

Ellen believes the partnership is beneficial not only for students and staff, but the entire community.

“Both the university and LHDs have taken something away from these partnerships,” says Ellen.

“By leveraging off each other’s expertise, we can deliver a better quality experience to our students. We can increase the mental health literacy of our students and staff, but also the broader community, because our staff and students are out there having conversations at home.”

“By leveraging off each other’s expertise, we can deliver a better quality experience to our students.”

**ELLEN BRACKENREG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
STUDENT SERVICES**

RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY NEED

To have the greatest impact, the university and LHDs have adopted a multifaceted approach. Broad mental health promotion campaigns (such as mental health awareness months) are run across all campuses, in addition to targeted, campus and community-specific programs.

Helen Ryan, Co-ordinator Partnerships and Healthy Places, WSLHD, Centre for Population Health says adopting a “universal approach” benefits all students”.

“This was particularly important at WSU where a high percentage of students are first in family to attend university, live in Western Sydney and are from CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) or Aboriginal backgrounds,” says Helen.

“Within this universal approach, some strategies target specific student populations (such as LGBTIQ+ students) as required.”

This focus on matching community need with university need enables WSU to tailor initiatives to specific populations. A state-wide service hosted within the Western Sydney LHD – the Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC) – is particularly helpful when supporting the mental health of CALD students.

“Adopting a universal approach benefits all students.”

HELEN RYAN, CO-ORDINATOR PARTNERSHIPS AND HEALTHY PLACES, WESTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT



From providing guidance on how to make campus events more inclusive, to advising student services staff on how to destigmatise help-seeking within the international student community (a cohort who typically feel more comfortable discussing concerns with people who share the same cultural background), the TMHC ensures the university’s services and support systems are suited to the community they serve.

“Having the right people on-board to listen to the community and develop a culturally-responsive framework is important,” explains Ellen.

“It’s important for student services staff to be culturally aware and to recognise that the approach to a student who is experiencing psychological distress, or responding to a sudden death or suicide needs to be culturally sensitive.”

After identifying a need for specialised support for Pacifica students experiencing mental health concerns, a draft *Grief and Bereavement Protocol Fact Sheet (GBPFS) – Pacific Communities* was developed by WSU’s Pacifica Project Officer and Mental Health Coordinator in consultation with the community.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FOR THE COMMUNITY

Research and evaluation forms a pillar of WSU's Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy, so the university regularly reviews and refines its programs to ensure they meet community need.

"Just because we've done these projects in the past, doesn't mean we keep doing the same projects in the future," says Emma.

Data shared by LHDs provides key insights, in addition to data gathered from student surveys, the International Student Barometer, and welfare, disability and counselling service access points.

Emma believes the data reveals how far the mental health conversation has shifted. As such, the university's approach is evolving to suit the needs of a diverse community living in a rapidly changing world.

"The national and global agenda has shifted. Eight years ago the message was more general," says Emma.

"We've really moved on and now we're embedding mental health and wellbeing into the curriculum."

FIND OUT MORE

[WSU Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy.](#)

[University Mental Health Framework.](#)

LINKS TO THE FRAMEWORK

Western Sydney University's partnership with Local Health Districts is an example of effective collaboration between universities and the mental health sector facilitating a joined-up approach to supporting WSU students' mental health and wellbeing.



This aligns with **principle four** of the [University Mental Health Framework](#)

Programs and initiatives to support students' mental health and wellbeing typically involve a range of different practices. This case study also draws on other practices described in the framework by:

- providing services and supports that are appropriate and accessible for WSU's diverse student population;
- communicating about mental health and wellbeing through promotion campaigns, which builds understanding, increases awareness and helps to break down stigma and discrimination; and
- sharing data and insights between WSU and external partners, which enables continuous improvement, increases understanding and minimises gaps for students based on evidence.

**REVOLUTION
IN MIND** *ory
gen*

GET IN TOUCH

IF YOU'D LIKE MORE
INFORMATION ABOUT
ORYGEN, PLEASE CALL
+61 3 9966 9100 OR
SEND AN EMAIL TO
INFO@ORYGEN.ORG.AU

[ORYGEN.ORG.AU](#)

35 POPLAR ROAD
PARKVILLE VIC 3052
AUSTRALIA

FOLLOW US ON

