



Impact Report

2024



Brave Foundation



Cultural Acknowledgment

Brave Foundation acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation as the traditional custodians of the lands on which our organisation works. We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

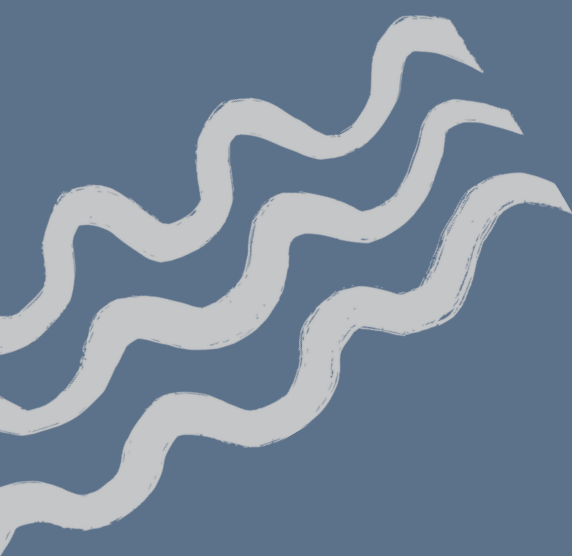
Brave's work also brings us into contact with people from diverse communities. Brave is committed to respecting the sexuality, gender, culture and heritage of each person we encounter, inside and outside our organisation.



Front: Katelyn with
Brave Mentor Brooke (Vic)
This page: Frances (NT)

Contents

Contents	3
About Brave Foundation	5
Amanda’s Story	6
2024 At a Glance	8
Chair’s Message	10
CEO’s Message	11
Achievements	13
Innovation	14
Amplifying Voices	16
Continuous Improvement	20
Vision 2030	23
Calum’s Story	24
Acknowledgements	27





Participant Erika's
son (WA)

Our vision is a future where every young parent and their child thrives and belongs

Our Purpose

Unlocking the boundless potential of young parents

Our Mission

Walking alongside and championing young parents as a Centre of Excellence

Our Values

Inspire

We support and encourage our community to dream

Empower

We champion and resource individual potential

Connect

We establish and strengthen collaborative relationships

Include

We embrace diversity and combat prejudice

Innovate

We are curious, we will find and make a way



Amanda's Story

Amanda was 17 years old, living at home with her mother and sister, and in Year 11 when she discovered she was pregnant. On medication for depression and suffering crippling anxiety, Amanda felt unsafe in her community, and with limited social networks, was unsure of how to meet her own needs. She was concerned about the impact of having a newborn in the small home would have on the family dynamic. Shortly after the birth, Amanda became pregnant again, and at 18 years old was mother to two young infants.

“ I was definitely very like anxious because I was pregnant, and I didn't really have much support outside of like my direct family and my partner.”

Amanda experienced common challenges for new parents - feeling overwhelmed, establishing a routine and managing changing relationships. She also faced additional difficulties due to her depression and anxiety, financial stressors, lack of suitable housing, and reliance on public transport which impacted her sense of independence. Feeling judged and stigmatised by formal support services created additional barriers to seeking help, making her struggles even harder.

Although she had a supportive partner and family, she lacked the confidence to talk to health and other professionals. She found solace in her Brave Mentor as a trusted adult outside of her family. Amanda set goals to develop more independence and ensure she had the right resources and support systems in place to study, access healthcare, childcare, and build financial stability.

“ She [mentor] was very open to like all of my goals, and especially like when we were planning out and working through my goals... so, you know like, except for [mentor], essentially I didn't really have any outside perspectives of like knowledge around things like moving out, school, stuff like that.”

*Name & image changed for privacy



Trinity &
daughter (VIC)

Establishing her own family home and gaining her driver licence were key to developing her independence. Her mentor supported her to move into transitional housing and access support to buy essentials, like a fridge.

The mentor's calm and non-judgmental approach, support and advocacy meant that Amanda was able to explore her options and gain confidence to pursue her education and career aspirations.



It felt really good because being like a younger parent, especially school-wise, I found I wasn't really being listened to by people in the Education Department. So it was really nice having, you know, someone else to advocate for me and my goals because so many people just sort of shrugged it off because of me being a young parent..."

Another significant milestone was purchasing a second car for the family, which she achieved with the support of her mentor and the No Interest Loan Scheme. The second car gave Amanda independence to attend appointments while her partner was at work.



That was like a huge deal because my partner works full time and at that stage we were in transitional housing, so I didn't actually like, have someone at home with me and my daughter and I was also pregnant at the time..."

At the core of Amanda's relationship with her mentor was a trusting, non-judgmental partnership built on flexibility and a focus on building strengths. The mentor offered creative support while respecting Amanda's autonomy, empowering her to make her own decisions. This guidance not only nurtured trust and confidence but also sparked personal growth, resilience, and a renewed sense of direction for Amanda and her family.



Getting our own house, like our own space & the vehicle, like, it's just given us so much freedom & so much independence... it's given us our own space for our kids & our own space to make our home..."



2024 At a Glance

Participant Snapshot

"I'd feel a lot more alone without Brave. It feels like she [mentor] walks through life with me."

407

young parents in Brave programs

49%

aged 19 or younger

89.5%

female

10%

male

0.5%

gender diverse



64%

live regional, rural or remote



68%

have housing security concerns



29%

currently affected by family violence



71%

have known mental health concerns

40%



pregnant at referral

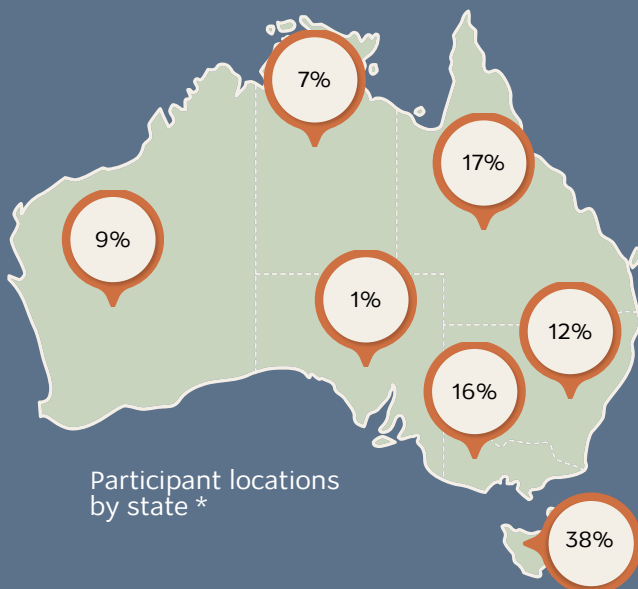
58

participants in Digital Delivery

more than

1 in 3

Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander



*Participant densities in some states are due to current funding arrangements

Program Snapshot

240

participants graduated or closed

87%

of participants had a Pathway Plan

5.4

average goals were set

83%

of goals set were achieved or in progress



72%

have noticed an improvement in children's outcomes*



79%

of new mum participants feel more confident looking after their baby*



75%

feel better about their personal wellbeing*

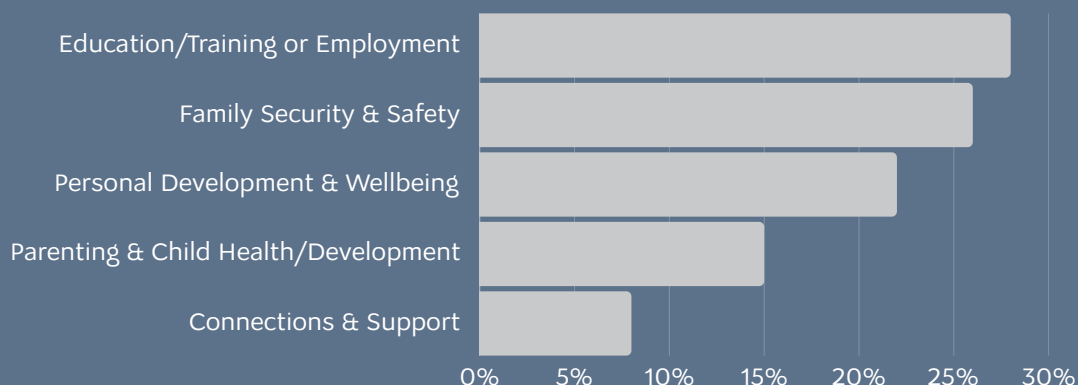


80%

feel their family's stability & security has improved*

“My child has grown into a bright, happy child as I was able to get help & support that I needed to be the best parent I could be.”

Participants set at least one goal related to...



*Data based on participants who completed final outcome assessments



Chair's Message

The work of the Brave Foundation has always had a focus on achieving positive outcomes for children, for young parents and for families. At the core of this focus has been, and remains, its fidelity to the evidence gleaned from the lived and living experience of young parents who are our co-producers of change. In multiple ways, this report demonstrates the success of the work of Brave, the value of its focus and the benefits to all parties – including our broader community itself. The impacts for children, parents and families are clearly identified, described, and enumerated. The data speaks for itself. However, the penetrating power of the evidence of impact is not only in the data but in the heroic stories of the mums and dads themselves. These are stories of the myriad of challenges young parents face and of the determination they demonstrate to create positive lives for their babies.

Brave provides its mentor service to some of the most vulnerable of young mums and dads to help them nurture and 'grow up strong' the new life they have in their hands. Youth is not their core vulnerability. As the data and the stories show us, these parents have remarkable strength. However, alongside this they generally experience multiple and complex trials that would challenge anyone twice their age. In particular, they experience the aloneness that comes with trying to navigate responsibilities for new life when violence and health concerns weigh heavily and when family support, community support and even a place to live are absent.

Whatever our age, we all need a guiding hand that enables us to achieve our own potential and to meet the challenges we face. The stories herein demonstrate so well the value of the guiding hand of our mentors that augments the strengths of these young parents to find their own solutions.

Australia, like nations across the globe, is increasingly paying attention to the need to focus on prevention and enhance the wellbeing of children and young people rather than provide (costly) band aids when things go wrong. Supporting young families who experience adversities helps them to care for their children, keep them safe and nurture their wellbeing – as well as aiding the health and wellbeing of the future generations of our nation. We are grateful to be part of a policy and professional community of supporters who share our commitment to valuing the voice of young people as we partner in gathering evidence of what works to support young families.

Our new Centre of Excellence aims to keep developing our model of care and of demonstrating the value of the evidence led innovations of the Brave Foundation. On behalf of the Board of Brave, I thank our supporters, and congratulate the leadership team, our lived experience advisers, all the mentors and the mums and dads who continue to lead the way to provide the evidence of what works and of the impact of our model of care and of mentoring.

Professor Maria Harries AM

CHAIR



CEO's Message

Brave's ability to contribute meaningfully to seeing positive outcomes for young parents relies on us having the right team members in the right roles at the right time, having shared clarity on what we are doing, and most importantly, who we are doing it for.

In 2024 we developed a new strategy which, for the first time in Brave's history, was deliberately informed by the insights, experiences and expertise of a broad range of stakeholders including staff, partners, funders, and young parents. Vision 2030, launched to staff in November, guides Brave on our journey towards becoming a Centre of Excellence for Young Parents over the next five years.

The last 12 months has primed Brave for the next phase. With new systems and data providing a deeper understanding of who we are working with, with new partnerships providing opportunities to learn and share information, and with a strong team of experienced staff directly working with young parents - Brave is well positioned to see intergenerational change for young parent families.

Our focus on continuous improvement via numerous working groups and through our Empowering the Voices of Young Parents Advisory (EVYP) saw important enhancements delivered across the organisation. Our internal evaluations, such as the review of our digital program, have also helped to identify opportunities for innovation. Our Young Dads pilot is an important example of a program innovation, delivering great outcomes over the last year. In 2024 Brave also finalised a two-year project that drew together a community of professionals in navigator roles.

Led by Brave, the community shared their professional experiences and the insights from the group are captured in the How to Guide for Linkers, Navigators and Connectors.

Our two-year grant through the Department of Social Services, announced in the 2024 Federal Budget enabled us to refine our program footprint, and introduce Brave's Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens program (SEPT) on the ground in several new locations. As a national organisation working with young parents and partners in communities around the country, we are in a unique position to understand both the broad and the local challenges that young parents are navigating and we actively share that knowledge with governments and other community and health organisations.

This was also a year marked by significant change as we supported our founder, Bernadette Black AM, to transition to the establishment of a new organisation, SEED Futures. I look forward to continued opportunities for Brave and SEED Futures to collaborate in the future.

The last year has delivered a great deal of important change necessary to ensure Brave is able to focus on meeting the needs of young parents and their children, today and into the future. I am grateful for the wisdom of our Board, the leadership within our team, the commitment and expertise of our staff, the generosity of our partners, and the trust that young parents have placed in our organisation.

Jill Roche

CEO



Violet & daughter
(WA)

Achievements

Enhance & Deliver Core Program

- Launched Young Dads Pilot Program in Newcastle & Victoria
- Received Empowering Children & Young People Award at the Victorian Protecting Children Awards
- Recognised internationally with Silver Stevie Award for Women in Business
- Received endorsement for Brave's inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan
- Enhanced Central Intake process
- Introduced 17 policies to strengthen compliance framework
- Onboarded 15 new staff
- Introduced new Performance Management Framework

Generate Evidence & Ensure Sustainability

- Completed evaluations for SEPT Digital Delivery & Peer-to-Peer Mentoring pilots
- Finalised Navigators Network project & released 'A How-To Guide for Linkers, Navigators, & Connectors'
- Implemented a new client management system
- Contributed to Federal Government's Early Years Strategy
- Contributed to Social Ventures Australia's 'Integration of Early Years Services' Report
- Introduced new outcome measures for SEPT
- Communicated results of Social Return on Investment
- Successfully concluded three-year grant with Women's Leadership Development Program

Develop & Deepen Funding & Delivery Partnerships

- Government funding secured in 2024 Federal Budget
- Secured Minderoo Foundation Funding to enhance participant voice & involvement in advocacy, research & communications
- 60 meetings with Federal & State Government representatives
- Established 2 new research partnerships
- Active engagement with key sector peers & partners

Advocacy

- Transitioned SEED to separate legal entity as SEED Futures
- Appointed to Federal Government's Department of Employment & Workplace Relations Parent Advisory Group
- 8 submissions made on behalf of young parents to Federal & State Government inquiries
- Case study of former SEPT participant showcased for Queensland Youth Week
- Participated & contributed to government, sector & community consultations
- Supported young parents to participate in media opportunities

Board & management collaboratively developed 2025-2030 Strategy, which will see the organisation become a Centre of Excellence for Young Parents.

For more see page 22

Innovation

Young Dads Pilot Program

Research highlights that young fathers have unique needs and are motivated to be good dads, but existing programs often don't meet their needs. To address this, Brave developed the Young Dads Pilot Project, launched in February 2024 in Newcastle and Melbourne, with support from the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, Shine On Foundation and The Ross Trust.

The project includes four phases: Discovery, Co-Design, Pilot Delivery, and Evaluation. Although initial funding has now ended, support for young dads in Newcastle will continue until June 2026, while funding in Melbourne will conclude in June 2025.

The project has provided valuable insights into young fathers' needs and highlighted the importance of tailored, holistic support. It has also identified opportunities to improve engagement and reduce isolation among young fathers. The project is gaining attention from researchers and community stakeholders, emphasising the need to sustain and evolve the program based on young fathers' experiences and scientific evidence.

“The moments of success of transformation for him [young dad] was when we were able to set some of the goals & he was able to work towards them & achieve them. And then yeah, feel that sense of accomplishment & also feel the benefits of it. I think that helped change his mindset & understand that it's possible for him.”

YOUNG DADS MENTOR

“I felt a lot of relief as I got someone to talk to about this... &, like [Mentor] will text me... just to see how I am, which is like really good & not a lot of people will do that...”

YOUNG DADS PARTICIPANT - NSW

100%

of young dads referred wanted parenting support

More than **80%**

of young dads (who completed assessments) showed improvements in at least 6 of 8 life domains



Bhodie
& son (WA)

Amplifying Voices

A current EVYP Member and CEO Jill Roche were appointed to the Federal Government's Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Parents Advisory Group (PAG) for a two-year commitment. They joined representatives from a small group of community organisations and individuals with valuable lived experience to provide insights, advice and feedback directly to government in relation to the new pre-employment service replacing ParentsNext.

Brave Team members Peta, Mel and Jill joined a former SEPT participant at the Tasmanian Roundtable focused on Families in the First 1000 Days which was hosted by SEED in Hobart in June 2024. Attendees, including Federal and State government representatives, had the privilege of hearing directly about the experiences of young parents in Tasmania.

Jill also represents Brave and young parents as a member of the SEED Futures Advisory Council.

💡 **By participating in this advisory group I'm hoping to offer valuable information in order to assist in curating a program that's as beneficial as possible for parents/families. On a personal level, I'm excited to experience the process that goes into this sort of work & to further my communication, collaborative & adaptability skills."**

YOUNG MUM APPOINTED TO PAG



Frances' daughter
(NT)

Submissions

Brave made five submissions to Federal and State inquiries and consultations, and three budget submissions (Federal, Tasmania and New South Wales) in 2024. Often the experiences and voices of young parents are unheard in inquiries on matters that impact them and their children. Our intent with these submissions is to ensure the needs and perspectives of young parents are presented. During the year a submission was made to the Select Committee on the Cost of Living to emphasise the growing impact the increasing cost of living is having on young parents. In addition, several submissions to youth action plans highlighted that young parents require flexibility to engage in consultation opportunities as they may not be available during regular working hours to get involved.

Empowering the Voices of Young Parents Advisory Group

The Empowering the Voices of Young Parents Advisory Group (EVYP) were active during the year, contributing to internal projects and external consultation opportunities.

Activities have included:

- Representing EVYP on Continuous Improvement project working groups
- Development of honorarium guidelines for lived experience contribution
- 6 members confirmed for a new affiliate stream for young parents interested in casual participation
- Approval of second year expectations
- Second year member involvement in onboarding for new members
- Co-development and co-facilitation of monthly EVYP meetings with Young Parent Co-Chair

The first term of the Empowering the Voices of Young Parents Advisory Group (EVYP) concluded in July 2024 with several existing members agreeing to continue for a second term, either as a Tier 2 or affiliate member.

Involvement in external consultations

- Red Nose Healing Through Community Project
- Youth Action New South Wales Department for Health Factsheets
- Mamamia.com.au digital story
- Young mum appointed to Department of Employment & Workplace Relations Parent Advisory Group
- Safe & Supported National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy

“ I believe that I’ve gone through what I’ve gone through so I can help others who don’t have my strength & resilience & EVYP helps me action that.”

EVYP MEMBER





Katelyn (Vic)

Acknowledgment

Brave received the Empowering Children and Young People Award at the Victorian Protecting Children Awards, held during National Child Protection Week. Staff were honoured and thrilled to accept the award in recognition of the work Brave does to ensure young parents voices influence what matters to them. At Brave, it is a deep organisational commitment that changes the way we work, the choices we make, and the actions we take.

Brave also received international recognition as a Silver Stevie Awards winner for Women in Business for 'Organisation of the Year – Government or Non-Profit – More than 10 Employees'. The Stevies are an international business awards program which honours women executives, entrepreneurs, employees, and their organisations.

On the local stage, Brave and SEPT were finalists in both the NSW Youth Work Awards and Tasmanian Community Achievement Awards in October.

“One of the greatest protections a young person can have is empowerment & their own sense of agency. We are genuinely thrilled to accept this award as recognition of the strength of young people who are raising their children to have the best lives possible.”

CEO JILL ROCHE UPON RECEIVING THE VICTORIAN
PROTECTING CHILDREN AWARD

Conferences

Brave participated and presented at the following conferences and events in 2024:

Presented

- Outcomes Practice & Evidence Network Symposium
- Queen Elizabeth Centre Annual Learning Event
- Maternal Child & Family Health Nurses Australia Conference
- MAV Maternal & Child Health Conference
- Father Inclusive Practice Network Meeting
- Connection to Journey of Families in First 1000 Days Round Table

Participated

- Australian Institute of Family Services Conference
- The Fathering Summit
- Family & Relationship Services Australia Conference
- Australian Evaluation Society Conference
- Australian Centre for Child Protection 20th Birthday Symposium
- Children & Young People at Risk Summit
- Philanthropy Australia Conference
- Influence & Advocacy Breakfast
- The Australian Women's Leadership Symposium

Continuous Improvement

The Continuous Improvement and Practice Governance Framework aims to achieve the best outcomes for participants and continuous improvement for the organisation. The 2024 Annual Workplan, informed by research, participant feedback, and the EVYP Advisory, has led to several key developments.

These efforts have significantly advanced Brave's continuous improvement objectives.

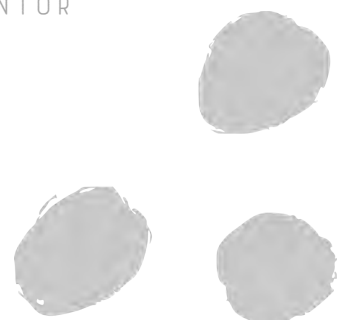
- Implementation of a new client management system
- Improved family violence screening & safety planning
- Revised exit & 6-month follow-up surveys
- Reviewed participant graduation & closure processes
- Data quality improvements
- Commenced projects for online communication & community engagement guidelines
- Completed internal practice guidelines & Mentoring Handbook
- Introduced iPads to support mentor practice



Kayetlin
& son (NT)

“It's really a privilege to share in a young person's worries, thoughts, feelings & achievements. She has been very open about her challenges, & I have loved supporting her while she overcomes these.”

SEPT MENTOR



Measurement, Evaluation & Learning

Brave's first Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework for the SEPT was implemented throughout 2024. The MEL framework outlines the SEPT Program Theory that guides a mixed-method evaluation design. Quantitative measures focus on Personal Agency and Parenting Confidence, assessed at program start, exit, and six months post-program. Outcome Star assessments are conducted at early, mid, and exit stages. The Session Rating Scale, used to evaluate mentoring quality, and new exit and six month surveys were introduced in early 2024.

The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews with participants and mentors, with 15 interviews conducted so far. MEL activities also included reviewing the SEPT Theory of Change to incorporate father-specific amendments for the Young Dads program, based on expert advice, consultations, and existing research. This framework informs program processes and outcome measures for Young Dad program participants.

“[I feel] support, understanding, that it's ok to ask for help, everyone's story is different, no parent is alone.”

SEPT PARTICIPANT



Research

Brave's research partnership with the Peter Underwood Centre (PUC) at University of Tasmania to evaluate SEPT in Tasmania continues to progress. The PUC team conducted three focus groups with young parents in Burnie, Hobart and Queenstown. An online survey of participant outcomes and experiences was completed between August and October where 32 past and current Tasmanian SEPT participants responded. An additional 21 participants took part in a follow-up one-to-one interview to further explore their experiences. Interviews with community stakeholders are also underway.

Additionally, Brave participated in external research to feature in Social Ventures Australia's Integration of Early Years Services Learnings for Impact report, developed in partnership with dandolopartners. The report is a testament to the power of knowledge sharing within early years services, showcasing a range of innovative approaches that address diverse needs for effective support.

Research partnerships confirmed with Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth, Red Nose, University of Tasmania's Peter Underwood Centre



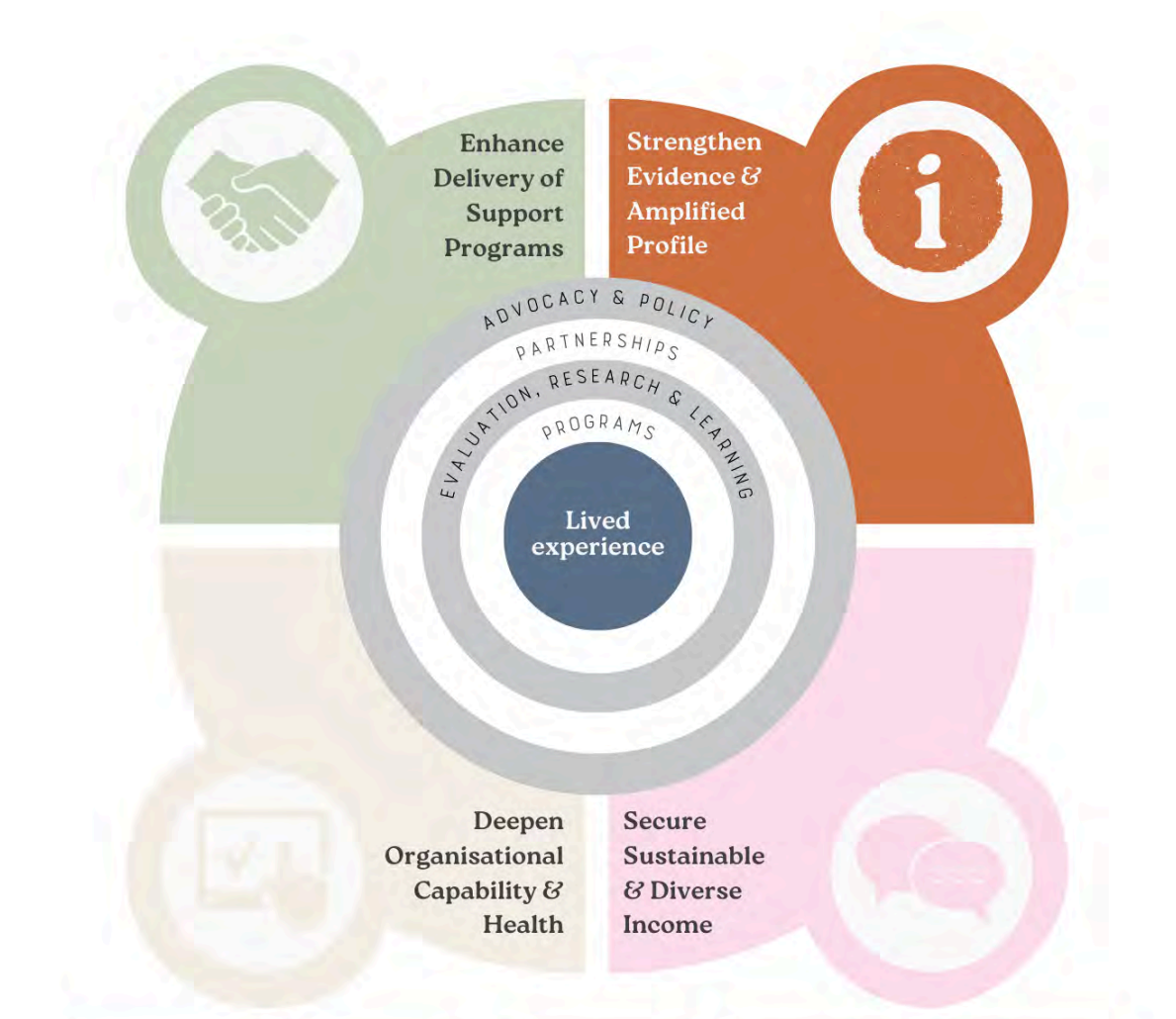
Glorious
& son (NT)

Vision 2030

During 2024, Brave management worked collaboratively with the Board to develop a new strategy for 2025-2030, which will see the organisation become a Centre of Excellence for Young Parents.

Brave's 2025-30 strategy is one that draws from the past and builds upon the foundations established in the last three years, while broadening for the future. Our model of mission and evidence of impact has evolved and matured over time however, lived experience always remains at the centre of who we are, what we do, and how we work.

For Brave, excellence means listening directly to young parents, continuously improving our programs, and sharing our knowledge through advocacy and policy. It is not about becoming an academic institution, a think tank or a peak body – it's about ensuring excellence in outcomes for young parents. Brave's Centre of Excellence for Young Parents is the holistic description for the full collection of functions and activities that we do – all of which is centred on young parents and their children.



Calum's story

Calum, a young Aboriginal man, faced significant challenges from an early age. At 19, he and his partner were expecting their first child, and two years later, they welcomed their second child. Calum's early life was marked by trauma and adversity, growing up in a household with family violence and substance misuse. Diagnosed with neurodiverse and psychiatric disorders, he left school after Year 7.

As a young father, he was grieving a friend and juggling work and home-life while dealing with past family trauma – it was overwhelming.

“ Trying to keep everything in order was just stressful. And just my emotions as well... when it came to helping someone, I was always saying no, always giving an angry answer, I wasn't happy with the world.”

Calum referred himself to Brave after his partner suggested it could help him with his struggles. Like many young dads, Calum had prioritised his role as a 'provider,' leading him to neglect his own health and wellbeing, making him exhausted and tired with life. Consequently, he found it difficult to find time to enjoy his children and nurture his relationship with his partner. He knew he wanted things to change and that he couldn't continue the way things were going.

“ As I got into the whole, like Brave Foundation thing, it sort of gave me a sign because there's someone that actually wants to help into the young dads community, because there's no one that really ever does it, at all. There's not a lot of help for young dads...”

*Name & image changed for privacy



Dorsay &
daughter (Vic)

He was eager to build his parenting and financial literacy skills, secure stable housing to provide a safe environment for his children, improve family relationships, and make positive changes to his own health and wellbeing.



[Mentor] would ask what sort of interest I have in work, or just like what I would like to get into, then he'll give me a lot of options or just like a lot of ideas and, if I say I want to learn more about that one... like he's willing to do all the research I am looking for, which is really, really good because sometimes I don't have the time to do the research so he helps me with doing all the research and then we meet-up to talk about it."

Building a relationship with his mentor that was supportive and understanding rather than another source of pressure was crucial for Calum. His mentor took the time to build trust and rapport while respecting his wisdom about his own goals and the timelines for making changes to his life.



It's good to have a male figure, like I don't really have a male figure much in my life cause my dad always worked constantly when he was home... not a lot of young dads have that male figure... and having a male figure just makes them feel OK."

Having a male mentor figure provided Calum with guidance, support, and a positive role model, helping him navigate the challenges of fatherhood and better understand his unique role in his children's development.



I wanted to get in touch with... my inner self and also with my kids as well... when I lost myself... like when my kids would come up asking me something... I'd say 'just go to your mum'... I just didn't want to deal with it... but now, like when the kids are going like 'hey day, let's go'... well go and have water play... I feel more of a connection towards my kids."

The strong partnership with his mentor enabled Calum to gain the skills and confidence needed to improve his parenting, secure stable housing, and enhance his overall wellbeing, ultimately creating a better environment for his children and strengthening his family bonds. He has also developed strategies to improve communication and rebuild relationships with extended family members.





Erika &
son (WA)

Acknowledgements

Lived Experience

Brave acknowledges and appreciates the courage and contribution of people with lived experience of young parenthood, their supporters and mentors who work with them.

Funders

Brave is grateful to the following funding partners who make our work possible.

- Federal Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (Office for Women)
- Federal Department of Social Services
- Tasmanian Department of Premier & Cabinet
- Paul Ramsay Foundation
- Equity Trustees
- Shine On Foundation
- Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation
- Minderoo Foundation
- The Ross Trust

Partners

Brave acknowledges the incredible work of our diverse range of partners who support young parents nationally. We initiate collaborative working relationships with place-based partners who have local knowledge, and are also active in delivering services and supporting our young parent population. Across the country Brave works closely with schools, hospitals, maternal and child health care centres, Child and Family Learning Centres, community organisations, and more. It is with the support of these organisations that Brave is able to ensure young parents and their families have the best chance to thrive.





B R A V E

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