

THE PUSH-UP CHALLENGE CASE STUDY 2021

Dungog High School push for better mental health



45

Legends



78,565

Push-ups completed



\$20k

Funds raised

In June 2021, a small group of passionate year 11 students from Dungog High School came together to raise awareness of mental health within their school and their wider community. This is their story.

Get fit, have fun, learn about mental health. thepushupchallenge.com.au

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Being the Student Coordinator for The Push-Up Challenge gave me the opportunity to share my passion for the importance of good mental health. After experiencing first hand the devastation of suicide and losing a brother, I felt there was no better way than to involve my entire school and community in The Push-Up Challenge.

Together 6 mates and I shared our involvement by presenting at whole school assemblies, participating in radio and newspaper interviews and rallying the community for support and donations. Samaritans purchased our Push-Up Challenge shirts for us, and we were very proud to wear them at all of our events.

We were blown away by the support of our local town and surrounding communities. We joined together for lunch on June 1st, with a free sausage sizzle, where our school Principal Stephen Harper kicked off the challenge doing the first 30 push-ups. The students and staff all cheered him on and then took turns doing their own push-ups.

I enjoyed the fitness side to the challenge, and found the app and website very user friendly. The Push-Up Challenge team replied to our questions quickly and supported us through the entire process. The daily mental health tips were a great extra in the program and we happily shared these with family and friends.

Participation in the challenge made me feel empowered, like I could do something to raise awareness of the significance of mental health and the importance of looking after each other, of reaching out, having those conversations and supporting each other. I am very proud of myself, my mates and my community. Completing the challenge made me feel as though something positive has come out of the tragedy we have experienced.

Dungog High School will proudly participate in The Push-Up Challenge year after year and keep spreading the word of mental health.

Aaron Whelan, Student - Dungog HS



This challenge has helped raise the awareness that poor mental health is a community issue and that as a community, we can take great strides to accomplish far greater results than what as individuals we could dare to dream.



The young men behind this enterprise developed and matured throughout the journey as they handled media appointments, negotiations with community organisations, meetings with school leaders and public speaking with audiences of over 700 people.

Overall, this was an extremely positive event for the school, yielding wonderful and unexpected outcomes well beyond the money raised for all who participated.

Stephen Harper, Principal - Dungog HS

The Push-Up Challenge was a great experience to raise money for a good cause with all of my mates.



The challenge was a fun way to get the community together and teach everyone about mental health, and show people who suffer from it, that we care. The Push-Up Challenge showed the school and community that there are people all around you who can support you, and it was a great thing to be a part of.

Alec Grainger, Student - Dungog HS



Our community is not immune to mental health issues, and has unfortunately experienced the impact of suicide, both within the school and wider community.

The Push-Up Challenge provided an opportunity for us as a school to come together and raise awareness of youth mental health. We kicked off the Challenge with a free whole-school barbeque, donated by the Dungog HS P&C, which provided an opportunity for both staff and students to initiate discussion about mental health, coinciding with a push-up exhibition, which featured students as well as staff. The atmosphere that was created at the barbeque was one to behold, with students cheering on their peers and teachers who were part of the exhibition.

Through the involvement of the Dungog Rotary Club and Dungog HS P&C, we were able to establish a fundraiser that assisted us in raising vital funds for our beneficiary, headspace Maitland. headspace Maitland provides much-needed counselling and psychological support to our students and we felt that they were a very worthy beneficiary. As a school community, we have been blown away by the

generosity and support given to our cause by community members and after media exposure through various radio and newspaper articles, members of the wider community have generously donated to our initiative. Setting an initial fundraising target of \$10k, we quickly surpassed that goal and raced towards \$15k. Within the last few days of the challenge, we were heading for \$20k, and competing on the national education leader board with schools that far exceeded our enrolment and were much more affluent.

We reached \$20k on the final day of fundraising, and the generosity that our small school community has displayed, when compared to other larger school competitors, is nothing short of inspiring. The positive impact that the challenge has had on the Year 11 boys will last for many years to come. These boys, and the entire school community, should be incredibly proud of their achievement in coming 1st on the Education leader board. I think the initiative within our community will only grow from here.

Ian Parsons, School Learning Support Officer - Dungog HS