The Headroom Model of Youth Participation:

A conceptual and practical description

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2008 the Centre for Health Promotion (CHP), Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS) contracted the SA Community Health Research Unit (SACHRU) to undertake this project. The aim of the project was to document the Headroom model of youth participation. This had been identified in the Review of Headroom (Auseinet, 2007) as a key factor in the success of the program which, paradoxically, had never been documented.

It is perhaps misleading to speak of a singular Headroom model of participation because in fact the model evolved as the project matured and responded to changing circumstances.

In order to capture the development and evolution of the model interviews were conducted with key stakeholders including program staff and members of the core youth group.

Organisational and professional commitment to youth participation; skills development of both staff and young people; and an underlying belief that youth participation will result in better outcomes were identified as key principles underpinning the program. These principles have supported the development of trusting and meaningful relationships with young people. They have also provided a foundation for the development of flexible processes and a meaningful journey for program participants.

A number of features of the Headroom model were identified as promising ways of facilitating meaningful participation. These are principles or lessons about participation rather than prescriptions about how to 'do' participation:

- Youth participation is a journey – be prepared to invest time, resources and a philosophical commitment to the process. No framework for youth participation can predict how the journey will evolve.

- Youth participation is underpinned by strong and respectful relationships with young people. These take time and significant skills to build. Staff who are philosophically committed to, and skilled in, working with young people is absolutely critical to success. Building respectful relationships also implies value being placed on the skills and role of professionals.

- An important but sometimes overlooked aspect of youth participation is to ask young people *how* they would like to be engaged. Meeting young people at their level, their place, and within their context will not only encourage more people to participate but enhance their contribution.

- Developing a good process for youth participation in a program or organisation requires support at all levels. The process can be resource intensive and relatively slow to demonstrate full benefits which means that organisational commitment is imperative. Furthermore, finding staff and leaders who are champions for youth participation will reduce the likelihood of having to 'battle' for necessary resources.

- Working with young people carries a level of responsibility which organisations and programs need to take very seriously. Asking young people to participate implies a responsibility to take them seriously and to support them. Organisations must build in processes and structures to implement the outcomes of youth participation. Organisations should be prepared to change as a result of engaging young people. Without this preparation, young people will quickly understand that their thoughts are not valued.

- Youth participation is an organic process. Whilst a program may have a framework and processes for engagement, the nature of these should support diversity, change and responsiveness so that young people can take ownership and contribute no matter what their skill level or background.

The intention of this report is to inform and assist other organisations and agencies who are working with young people or who are interested in strengthening their ongoing partnerships with young people to promote their positive mental health.

Youth Participation: lessons from the literature

Youth participation is the process of building partnerships between adults and young people to promote the role of young people in decision making on issues that affect them - within services, programs and society more broadly (Youth Affairs Council VIC, 2004). Youth participation inherently places value on young people's ideas and energies and as such places value on young people as important members of society.

Successful youth participation is not only beneficial to those young people who are participating, but also to other youth who are recipients of improved services, policies, information and advocacy. Furthermore, broader society benefits when the youth voice is heard as the needs of young people are better addressed, and young people are more likely to become active participants in society.

Youth participation is about building meaningful partnerships and "working alongside young people, treating them as equal stakeholders, and acknowledging their expertise and knowledge", (Youth Affairs Council VIC, 2004). Youth participation which is underpinned by the following principles is likely to promote youth ownership and successful engagement:

> *Empowerment*: participation promoting greater control
> *Purposeful engagement*: participation creating valued roles, addressing relevant issues and influencing real outcomes
> *Inclusiveness*: participation ensuring that all young people are able to participate
> *(Adapted from Youth Affairs Council VIC, 2004)*

Youth participation recognises that young people have specific needs which cannot be addressed by assuming that they are 'just children' who are yet to develop into adults. It is not appropriate or useful to impose adult and expert views onto young people – they are in fact active social agents in their own right, with valuable and legitimate contributions to make regarding issues that affect them (Prout and Prout, cited in Golombek, 2002) and they are in need of particular mental health promotion programs and services linked to levels of development (AICAFMHA, 2006). Young people are recognised under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) with "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child…", and as such young people are recognised as an important part of decision making in society.

Australian Youth Foundation (1996) suggests some of the reasons for undertaking the processes of youth participation include to:

- model and make possible young people's broader right to full citizenship and participation in Australian life
- support the individual young person's right to participate in decisions affecting them
- tap into young people's expertise on their own social and cultural conditions
- assist young people to develop skills, confidence and awareness so that they can take initiatives and tackle issues on their own
- challenge negative stereotypes of young people otherwise perpetuated in the community
- explore new perspectives, influencing outcomes in new and unexpected ways
- make services more responsive, understanding and considerate of the young people with whom they are working
- develop more efficient and effective policies and programs
- align with the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child which endorses the right of young people to participate as fully as possible in their society.

Youth participation is a relatively new concept in mental health which has evolved to encompass best practice principles to benefit participants and the recipients of better services. Many of the best practice principles are about meeting young people 'where they are at', minimising harm, and of course maximising the benefits (See Box 1). These principles have informed other CYWHS youth participation strategies such as for The Second Story[1], and are aligned with discussions later in this report.

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[1] The Second Storey provides services and programs for the health and wellbeing of young people aged 12-25 in South Australia, including clinical and health promotion activities.

Box 1: Principles of best practice

YOUTH PARTICIPATION BEST PRACTICE
Adapted from Youth Partnerships and Participation
(Australian Youth Foundation, 1996)

1.   *Youth participation should be beneficial for young people:*

Informed choice: Young people should be informed about what is involved. Partnership is not possible if participation is compulsory.
Enjoyment: Participatory activities should be fun, exciting and challenging.
Relevant: Activities should address those issues and needs that are perceived as real by the young people involved.
Developmental: Activities should raise young people's awareness of the social, political, economic, cultural and personal aspects of the issues affecting them.
Educational: Activities should provide opportunities for both formal training and the informal development of skills.
Relationship focused: Activities should provide opportunities for building active and supportive relationships between young people and other community members.
Support, supervision and monitoring: Young people should be provided with whatever is required to promote success and to handle failures or setbacks.
Resourcing: Activities should be adequately resourced with sufficient time, space, funding, and information.
Beneficial: Benefits for the young people need to be included. This may be simply that the involvement is enjoyable, educative, etc—or in some cases may involve specific payment.

2.   *Youth participation should recognise and respect the needs and contributions of all involved:*

Accountability: Mechanisms need to be included to provide for monitoring, accountability and feedback for activities undertaken by young people.
Goals and strategies: Young people must be given the opportunity to identify and define the problem as they see it, exploring options and alternative strategies.
Ownership: Activities should provide young people with a sense of belonging and ownership.
Value: Young people should be able to recognise that their participation is valued and that they have ownership in the process.
Negotiation: Young people will not necessarily dominate decision making. Knowledge, responsibilities and commitments of adults must be acknowledged.
Avoidance of tokenism: Young people must be offered real roles or they will quickly recognise that they are not being taken seriously.
Flexibility and space: options for participation must be sensitive to the particular young people's value systems, availability, commitments, language, skills, culture, financial resources, access to transport, etc.
Diversity: Young people are not a homogenous group, and having some young people participate does not ensure the inclusion of the views of all young people.
Expertise: Some tasks need to be undertaken by trained professionals, either because adequate training is not possible or due to legislative requirements.
Evaluation: Activities should include ongoing critical analysis of experiences, actions taken and outcomes.
Recruitment: Appropriate recruitment and selection processes will ensure the right young person for the job.
Confidentiality: the confidentiality and privacy of any personal or sensitive data held by the project must be preserved.

Similar components of successful youth participation are described in *Sharing a Story: Young People in Decision Making* (Foundation for Young Australians, 2003). Young people were more likely to continue and enjoy participation in opportunities which were meaningful, which offered control in decision making and tasks, and which promoted connectedness to other people and a common goal.

Sharing the Stage (The NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People, n.d.) suggests that the following key areas are the foundations for successful youth participation practice. Importantly, embedding youth participation into an organisation's culture is listed first:

1. Participation is part of the organisation's culture
2. Kids have a place in decision making
3. Adults adapt to kids' ways of working
4. Strong relationships are built with kids
5. Participation rewards kids and the organisation

Consumer participation, whilst slightly different to youth participation, offers some insights into best practice. Many of the forms of consumer participation in Australian health care that were analysed by Silburn and Johnson (2000) highlighted the overwhelming enthusiasm for consumer participation in improving health services. However this research contextualised perceived benefits within perceived barriers to implementation. Like youth participation, consumer participation is a resource intensive process which poses the challenge of change to health services and professionals. Both processes require leadership and organisational commitment to making cultural changes which support respectful consumer participation.

Youth participation in mental health programs

Mental illness is a significant public health issue for Australia's young people (Sawyer et al, 2000) and upstream positive youth mental health promotion is well positioned to reduce the burden of disease in youth and adult populations (AICAFMHA, 2006 and WHO, cited in Lock et al, 2002) and to positively influence population health and wellbeing more broadly.

Mental health is more than simply the absence of mental illness (WHO, 2007). Youth participation in mental health programs and services is imperative given that adult programs and services are inappropriate and ineffective for young people (including prevention programs) (AICAFMHA, 2006). Furthermore, given that youth participation in mental health is a recently emerging trend, meaningful and appropriate partnerships with young people are even more crucial in

order to forge best practice and to demonstrate to young people that their views are valued in the mental health sector.

Whilst there is certainly a movement towards continually improving consumer participation in mental health in Australia, there has overall been little attention paid to the importance of youth voice in prevention and treatment. For example, the latest National Mental Health Plan 2003-2008 (Australian Health Ministers, 2003) makes only passing mention for potential roles for youth participation in mental health prevention or service delivery. As more mental health programs and organisations undertake youth participation in Australia, it is hopeful that the body of evidence for 'what works' will grow and best practice will become more common.

Headroom: an innovative approach to mental health promotion and youth participation

Headroom is a youth driven mental health promotion program which was initiated in 1997 originally under the banner of *Partnership with Young People Project*. Headroom was funded by the South Australian Department of Health and was originally under the auspices of Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS). In 2007 administrative responsibility for Headroom was moved from CAMHS to the Centre for Health Promotion.

The Headroom model of youth participation has changed over time. The initial phase of the project described in this report, presents the model as it was originally conceived. This model provided a strong foundation for the ongoing evolution of youth participation processes.

The current practice of engaging youth through the partnership with youth-oriented organisations was made possible by the strong relationships forged in the early operation of Headroom. As the understanding of, and commitment to, youth participation has gained momentum, many more organisations are actively engaging young people. Headroom has been able to utilise its partnerships to continue to engage young people, extend its reach in recruiting, and in particular increase the diversity of the young people who are able to contribute to the project. This has maintained the youth voice by working with young people who are already in another participatory role and extended the scope beyond mental health into a broader wellbeing program. For example, Headroom has strong links with the Department of Education and Children Services and so several key school based groups have been engaged: the MindMatters SA Youth Empowerment Program students; young people from the Open Access College, who come from a variety of backgrounds and have often had difficulties at school; and students from Paralowie R-12 school which is in an area of high disadvantage. Innovative Community Action Networks and School of the Air are possibilities that are currently being explored. Headroom has also linked with Youth Advisory Councils through the Office for Youth and other agencies. A group of young people with the Children of Parents with Mental Illness project have also offered to work with Headroom.

Headroom aims to promote positive mental health using strong youth voice and action. Youth participation is central to the program. Participatory processes drive the creation of relevant and accessible resources. Youth participants also act as the public face of the program in their role as ambassadors for positive mental health.

At the time of Headroom's conception in the late nineties consumer participation in health service development and implementation was becoming more common. However, it was still a relatively unexplored practice in the mental health sector and most focus was on carers' voices. Youth participation was virtually unheard of in the mental health sector at the time.

Headroom also differed from other programs at the time as it was positioned within a wellness framework. Headroom took an upstream, universal approach to positive mental health for youth. This set it apart from other programs that had a focus on at risk youth, early intervention or mental illness. Headroom also used the internet as the main vehicle for delivery of information which, at the time, showed insight into the emerging needs and habits of young people. The combination of these factors meant that Headroom was innovative in both its conception and implementation.

The program was developed within a broader context of advocacy at State and National levels for improved adult and youth participation in health services. Headroom was seen by many as a demonstration project which illustrated the methods and benefits of youth participation.

> So the good thing about Headroom was that it's a tangible product... theory about youth participation is one thing but can you make it work? Laudable aims... how do you operationalise it? (Professional interview – 3)

> A strong youth participation framework was central to the development of Headroom. The project engaged young people from across metropolitan Adelaide as well as regional South Australia. This was referred to as the 'golden era' for Headroom by one interviewee, a program that was 'lauded as fantastic' (Professional interview - 5).

Participatory mechanisms changed over time, in part due to reduced funding, and in part due to changes in the broader context which provided increasing opportunities for participation in other youth and health services.

A Review was commissioned by SA Department of Health (Auseinet, 2007). The Review highlighted that Headroom was seen as a leader in youth participation in mental health, and that this component of the program should be recorded.

In order to document the model of participation and understand the context in which it has developed, interviews with key stakeholders were conducted. Potential interviewees who were well positioned to describe the model of youth participation and associated issues were identified by the Centre for Health Promotion (CHP).

One phone and six face-to-face interviews were conducted with professionals who had been directly involved or associated with Headroom since inception. Interviews were also conducted with four youth core group members, drawn from the most recent group of past participants in Headroom. One professional and two core group members either declined to be interviewed or did not respond to interview requests.

Interview schedules were developed with input from the project team (see Appendices 1 and 2).

THE HEADROOM MODEL OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Headroom is a mental health promotion program for young people and is characterised by participation of young people in program development and implementation. It is unique because it is positioned within a wellness framework (James, 2007). The program components have varied over time but key activities have included promotion of mental health awareness with young people as ambassadors at community events, workforce development, and the development of mental health information by young people for young people. The development of mental health information involved a combination of youth and staff ideas to develop fact sheets and other resources that had a credible youth voice on issues of mental health and wellbeing.

Youth participation *is* Headroom in the sense that the inputs, the products, the outcomes and the processes along the way are shaped and delivered by young people. The Headroom youth participation model encompasses both (A) *participation values and ways of working* and (B) *participation practices* (see Appendix 3 - Program Logic Model[2].

A. Headroom participation practices:

Recruitment of Core Group

Participants were recruited to the program through the web-site, contact with a youth ambassador at an event, or contact with the program staff. Following contact, the young person met with program staff to discuss what was involved and the expected role and commitment.

Some young people were supported by local agencies in rural areas to become involved. Participation was open to any young person who sought involvement and who was comfortable with the expectations of the program. This supported a broad geographic spread of youth participation.

Engagement of Core Group

Core group members met monthly. Meetings included facilitated discussion on mental health issues and the development of web based or written materials for other young people.

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[2] Program logic provides a graphic description of how and why a program works and what impacts and outcomes are likely to be achieved.

Young people were engaged around particular issues and encouraged to drive discussion and action on those issues. Meetings were also used to plan events at which core group members acted as ambassadors for positive mental health.

The branding of the Positive Minds Attract (see Box 2) campaign was appealing for both core group members who were proud to wear and campaign for the 'brand', and other young people, who were drawn to a well known and credible youth brand.

Box 2: Positive Minds Attract

The Positive minds attract health campaign was implemented by arts organisations that received funding from the Health Promotion Through the Arts (HPTTA) Program. The campaign's objective was to increase young people's awareness about mental health and their own role in managing it. The campaign also encouraged young people to take a positive attitude in the management of their own mental health and used the Headroom website (www.headroom.net.au) as a resource link for young people and those who supported them. A new arts funding program was developed by Arts SA that replaced the HPTTA program from 1 July 2008. The new program incorporates community engagement and social inclusion that are key features of the current state mental health reform agenda.

Core group members were engaged in a sustainable way primarily through the promotion of open and safe meetings and environments which supported young people to contribute equitably. Program staff provided trusted facilitation and support. Participation processes were as flexible as possible, and incorporated young people's ideas about which participation mechanisms were used. Flexibility was also important for individual young people's ability to commit longer term.

Training and support

Headroom's model of youth participation provided excellent support to the young people in the core group. Program staff developed and sustained trusting relationships with the core group members, and offered support for the group as a whole as well as individuals. This ensured equality in decision making and participation.

Skills development for core group members included: conducting and participating in meetings, public speaking, governance, media training and an understanding of mental illness and health. Importantly, training and support was tailored to the needs of the core group.

Core group members were provided with financial support in the form of a base honorarium, with additional 'thankyou' payments depending on additional attendance at events. Support was also provided with travel reimbursements and provision of food at meetings.

Supervision / accountability

Individual core group members were provided supervision through 3 monthly progress assessments and 6 monthly reviews. These allowed program staff and core group members to collaboratively assess progress towards previously set goals and aspirations and to determine ongoing commitment to the role or otherwise. Review processes were used to set clear boundaries which were tailored to individuals.

Mentoring by program staff to core group members was supported by consistency of staff and consequently, the development of trusting relationships. The role of program staff in developing 'youth friendly' environments was crucial to Headroom's success.

Partnership building

Headroom developed significant local partnerships, in particular around the Positive Minds Attract campaign. Investment in partnerships allowed Headroom to increase recognition and to secure its role as a credible program for mental health and young people. Partnerships offered synergies and improved spread of health promotion messages.

Headroom pioneered a model of youth participation within a broader movement towards participation and partnership in mental health. Headroom demonstrated principles of good practice pre-empting some of the earliest literature describing the benefits of consumer and youth participation in health programs. As noted earlier it has been an evolving 'product' and the partnerships built have formed the foundation of Headroom's current mode of operation.

B. Headroom values and ways of working:

Respectful Relationships and Participation

Headroom recognises the rights of young people to participate in decisions that impact on their lives.

Practices aimed to reduce tokenism, increase youth ownership, increase organisational receptiveness to youth needs and facilitate equity in decision making. Respectful participation means that the invitation to participate is genuine, that participation is meaningful, and that the skills and thoughts of young people are respectfully integrated with those of adults or decision makers.

> *I would encapsulate it as a partnership between young people and program managers to an agreed upon philosophy, being that the voice of young people needed to be heard... and that we had a process in place to respectfully obtain the views of young people, document them and reproduce them in a way which was acceptable to young people.*
> *(Professional interview – 3)*

> *Underpinning... was the valuing of youth perspective of how they perceived their mental health in a wellness model.*
> *(Professional interview – 3)*

Young people understood their importance to the project:

> *They saw us as crucial to a youth project. (Core Group interview – 7)*

> *Building a community that's inclusive of youth and mental health is an important aspect of community so it's important to get youth involved in that. (Core Group interview – 8)*

The relationships with young people were the foundation for meaningful youth partnerships in a range of activities. Staff created a safe environment where young people felt they could express their ideas and opinions freely.

Staff consistently worked to empower young people to participate in Headroom. For example young people received feedback on their work, and informants reported that there was always enthusiasm for new ideas and youth driven discussion. The young people interviewed identified this feedback and encouragement, and a sense of being taken seriously as key factors which sustained their desire to be involved:

> *We were always taken seriously. (Core Group interview – 7)*

> *We did get feedback. Yeah, it was one of the reasons we felt valued... our ideas were brought back. It's not like we'd say something that never got addressed. Not every time, but most often the ideas were brought back and had been considered seriously. Especially regarding writing we got good feedback.*
> *(Core Group interview – 9)*

They also had a sense of responsibility toward the program:

> *I felt most involved when I had more responsibility and more action to do... there was an event... and I felt quite involved and happy to do that for them. That was pretty cool. Being involved in events was really good and responsibility is always good. (Core Group interview – 8)*

Headroom facilitated a sense of genuine ownership of the program by young people.

> *It was ownership really... ownership of the issues and making it accessible by young people. And it really did do that for many years – that was its strength. (Professional interview – 5)*

Headroom did not just consult with young people on issues identified by staff - young people raised the issues and addressed them.

> *It was about youth talking to youth, making it relevant to youth. The assumption was that youth involvement would increase relevance of the program and resources. (Core Group interview – 10)*

Headroom provided meaningful tasks and roles for young people. The ambassador role of Core Group members was attractive to young people and they embraced this role at public events.

> *Getting the information out there was good. We were more approachable to other youth. We were effective in being the public face of Headroom. (Core Group interview – 10)*

Equity in Facilitated Decision Making

Young people experienced group decision-making processes as respectful and inclusive. Participants felt there was a strong element of equality in decision making and that program staff acted primarily as facilitators. Young people also noted that the group dynamic supported constructive discussion and that the group forged friendships over time and therefore worked well together.

> *We didn't do votes or anything, it was just discussing things. We all had equal value... and because we met so regularly and were used to talking in a setting where we'd listen to each other and value each others' opinions, we'd always sort things out. We never had a major argument about anything. The presence of (Project Officer) made her into a bit of a facilitator but she didn't get too involved. Usually anything that was worth arguing about was worth letting us reach our own decision. (Core Group interview – 9)*

There were mixed perceptions as to the role of the group in setting the direction of the project. Some young people felt that they were entirely free to contribute while others felt that they were more often contributing to an agenda and issues that were pre-determined.

> *There was always an agenda and we were asked to contribute to those things and to make those things come to fruition. It wasn't so much about generating entirely new ideas. (Core Group interview – 8)*

> *I felt that there was always a level of equality. It wasn't them in charge – we'd take turns running meetings and taking minutes and they guided us with the hard stuff but they were really good, welcoming, encouraging… (Core Group interview – 9)*

Integration of Youth and Professional Skills

Effective youth participation requires the marriage of skills, ideas and values of young people with those of program staff. Headroom has been particularly successful at bringing together adults and young people in a respectful and productive way. Staff in particular highlighted the need for clear parameters when working with young people – to offer them the freedom of voice but also ensure they understood both what was acceptable and possible. Some aspects of the program did not offer possibilities for participation and this was explained to youth participants. It was also noted that respect for staff skills and roles was also required.

> *Meetings involved discussing new things including new ideas from core group members. It was a mix of staff and youth ideas…(Core Group interview – 10)*

> *Our view was that we worked in an environment that had a number of boundaries including government policies and organisational governance structures. That meant we had to have very clear about structures and boundaries that guided and at times limited our sphere of influence and decision making… and it was important for young people to understand these limits that we were also bound by. It's about a true partnership… as workers we have expertise and young people bring their own set of skills, knowledge and ideas too, so it's about being respectful of that marriage and what we all bought to it. (Professional interview - 4)*

> *For example, young people took the lead on designing and conducting info and activities for other young people and we supported them to do this. As workers we delivered workforce development packages and this did not necessarily involve young people. (Professional interview – 4)*

Given that one of the youth roles was the development of resources, integration of staff and young people's expertise was essential in ensuring information provided was clinically accurate and presented in a manner acceptable to young people.

> *The information had to be developed in a way that youth could relate to and access, alongside clinical verification. (Professional interview - 3)*
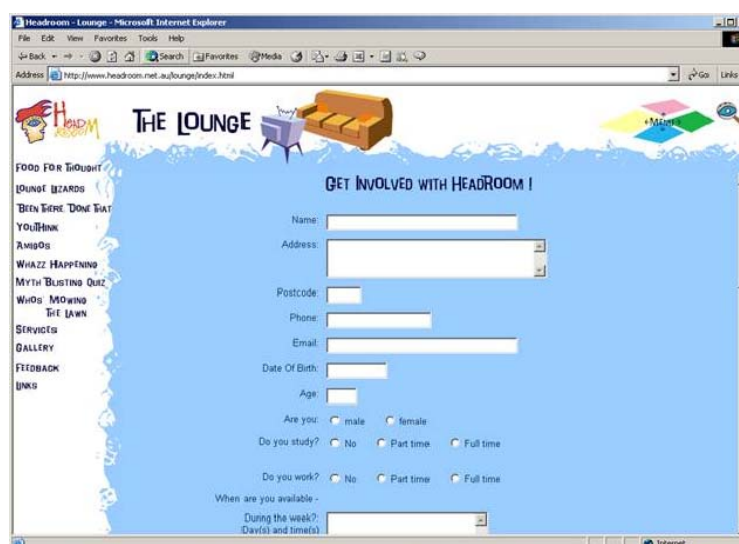
Recruitment and Engagement

How

Participation was invited from young people aged between 12 and 18. The length of participation was not fixed, for example of those interviewed for this report, the length of participation varied between one and a half and five years. Each had heard about Headroom in different ways – through social marketing, through a friend, or from a colleague or other professional.

Motivation for involvement in Headroom varied. For example, some wanted to get experience in the mental health field, others were looking for some type of volunteer work, and some had a lived experience of mental illness.

Young people nominated themselves to participate in Headroom by completing an online registration form.

Details of experience and other commitments and areas of interest were collected. Following submission the young person received an invitation to an information session. These sessions provided information regarding what participation might include without being too

prescriptive. Expectations about the role and the importance of commitment were explained as were the ethos of the program and the focus on positive mental health.

Attendees were provided with an information pack which included an agreement and a consent form to be discussed with a parent. On receipt of these an invitation to attend the next Core Group meeting was issued.

Young people were paid a base honorarium ($80) per quarter which could be extended ($120) if extra events were attended. Bus tickets were also provided for attending meetings and events.

Who

Over time, the composition of the Core Group shifted considerably. In the late 1990s there was funding provided to support regional youth participation in Headroom as well as the metropolitan component. This meant that there were multiple satellite groups supported by local youth agencies at Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Whyalla, Cooper Pedy, Murray Bridge and Mount Gambier. Young people from regional areas were provided with support to attend occasional meetings in Adelaide. Furthermore, the metropolitan core group was able to support participation of youth from outer suburban areas.

In more recent years participants have been drawn from the metropolitan area primarily due to budgetary pressures. The Core Group currently consists mostly of inner metropolitan young women in their late teens.

There has been some debate around the representativeness of Core Group members. Headroom did not seek to specifically engage young people from disadvantaged or 'hard to reach' population groups and for some this was seen as a weakness. This view was expressed by some of the young people interviewed for this report:

> There was quite a broad spread of SES people at different stages but the people who stayed the longest were often middle class... I guess because they had the support to stay on. But there was at least one girl who was from a completely different world to me really... but it fizzled out at the end. It was really good to have that range because at times I felt that there wasn't enough (range)... it made it more accessible... (Core Group interview - 9)
> Regarding the core group, there were people from different backgrounds but only one guy... gender balance would have helped but it probably reflects that guys aren't as interested. (Core Group interview - 10)

> *It's about marketing... to get a wide range of people you need to market to them. Like I got linked in at a concert and I'm not sure if they did that very often. I guess a way to target other people is to consult other YACs and other existing groups. (Core Group interview – 8)*

Some of those interviewed also regretted that a broader range of young people were not engaged and did not reap the benefits of participation:

> *(Participation) privileged a few... if you got in you got a lot of skills and really benefited from Headroom and they're probably still using those today. So it didn't generalise out enough. That was a problem. And it didn't have a broad enough ownership (Professional interview – 5)*

Countering this was an argument that the participation processes were in keeping with the scope, intent and resources of the program - as a universal, population strategy Headroom participation did not necessarily need to reflect the diversity of young people.

> *There was some criticism of representation...it was a population based approach... In the later stages of the project we made a decision to make it a self-select group due to limited resources... it wasn't a project designed to address the needs of just disadvantaged youth or a particular group other than young people as a general population group. (Professional interview - 4)*

> *Regarding marginalised youth... you have to look at the intent of the program... it wasn't expected that Headroom would become the youth participation program for mental health for the state... it was about using youth participation to assist in developing mental health information. (Professional interview - 2)*

The self-selection process did result in recruitment of young people who were enthusiastic and able to commit and contribute effectively. The limitation of this approach was clearly a loss of diversity.

> *Self selection did have some issues. On one hand, it's positive because you attract young people with an interest in issues like mental health...On the other hand, it can limit the range of young people particularly if they have misconceptions about mental health. But we think self selection was the way to go... you get young people that are interested and passionate... and if we did encounter gaps in ideas or experiences we would seek out young people with the relevant experience to feed that information into the group. e.g. around issues of young people's emerging sexuality and choices. (Professional interview – 4)*

...because for some young people it's very easy for them to participate like this. They have a level of education, they're not shy, they have interpersonal skills... but there are many young people who have none of that and they don't know how to participate but they have things to say and things to learn as well. So it's problematic... there has to be a mixture. But the people who self select in are by default those with some sense of entitlement and some skills. Also you have to be sensible about who mixes well. (Professional interview – 5)

Recognition of the diversity of young people would however suggest that a cross section of young people is needed to represent youth even in a universal program (Australian Youth Foundation 1996). To some extent the recruitment and selection processes were shaped by the funding and resources available and represented a pragmatic approach to engagement of youth. Additional resources would be required to support targeted recruitment strategies resulting in broader representation around aspects such as geographic spread, ethnicity, socio-economic status and gender.

Initially there was good breadth of membership and they had resources for that... when resources dried up, it became less representative and more a demographic of probably more articulate and educated youth who may have had some experiences of mental health but it wasn't as much a cross section as when Headroom started. (Professional interview – 5)

When we had more resources we were able to more actively involve young people from a range of backgrounds...geographical, cultural, social... Being able to keep the satellite rural groups would have been great...it would have kept those links we'd established going ... different experiences for the project to link into. But we had to let these links go due to resources. (Professional interview – 4)

The need for a balance between retention of participants and facilitating turnover to allow for new participants is challenging but an important aspect of successful youth participation.

Sometimes it was difficult for young people to leave the core group or to juggle competing priorities like jobs, studies, relationships with Headroom commitments. We would encourage them to move on with the idea that it was okay to leave... if they didn't want to be involved any longer or had too much going on, they didn't have to stay involved ... that was one of the hardest things for some of them to come to terms with... it's ok to say I'm not going to be involved. (Professional interview - 4)

Keeping young people engaged was a challenge along with knowing when to have them moving on because you can

become comfortable with the group you've worked up. (Professional interview - 3)

Sustaining youth engagement

Regular meetings and genuine devolvement of responsibility to the young people involved appear to be key factors in maintaining interest. The Core Group was characterised as fun, supportive and participants felt valued.

> *Regular meetings – it kept us up to date and there was always correspondence in between. We were expected to be there. To regularly be put in a position where our opinions were heard it was worth being there. Generally, we'd do some more social things and those opportunities for friendship meant that we'd want to go to see our friends. Often they were friendships that wouldn't have otherwise formed outside of HR. It was also just a bit of fun. (Core Group interview – 9)*

A few young people suggested that more structure would have been beneficial.

> *It could be more structured. Maybe it's hard because we were giving our own time but it could have been more organised to give people a greater sense of importance in what they were doing. It was a bit 'come and go'. (Core Group interview - 10)*

Flexibility was also cited as a critical factor in maintaining participation. Whilst it was made clear that being a Core Group member required a certain level of commitment, program staff also facilitated flexibility for individuals and the group to meet competing demands or priorities. For example, young people completing year 12 could negotiate time away from the Core Group, or the group as a whole might shift focus from writing to attending events.

Setting boundaries

Clarity of purpose and secure boundaries were provided for participants. Young people understood what was reasonable and achievable. Both program staff and young people reported that setting parameters was important in maintaining motivation and in feeling valued.

> *Some people working with young people are so busy pretending not to be an adult, being cool and groovy, that they don't want to set limits, but I think that young people actually understand limits (like those set in Headroom)… like within an issue 'here's what we can talk about but this is not on the table because we sit within a government system'. (Professional interview – 5)*

Not all young people wish to participate in the same ways or at the same level. Some may want to be consulted on a particular issue whereas others may want a longer more intensive involvement. Headroom was particularly successful at allowing young people to focus on areas which best suited their skills.

> *You have to think about different levels of participation – not everyone wants to sit around a table, not everyone can write, there's different ways that youth might want to be involved. Some might want to be consulted, others might actively participate. (Professional interview – 5)*

Skills Development and Support

The Headroom model recognised the need to provide support to young people whilst respecting their ability to take on responsibility. This balance was seen as a key strength of Headroom. A developmental approach was used, which asserts that young people need support to participate at their own level.

Support for Headroom Core Group members took on a number of forms – some very practical and others more intangible. The development of skills was a focus for Headroom. Training was provided in areas such as conducting and participating in meetings, public relations, media, mental illness and mental health. A flexible approach was taken regarding the training and support provided in order to be responsive to the experience, capabilities and skill level of people in the group.

> *One key element is about having a developmental approach – understanding that youth come to this type of thing with a whole range of skills and you need to take those into account – to expect them to contribute you need to skill and support them... as individuals and as a group. (Professional interview - 2)*

Young people also experienced considerable personal development. Interviewees named some of the areas in which core group members gained new skills:

- Improved confidence, belief in themselves and their power in the world
- Public speaking skills
- Ability to reflect on practice
- Better understanding of mental health
- Group/team work skills including learning to respect difference
- Leadership skills
- A passion for giving back to society

- Being able to articulate thoughts
- Being a part of an organisation which gives a sense of importance

Program staff also took on a mentoring role with youth participants... This skilled support, resulting in a feeling of genuine partnership, was seen as fundamental to Headroom's success:

> *It had support through the project officers to provide guidance... 'with' not 'to' young people. For it to be effective, youth not only need the freedom to explore their ideas, but the supports also need to be there, especially for the younger people who are new. (Professional interview – 1)*

> *You had to train and develop and support young people, which was an important underpinning. It was about empowering youth with skills. (Professional interview – 3)*

> *They were great. They were always quick to respond to emails or messages and very understanding that we had a lot of other things in our lives, like social stuff, sport, family. Generally they were really approachable. (Core Group interview – 9)*

A balance between providing support and allowing young people to take responsibility and risks was achieved in Headroom. Many agreed that program staff empowered young people and facilitated decision making in ways which fostered growth and development.

> *It's about giving opportunities to youth to take some risks as well... that's where learning occurs... their ideas may not be able to come to fruition for various reasons but the project allowed them to work through that and gave them space to do that. (Professional interview – 1)*

> *Youth aren't 'job ready' and it's a process... it was about putting things in place for training and skills to participate in meaningful way. (Professional interview - 2)*

Perhaps a unique feature of the role of program staff was that they needed to be skilled in working with young people generally but also needed to be able to offer support regarding mental health issues. Specific needs of young people around mental health issues are likely to have arisen due to the mental health focus of the program.

> *Our clinical experience proved to be invaluable as we often needed to respond to the needs of young people... this was particularly critical for those young people in the core group who had existing mental health problems. This was about a duty of care... it wasn't the initial intention of the group to provide mental health support to the participants however it became*

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clear that this was a necessity. For example, at one point a number of young people in the group had suffered significant losses. (Professional interview - 4)

Duration of participation led to the development of friendships within the group which was linked to a feeling of group safety. Whilst not all Core Group members were friends, all interviewees suggested that there were respectful and long standing relationships and feelings of mutual support.

Some people were friends. It wasn't spoken but we were always supported. (Core Group interview - 7)

We'd start every meeting by going around and talking and there was always a sense of being comfortable that we could approach the group with anything. So we did get to know things about each other that you wouldn't normally get to know given our level of friendship. And we knew we could get counselling or anything we needed... they were very forward with that. (Core Group interview - 9)

Reviews for young people were provided both as a mechanism for accountability and as a mechanism to support Core Group members. Informal review sessions occurred every three months. The Core Group member outlined what they had gained from participating in Headroom and what they hoped to achieve in the future. They also rated their participation.

Every 6 months the young person met with program staff in a more formal review process which included feedback from staff to the young person. Reviews provided accountability and support and the opportunity to possibly facilitate a group member out of the Core Group when appropriate. Reviews also enhanced young people's reflective capacity skills. The process provided staff with ideas about training needs and the preferred activities for individuals.

Reviews are about accountability – Headroom kids have basically been contracted and paid... but because they're young people how do you do that in a way that's supportive but about them taking responsibility? Having reviews is one way of doing that in a supportive way. (Professional interview - 2)

(Project Officer) looked after us. It was a very relaxed atmosphere at meetings. At our half yearly evaluations she'd chat to us to plan our contribution and discuss our thoughts about being involved. (Core Group interview - 7)

Youth Participation - Integral to Headroom

Headroom was developed and implemented with youth participation embedded as rights based and non-negotiable. Although the level and scope of youth participation in the program has altered over time Headroom has stayed true to this value base. Program staff and leaders were individually committed to the principles of youth participation, and demonstrated their beliefs in the every day management of the program and in the strong relationships that were built with young people over time.

> *Youth participation can't just be lip service. You have to demonstrate that you understand it through your behaviour and respect. Headroom was very successful at that... keeping it true to what the young people were saying. (Professional interview – 3)*

> *There were explicit values... and they were put into practice... Youth participation was central – the youth weren't just informing the program, they were part and parcel. The workers worked very much from a facilitating and enabling model and not an expert model. (Professional interview – 5)*

It is clear that the program, its products and outcomes simply could not have occurred if young people were not engaged as fully and across all levels and aspects of the program. Not only did young people develop ideas and content for the website and other information, they were the public face of Headroom as ambassadors for positive mental health at community events.

> *It would have been very dry (without youth participation)... and not really possible to achieve the goal of the project without young people's input. Anyone can do a website but we would have missed the point and not captured the youth voice and profile. The Positive Minds Attract health message, which we were fortunate to be associated with, lifted our profile in the community and among young people. The core group embraced the Positive Minds Attract campaign which they could promote at events...supporting them as ambassadors for mental health... (Professional interview – 4)*

> *Headroom could go on without youth involvement – staff (like project officers) could do the event stuff and you might get more dedicated people compared to volunteers trying to fit it into their own time. (Core Group interview – 10)*
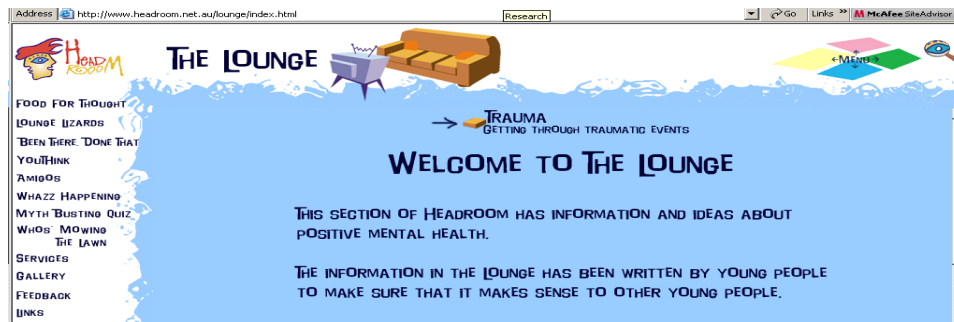
Youth were involved with every stage – planning, implementing, evaluating... they were always in it. (Professional interview – 5)

We couldn't have developed the product that we did... the terms, the words, the language, the ideas, where to promote the program, no ambassadors. Young people are going to relate better to their peers...an expert telling youth about mental health won't make them own it or embrace it. It's all interrelated as to why the young people could do what they did. You just can't unpick it (youth participation from Headroom) because you'd be unpicking the whole fabric of the program. (Professional interview – 3)

I think a lot of it was to have the youth voice as a realistic idea of what you're dealing with. E.g. bullying – an adult might say 'see a teacher' but a young person would see past that. Also the language is less formal and casual and makes it more believable, credible. (Core Group interview - 9)

Young people were involved at every stage of program development - a notable aspect of Headroom's youth participation model. Focus groups were held with young people at the program's inception to seek out ideas on the model, and were subsequently involved in developing ideas, making them a reality, and delivering the product. Core Group members were also involved in the 2007 Review.

Investment in youth participation shaped and enhanced 'products' – the website and the health information it contains, and young people as ambassadors for positive mental health.

Young people felt that they brought relevance to the issues, language and content of health and wellbeing information, and that they were an approachable public face for Headroom. Professionals agreed that the complete integration of young people into the program brought a culture and credibility to Headroom which could not be replicated without ownership and contribution by young people.

A lot of the feedback around the website has been that the youth information is really youth friendly... so it's likely that it wouldn't have been as accessible to youth if youth participation wasn't as strong. It's a given! How can you have things that are

for young people that you don't have their involvement or their say in? (Professional interview – 2)

The importance of adequate resourcing for youth participation was highlighted. Whilst the level of funding for youth participation in Headroom was a strong determinant of its scope, program staff maintained commitment to youth participation as a core input and outcome of the program.

At times the Headroom service agreement did not include reference to youth participation as a deliverable but program staff fought for this to be included as it is such a fundamental part of the program.

> *I think programs are often as big as their resource base. (The project officers) did really well in managing and delivering the project. (Professional interview – 1)*

Youth Participation is a Journey

Headroom changed considerably over the past 10 years and is likely to do so into the future. Many interviewees noted that Headroom's 'journey' of youth participation was an organic process which was driven by the commitment of program staff and leaders but which was shaped by external factors and issues or dilemmas which arose along the way.

There was a strong consistency of values and practices over time, requiring enormous skill in negotiating the changes and challenges whilst still meeting the needs of young people. The journey of forging partnerships with young people is critical in evolving towards a mature and fruitful model of youth participation.

> *Not many organisations have the luxury of being able to think through and live the process of developing their own youth participation models… need to understand it's a process… you can aim for the best but it is a journey and it takes a while to properly engage young people… I think it's important to have principles set, but the process is also very important and it is a journey and it is developmental. (Professional interview - 2)*
>
> *There were dilemmas along the way… because they had the opportunity to learn along the way they actually got to deal with the dilemmas… and to document those things and put things in place to help. (Professional interview - 2)*

A number of interviewees felt that an important part of youth participation is about keeping the program fresh and relevant to young people. This involved reviewing and monitoring, not only around

the model of youth participation but also regarding the purpose and strategies of the program as a whole. A few respondents mentioned new ideas for Headroom's focus into the future, such as emerging issues in mental health, but almost all agreed that youth participation is the key driver of the program and should be maintained in some form. A formal evaluation of the success of the program has not been conducted to date.

> *The external environment changed constantly and it was challenging to keep youth participation at the forefront of the project. (Professional interview - 4)*

Climate for Youth Participation

It is clear that successful youth participation such as the Headroom model does not happen by accident. It is a combination of planning, advocacy and implementation of supporting structures and processes for development of an organic and responsive program. The following is a discussion of some aspects which have benefited Headroom and promoted its support.

A positive climate for youth participation and for the development of a program like Headroom requires a combination of the right people (leaders and program staff) along with advocacy at a higher level of decision making. Attracting resources and other support are critical aspects of successful youth participation and a significant aspect of this is to advocate for its importance. Program staff in particular described the need for ongoing advocacy for the rights of young people to be involved in Headroom as this is an integral component of the program.

> *(High level staff were) philosophically committed to the values of youth participation. Having a leader who believes in it means that they can instil their vision into others who have the skills to put it together. Then we've got a good team... it's a special set of circumstances to make it work. You also have to have unshakeable faith that this is worth it because there was a number of times that... although Department of Health thought it was good... there were dwindling resources... so you have to advocate at that higher level that this is an important program. (Professional interview – 3)*

This is intrinsically linked to the importance of leaders who are supportive of youth participation. There was strong support within CAMHS for Headroom, and this was linked to advocacy at Department of Health CEO level. Being able to position the benefits of this program

within the broader system and broader priorities was seen to be beneficial in maintaining support.

> *Leaders need to have that vision to invest resources, to invest in staff and their skills to make it all happen. They also need to be able to put it in a broader framework so that policy makers and decision makers higher up are able to see why it's important... because this stuff is a constant battle in mental health. I think we're on a journey with youth participation and it requires ongoing state and federal leadership. (Professional -3)*

However, there is a perception that despite considerable commitment and drive from particular people, there were structural barriers for Headroom. One respondent suggested that the youth participation principles, particularly around using a wellness model, did not permeate CAMHS beyond Headroom, others felt that Headroom was a demonstration program that offered significant lessons for the organisation and other programs.

> *Headroom provided a template for youth participation in CAMHS and how to make it work with young people... as opposed to adult mental health models of consumer participation. It became a flagship for CAMHS and there was a positive public profile that talked about mental health without the illness focus.... It also assisted the organisation to think outside the square on approaching some issues and working with young people... Our expertise in the area was valued and we were often called in to be involved with activities that we weren't directly funded for. A positive outcome was that some services were assisted to further develop youth participation strategies. (Professional - 4)*

> *It wasn't broad enough... it needed to be broader – generic youth services could have been more involved... it was a bit too limited. It was CAMHS's way of saying 'we do health promotion'... and they did it there and not so much in their actual services. If you looked at CAMHS now and asked what impact Headroom had on CAMHS as an organisation you'd say none. It was their health promotion arm. Youth participation is more limited in their other areas. (Professional interview – 5)*

Implementation of successful youth participation requires significant organisational support in terms of policies, structures, processes and of course funding. Support for youth participation at all levels in an organisation is critical. Young people would have liked more engagement with higher level decision-makers.

> *Occasionally someone would show up at one of our events so there was a bit of awareness, but I don't think they understood the uniqueness of Headroom otherwise the funding cut would never have happened. I don't think it was really understood as to*

how important youth participation was in Headroom. (Core Group interview - 9)

It's hard to say (if they were supportive) because we never met them. Since they closed it down for a certain amount of time I'd probably say no! Maybe they think there's already enough youth services around. (Core Group interview - 8)

Staff

A key element in creating a climate for successful youth participation in Headroom was the employment of passionate, skilled and task oriented staff. Staff consistency was also seen as an important component of success as it facilitated the learning and developmental journey of the program and the model. It also facilitated positive relationships, a trusting environment, and the development of a Headroom 'culture'.

We did this in Headroom by using excellent people. (Project Officer) was an excellent person regarding conceptualising the theory, being respectful of youth, and she recruited (Project Officer) who was very, very committed to the intricacies of on-the-ground youth participation. I was very keen to have the right people with the right values. They have to walk the walk and talk the talk... need 100% commitment and there are no shades of grey. (Professional interview - 3)

Sustainability of Headroom was discussed by many of the interviewees. There is a general understanding that the model of the program and of youth participation will change in the near future. A number of suggestions were made to adapt to the changing climate. One was to strengthen links to other youth organisations and youth participation structures in South Australia.

Headroom has been very successful at building mutually beneficial partnerships in the past and these skills could greatly assist the next phase of the program including the development of National links and alliances (Auseinet, 2007).

CONCLUSION

The Headroom model of youth participation has demonstrated many of what are now accepted as best practice principles since its inception. Headroom was quite a new concept – a youth mental health promotion program with a focus on on-line delivery, a program which fully integrated youth participation, and a program operating within a wellness framework. Headroom quickly earned a good reputation regarding its accessibility and relevance to young people. Headroom was developed with, and has maintained, youth voice as absolutely integral to the program. There was a commitment to the process of youth participation by both program staff and organisational leaders and an ethos that valued the role and ideas of young people.

It is hoped that this document provides a useful account of some of the successes and challenges involved in building youth participation into a program. Other organisations may learn from Headroom's journey; its foundations and many of the processes have broad application.

This report was made possible by the generous input of past Headroom staff and youth participants. They remain passionate and committed to the principles and practice of youth participation and both the authors and the Centre for Health Promotion wish to thank them for their valuable contributions.

LESSONS FROM HEADROOM

The following lessons are some that have been learnt through Headroom, and in particular through the development of this research. These are not exhaustive, but were chosen because they highlight areas of youth participation which are not particularly well covered in other literature.

- Youth participation is a journey – be prepared to invest time, resources and a philosophical commitment to the process. No framework for youth participation can predict how the journey will evolve.

- Youth participation is underpinned by strong and respectful relationships with young people. These take time and significant skill to build. Getting the right staff, who are philosophically committed and skilled, to work with young people is absolutely critical to success. Respectful relationships also imply value being placed on the skills and role of professionals.

- An important but sometimes overlooked aspect of youth participation is to ask young people *how* they would like to be engaged. Meeting young people at their level, their place, and within their context will not only encourage more people to participate but enhance their contribution.

- Developing a good process for youth participation in a program or organisation requires support at all levels. The process can be resource intensive and relatively slow to demonstrate full benefits which means that organisational commitment is imperative. Furthermore, finding staff and leaders who are champions for youth participation will reduce the likelihood of having to 'battle' for necessary resources.

- Working with young people carries a level of responsibility which organisations and programs need to take very seriously. Asking young people to participate implies a responsibility to take them seriously and to support them. Organisations must build in processes and structures to implement the outcomes of youth participation. Organisations should be prepared to change as a result of engaging young people. Without this preparation, young people will quickly understand that their thoughts are not valued.

- Youth participation is an organic process. Whilst a program may have a framework and processes for engagement, the nature of these should support diversity, change and responsiveness so that young people can take ownership and contribute no matter what their skill level or background.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Core Group Interview Schedule

BACKGROUND
1. Can you describe your role in Headroom?
2. What specific involvement did you have regarding the processes of youth participation?
3. How did things change over time?
4. What assumptions, logic, values and theory drove the Headroom model of youth participation?

PROCESS OF DEVELOPING MODEL
5. Was the core group involved in deciding upon the model of youth participation? How?
6. Do you think that the organisation was committed to youth participation values and practice?

RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT OF CORE GROUP
7. How were you recruited into the core group?
8. What ongoing support was provided to you as a core group member?

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN OPERATION
9. What strategies and activities have you undertaken as part of the core group?
10. How did decision making within the core group occur?
11. Did the core group take responsibility and interest in their work?
12. Do you feel that your voice was heard and that you were listened to?
13. How were your ideas taken up? Did you receive feedback on your ideas?
14. Do you feel that the core group inputs were validated and/or celebrated?
15. Did you get any support from your peers in the core group?
16. Did you find that being in the core group was always interesting? Why?

IMPACTS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION
17. What were the positive outcomes of Headroom youth participation?
18. Why is it a successful model?
19. Were there any difficulties/challenges of doing youth participation in this way? How were they overcome? What are the limitations?
20. What lessons have you learned from the process of youth participation in Headroom? How would you do things differently?
21. In what ways did you and core group members benefit (or not) from your participation?
    o Skills – teamwork, leadership, advocacy
    o Self confidence
    o Becoming a participatory citizen
22. How would Headroom be different if youth participation wasn't as strong or done differently?

Appendix 2 – Professional/staff interview schedule

BACKGROUND
1. Can you tell me about your involvement with Headroom?
2. What specific involvement did you have regarding the processes of youth participation?
3. Are you able to provide some history of the Headroom model?
4. What assumptions, logic, values and theory drove the Headroom model of youth participation?

PROCESS OF DEVELOPING MODEL
5. Was the core group involved in deciding upon the model of youth participation? How?
6. In what ways did the organisation commit to youth participation values and practice?
    - Prompt for incorporation into the Headroom structure, governance, documentation (e.g. policy, mission and value statements)

RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT OF CORE GROUP
7. How are youth recruited into the core group?
8. What ongoing support was provided to core group members?
    - E.g. mentoring, training, dealing with diversity of group, 'group maintenance', safety of youth telling their own MH story

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN OPERATION
9. Can you describe the Headroom model of youth participation?
    - What strategies and activities comprise the Headroom processes of youth participation?
    - E.g. planning/development, implementation and evaluation phases
10. How does decision making within the core group occur?
11. By what mechanisms were the core group facilitated to take responsibility, interest?
12. By what processes are youth inputs validated and/or celebrated?
13. How was the voice of different members heard? What processes were there for taking up ideas and providing feedback?

IMPACTS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION
14. What were the positive outcomes of Headroom youth participation? What do you think was successful about the model? What do you think didn't work so well?
15. Were there any difficulties/challenges of the model and how were they overcome? What are its limitations?
16. What lessons have you learned from the process of youth participation in Headroom? How would you improve or change the Headroom model?
17. In what ways did the core group benefit (or not) from their participation?
    Skills – teamwork, leadership, advocacy
    - Self confidence
    - Becoming a participatory citizen
18. How would Headroom be different if youth participation wasn't as strong?

Appendix 3 – Headroom Youth Participation Program Logic Model

VALUES & WAYS of WORKING	ACTIVITIES & PRACTICES	PRODUCTS	OUTCOMES FOR WIDER COMMUNITY

VALUES & WAYS of WORKING

Youth participation is integral to the program

Youth participation is supported by the organisation

Youth participation is a journey

Youth participation uses principles of:
- Equity
- Universality
- Sustainability
- Inclusiveness
- Credibility

Marriage of youth and professional skills

Youth participation focuses on:
- Respectful partnership
- Creating youth friendly environments
- Flexibility
- Empathy for target audience

ACTIVITIES & PRACTICES

Recruitment of Core Group[1]
-Open, universal, geographically broad, financially supported

Engagement of Core Group[2]
-Open and safe core group
-Facilitated & flexible mechanisms
-Issue based

Training and support[3]
-Focus on skills development, trust, and tailored to core group

Supervision/accountability[4]
-Clear boundaries, goals
-Mentoring
-Review for core group members

Partnership building[5]
-Alliances & synergies for positive mental health

Benefits to Core Group

PRODUCTS

Website and written health promotion materials

-Further youth engagement in health promotion message

-Live and responsive to changing needs

-Youth driven with credible professional validity

Ambassadors for positive mental health at events

-Peer education model for health promotion

-Synergies with web based material

Brand recognition and credibility

-Identifiable brand e.g. Positive Minds Attract increased youth awareness and attraction to health promotion message

OUTCOMES FOR WIDER COMMUNITY

Increased mental health awareness

Increased health literacy

Decreased stigma around mental health and illness

Positive mental health brand

Monitoring and evaluation – External Evaluation, External Review, internal monitoring

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