State of Mental Health in Education 2026

Findings from the 2026 Mental Health in Education Survey

The national view of mental health in education

Mental health has emerged as one of the most pressing health issues facing children and young people in Australia, and educators are playing an increasingly central role in supporting early intervention and prevention.

The findings from the 2026 National Mental Health in Education Survey* highlight educators' concerns about the challenges affecting children and young people, alongside strong recognition that supporting mental health and wellbeing is a fundamental part of education.

As expectations on early learning services and schools continue to grow, so too does the importance of ensuring educators and leaders have the capability, confidence and resources needed to respond effectively to mental health and wellbeing concerns.

Australia's national response

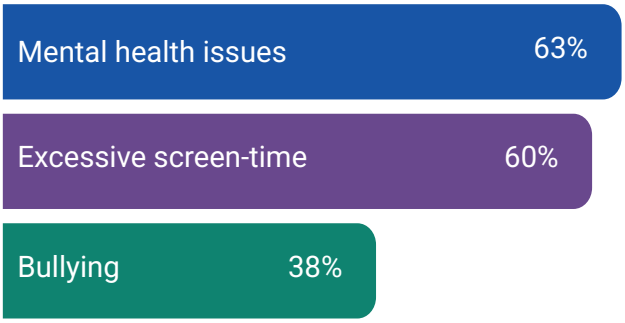
As Australia's national mental health and wellbeing in education initiative, Be You partners with early learning services and schools to embed mental health and wellbeing into everyday learning, leadership and culture.

Designed for whole learning communities, Be You is the only national initiative offering free, flexible and evidence-based professional learning, practical tools and expert consultant guidance, tailored to each education setting's unique needs.

The 2026 survey found that Be You is strengthening educators' confidence and capability to support children's mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health is the leading health challenge

Educators identify mental health as the leading health issue affecting children and young people, ahead of excessive screen time and bullying.



53% of educators **do not agree or are unsure** if children and young people in their learning community are mentally healthy.

National benchmark sample (n = 816)

"The numbers of children and young people being diagnosed with anxiety, depression or other health issues is on the rise."
– 2026 survey respondent

* Results are based on a national benchmark representative of education professionals across Australia (n = 816) and educators that reported engagement with Be You (n = 1,388).
For more about Be You and the National Mental Health and Education Survey, visit: beyou.edu.au

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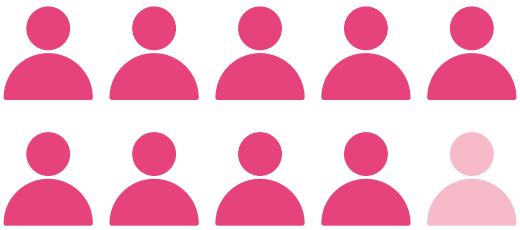
In collaboration with Early Childhood Australia, headspace

Funded by Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Supporting mental health is becoming a fundamental part of education

Recognising and responding to children and young people's mental health is becoming a more established part of educational practice, with **9 in 10 educators (89%) agreeing that supporting the mental health and wellbeing of learners is part of their job.**



National benchmark sample (n = 816)

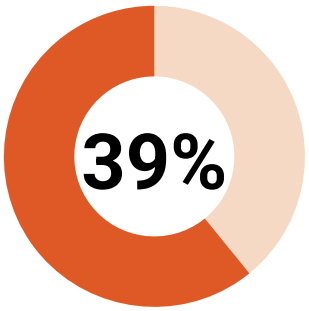
"[Mental health] affects their entire life, including school attendance, physical activity levels, their engagement with family and peers."
– 2026 survey respondent

As educators increasingly recognise mental health and wellbeing as part of their role, creating mentally healthy learning environments will require more than individual capability. It will take whole-setting and system level approaches that strengthen leadership, build organisational capability and prioritise educator wellbeing.

"Mental health illnesses are preventing students from attending school and feeling a sense of belonging and community through social interactions."
– 2026 survey respondent

Educator wellbeing under pressure

Educator wellbeing is an important foundation for positive learning environments. Yet, at a time when demands on educators continue to grow, many do not believe the workforce itself is mentally healthy.



of educators **do not agree or are unsure** if staff in their learning community are mentally healthy.

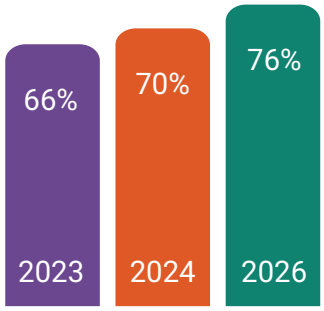
Educators' confidence in managing classroom pressures and other workplace demands is closely linked to their wellbeing[1]. Strengthening educator capability is important, but this alone is not enough to drive lasting practice change. Leadership support, positive workplace cultures and system-level support all influence whether capability translates into sustained teaching practice change[2].

Workforce capacity is growing

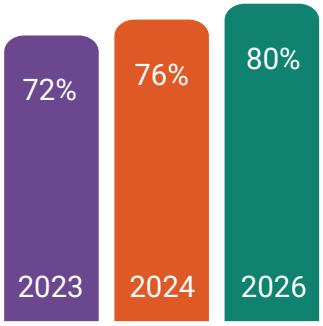
Between 2023 and 2026, educator confidence increased across key areas of mental health support. This includes greater confidence recognising signs of concern, initiating conversations and responding appropriately to mental health issues.

Growing confidence reflects increasing workforce capability and suggests that educators are becoming better equipped to respond earlier and have important conversations with children, young people and colleagues.

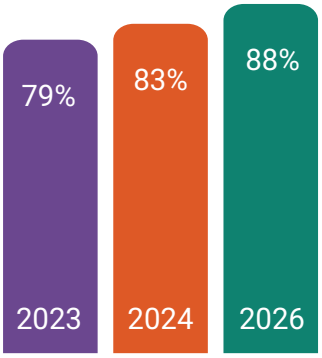
I am confident that I can **recognise the signs and symptoms** of different mental health problems.



I am confident I can **respond appropriately** to support children and young people with a mental health issue or condition in my learning community.



I feel confident i**nitiating conversations** with my colleagues or other professionals about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.



National benchmark sample (n = 816)

Confidence in responding to critical incidents has declined

Despite growing educator confidence in supporting learners' mental health more broadly, confidence that early learning services and schools are prepared to support children and young people after a critical incident, including the death of a student or staff member, suicide, natural disasters and other traumatic events, has declined. This highlights an important gap in workforce preparedness for high impact events that require coordinated, evidence-based responses.

As critical incidents become increasingly complex, early learning services and schools need the capability, resources and support structures to prepare for, respond to and recover from challenging events in a coordinated and compassionate way.

I am confident that my learning community is **adequately prepared to support children and young people after a critical incident** (e.g. death or suicide of a child, young person, staff member, natural disaster, bomb threat).

National benchmark sample (n = 816)

Be You's impact and outcomes

Findings from the 2026 National Mental Health in Education Survey indicate that educators engaged with Be You report higher confidence, capability and preparedness to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Be You supports early learning services and schools to embed sustainable mental health and wellbeing practices, creating conditions for every child and young person to thrive.

Educators value Be You's resources and support

Educators engaged with Be You report that its resources have helped increase their mental health literacy, improve their awareness of how to respond to mental health concerns and provides new strategies for supporting children and young people's mental health.

Among educators engaged with Be You:

85% rate **Be You resources as useful**.

81% report Be You has **improved awareness** of how to respond to mental health concerns.

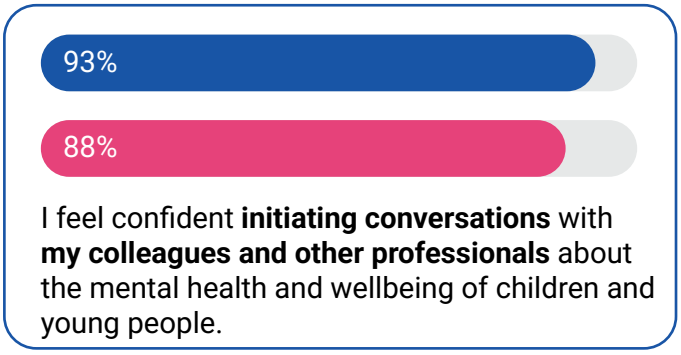
79% report Be You's resources provide **new strategies to respond appropriately**.

77% report **improved mental health literacy** through the use of Be You resources.

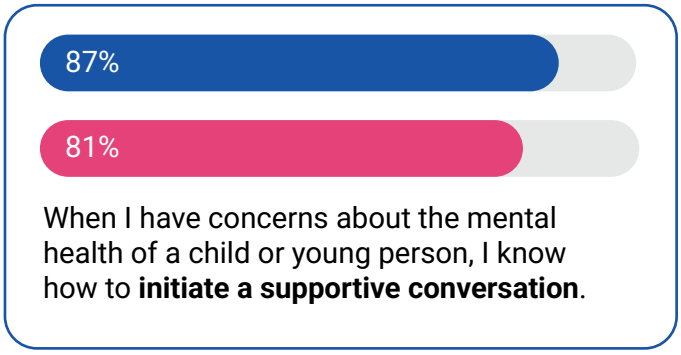
Greater confidence to recognise concerns and respond

Educators engaged with Be You report greater confidence in initiating supportive conversations and recognising the signs of different mental health concerns, compared with the national benchmark.

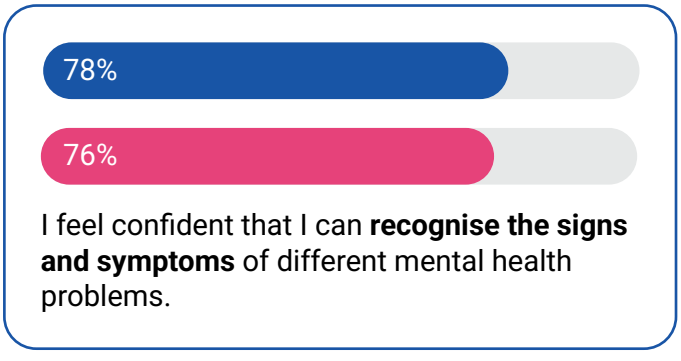
Educators with these capabilities can support earlier intervention, more consistent responses and stronger wellbeing practices.



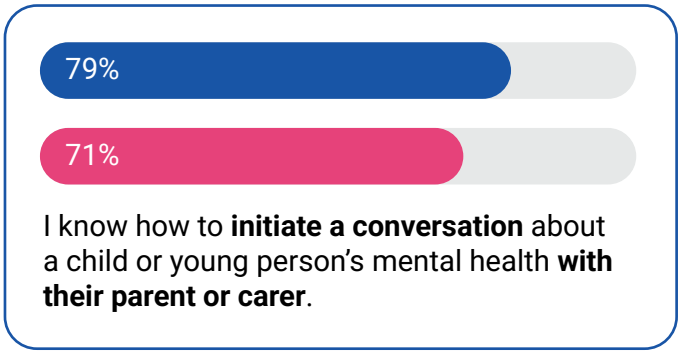
I feel confident **initiating conversations** with **my colleagues and other professionals** about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.



When I have concerns about the mental health of a child or young person, I know how to **initiate a supportive conversation**.



I feel confident that I can **recognise the signs and symptoms** of different mental health problems.



I know how to **initiate a conversation** about a child or young person's mental health **with their parent or carer**.

= *Be You engaged**

= *National benchmark*

**Respondents who reported engagement with Be You in the last 12 months. (n = 1,388)*

Positive outcomes for children and young people

Greater educator confidence and capability can help early learning services and schools to embed mentally healthy practices that support mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Qualitative evaluation findings highlight positive outcomes for children and young people observed by early learning services and schools engaged with Be You, including[2]:

Improved mental health literacy and language
Development and use of a shared language to discuss mental health and wellbeing.

Improved emotional awareness and regulation
Understanding emotions and development of the skills to recognise, express and manage emotions in healthy ways.

Improved help-seeking behaviours
Awareness of available supports, more open communication and increased willingness to seek help for mental health and wellbeing needs.

Improved engagement
Calmer classroom environments and more supportive learning spaces, enabling children and young people to manage their emotions when feeling overwhelmed and help them re-engage in learning.

While engagement with Be You can positively support mental health and wellbeing outcomes, early learning services and schools report that these outcomes are also influenced by a range of other factors.

> "I'm finding that a lot of students feel more comfortable coming up to me to talk about how they're feeling whether it be like a playground issue or like something that's going on at home or just the way that they've been feeling generally."
> – *School educator, case study interview*

Supporting leaders to drive culture change

Leadership is a key driver of sustainable practice change in mental health and wellbeing.

Through implementation support, professional learning and practical tools, Be You supports leaders to build knowledge, confidence and capability to lead this work across their early learning service or school.

Among leaders engaged with Be You:

97%

of leaders engaged with Be You say **"supporting mental health and wellbeing of learners is part of my job"**.

96%

I feel confident **initiating conversations with my colleagues or other professionals** about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

84%

I am confident I can **respond appropriately** to support children and young people with a mental health issue or condition in my learning community.

87%

I know how to **initiate a conversation** about a child or young person's mental health **with their parent or carer**.

81%

I am confident that I can **recognise the signs and symptoms** of different mental health problems.

Leadership support is one of the strongest protective factors for educator wellbeing[1], yet only 42% of leaders agree that staff in their education setting are mentally healthy.

Be You helps strengthen leadership capability to create workplaces where educators feel supported, connected and equipped to respond to increasingly complex mental health needs.

While effective leadership plays an important role in shaping workplace culture, lasting improvements in mental health and wellbeing also depend on supportive systems, policies and organisational conditions[1,2]. Together these factors create the foundations for sustainable changes across education settings.

Preparing before a critical incident occurs

Critical incidents place extraordinary demands on early learning services and schools, affecting children, young people, educators, families and leaders.

Educators in settings where Be You is embedded across the whole learning community, or who have received targeted support following a critical incident, report greater confidence in responding appropriately to these events.

The findings highlight preparedness for critical incidents as an important organisational capability. When critical incidents occur, educators are often called on to support children and young people through grief, distress and uncertainty, while managing their own wellbeing and emotional responses. By strengthening preparedness before an incident occurs, Be You supports more confident, coordinated responses that promote recovery and wellbeing over the long term.

The strongest responses to critical incidents begin before a crisis occurs.

I am confident my learning community is adequately prepared to support children and young people after a critical incident.

Sample: Be You engaged (n = 1,388)
Respondents who reported engagement with Be You in the last 12 months

If this information raises concerns or causes distress, mental health support services and helplines are available at beyou.edu.au

The future of mental health in education

The 2026 National Mental Health in Education Survey demonstrates that building mentally healthy learning communities requires more than awareness and individual capability alone.

Findings from the forthcoming independent Be You evaluation reinforce this, highlighting that capability building is most effective when supported by leadership, positive workplace culture and system-level support to embed mental health and wellbeing into everyday practice.

Lasting change is achieved when educators and leaders are supported to build the capability, confidence and organisational conditions needed to sustain mentally healthy practices over time.

Continued investment in evidence-based professional learning, tools and implementation support will help to ensure every early learning service and school is equipped to support the wellbeing of educators, children and young people.

Be You in action

The stories that follow bring these findings to life, illustrating how Be You is supporting lasting change in diverse education settings. Across Australia, approximately 14,500 early learning services and schools are using Be You to embed mentally healthy practices into everyday learning, helping create positive outcomes for educators, children and young people.

Green Point Early Learning Centre
Tasmania

Challenge: What was happening?

After a period of significant staff changes, Green Point Early Learning wanted to ensure that mental health and wellbeing remained a top priority.

Implementation: How did they work with Be You?

Green Point, along with the wider Discovery Learning Centres network, introduced Be You professional learning as part of staff induction. This ensured all educators begin with a common language and shared foundation for supporting mental health across the service.

Change: What outcomes were observed?

Now, educators are more confident recognising and responding to children's emotional needs, while children benefit from supportive environments that help them regulate emotions, navigate change and build trusting relationships.

Read the full story.

"[Be You] creates a shared understanding amongst educators and a clear, intentional approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children, families and educators."
— Letitia Dillon, Director, Green Point Early Learning Centre

Coorparoo State School
Queensland

Challenge: What was happening?

Following the loss of a former student, leaders at Coorparoo State School wanted to improve how they supported the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff.

Implementation: How did they work with Be You?

Working with a Be You Consultant and using the initiative's professional learning resources, the school implemented a whole-school approach that strengthened critical incident response planning, supported educator wellbeing and built staff mental health literacy. Staff also introduced daily checks ins to normalise conversations about emotions and wellbeing with students.

Change: What outcomes were observed?

The school reported a more proactive and consistent approach to mental health and wellbeing. Teachers felt more confident identifying students who might need additional support and initiating conversations with students, parents and carers about wellbeing concerns. Students also demonstrated stronger emotional literacy, with an improved ability to express their feelings and identify strategies to support themselves.

Read the full story.

"When wellbeing is embedded in every conversation, every classroom and every decision, we create the conditions for every student to thrive."
— John Kennedy, Deputy Principal, Coorparoo State School

References

[1]Morris, Z. A., Patrick, P. M., Reupert, A., & Phillips, J. (2025). Educator wellbeing: An umbrella review of risk factors, protective factors, and interventions/initiatives [Unpublished internal report prepared for Beyond Blue]. Monash University.

[2]ARTD. (Forthcoming). Evaluation of Be You [Unpublished evaluation report prepared for Beyond Blue].