The first session is February 17th and will cover School Refusal, Bullying and Friendship Issues. Coffee, tea and light refreshments provided. For more information, contact Thishya Abeyanayake on (03) 9770 0341.</p> <p>Key Assets Foster care – Currently looking for more local foster carers for emergency foster caring, short term, long term etc. They are also keen to promote their service at local events with stalls etc. https://keyassets.org.au/ Flyer included below:</p> 	<p>10.40- 10.55am</p>

<p>Team Sports 4 All – TeamSports4All connect financially disadvantaged boys and girls, and their families, into their local sporting communities using the power of team sport. They can cover fees, uniforms and gear, but just as importantly, provide wraparound support that helps them stay in the game, and truly belong. https://teamsports4all.com.au/</p> <p>EACH Partners in Wellbeing – This free service offers one-on-one support for Victorians aged 16+. Assists in improving wellbeing, developing coping strategies and providing emotional support. https://www.each.com.au/services/partners-in-wellbeing-psycho-social</p> <p>Change Life Victoria – promote mental wellbeing, psychoeducation and counselling. Currently accepting referrals. https://www.changelifevictoria.com.au/</p> <p>CGD Young leaders – The Young Leaders program is for young people aged 16-25 years who live, work or study in the City of Greater Dandenong. The program provides a unique opportunity for participants to work with likeminded individuals, develop leadership skills, and make a positive impact by planning and delivering community projects. Applications close 14 April 2026. https://youth.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/programs/young-leaders-program</p> <p>HAC – The Holiday Activities Committee (HAC) is an exciting four-week introductory leadership program for young people aged 12 – 16 that provides young people with opportunities to collaborate on designing a series of fun, creative, engaging and healthy activities for our school holiday activities. Participants develop leadership and facilitation skills, and can then step into the role of Peer Leader during the Greater Dandenong holiday activities and attend for free. https://youth.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/holiday-activities-committee</p> <p>Uniting – running a community wellbeing program for young people 12-18. Waitlist is currently open and accepting referrals. Call Narre Warren office to discuss - 03 9704 8377</p> <p>Monash Health Youth Health Hub – wide range of supports available for young people 15-25 including psychology (waitlist currently closed until new staff recruited), dietitian, sexual health nurses, music therapy (coming soon) and exercise physiology (good availability). Open to direct referrals (don't need to go through main Monash Health channels) – email youthtriage@monashhealth.org or more information on their website: https://monashhealth.org/services/youth-services/</p>	
<p>Evaluation Feedback on today's meeting</p> <p>If you would like to provide feedback on today's meeting, please do so via this survey: https://www.menti.com/alvaxc3b4cw</p>	10.55-11.00am
<p>Meeting Formally Closes</p>	11.00am
<p>Time and space to network for those who can stay a little longer</p>	11.00-11:30am
<p>Next meeting Tuesday March 31, 2026, 9.30am – 11am Meeting Format: Online Topic: TBC</p>	

For submissions to the GDYN eNewsletter, please provide a brief update to matilda.houlihan@cgd.vic.gov.au
Deadline for March 2026: Friday 20 February