1. Additional description (Up to 1 x A4 page); Service information additional to that covered in Part A

Mind Blank are a unique community led response to a national mental health priority, and are the only organisation promoting young people and community suicide prevention through forum theatre in the world.

They aim to partner with service providers to:
- Enhance young people’s knowledge around mental health issues.
- Make sure young people know where to seek support.

Mind Blank is recognised Australia wide for mental health awareness and education through delivering innovative programs in schools, communities, and workplaces. We advocate a holistic and balanced approach through strategic partnerships and collaborations.

TeamHEALTH provide quality mental health services focused on support, recovery and rehabilitation that operates with National Standards for Mental Health. They have been operating in the Top End of Australia for 30 years. With approximately 75 staff we are passionate and dedicated to helping people, with a culture of continuous improvement.

The TeamHEALTH team celebrate diversity and culture. They make wellbeing and recovery integral to all that they do. TeamHEALTH continue to develop by providing training on the techniques and tools we use to assist you on your recovery journey to the best of their ability.
2. Criteria (Up to 10 x A4 page) - (Judges allocate marks to each criterion) 2.1 Evidence of a significant contribution to the field of mental health on a local, state or national level.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island inequality is still indicated as having significant gaps in all areas, including health (ABS, 2007¹). Appalling living conditions and past traumas have led to high suicide rates that are having great impact on Indigenous communities (Korff, 2016²). The ABS (2015³) indicated that data from 2011 to 2015 shows that intentional self-harm is the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons between 15 and 34 years of age. In 2016, the suicide rate was double that of the general population (ABS, 2016⁴).

There is a strong need for more proactive community initiatives to promote mental health and wellbeing. There is a need to support those in high risk groups to help reduce suicide risk in young people. When addressing the youths from the Northern Territory, culturally adapted mental health education programs are required.

An alliance between both Mind Blank and TeamHEALTH created a two week mental health promotion tour to the Northern Territory working in schools in the Darwin, Palmerston, rural and remote communities. This collaboration enabled us to raise the question about help seeking, and also address a solution as youth mental health outreach workers were present during every session. TeamHEALTH workers had pre-established connections to the schools and communities. This meant that when the program ended they were able to work with the schools directly to help support any at risk youths.

The program implemented on tour used a theatre designed workshop to promote depression awareness, mental health help seeking and suicide prevention education. Cultural alterations were required to address a range of schools from urban, rural and remote communities across Top End of Australia. Data was collected from surveys. A performance feedback form was sent to the school students and a customer feedback form sent to the teachers. The model was considered appropriate in supporting both students and school staff in this important area of work. Extremely positive responses were collected from both surveys. The data indicated that the program was successful in delivering a culturally adaptable model in an engaging and informative manner.

2.2 Evidence of innovation and/or recognised best practise
This alliance’s objectives are in line with priorities such as better awareness, prevention and early intervention in relation to the National Mental Health Plan, as well as the Australian Government’s Proposed National Strategy for Suicide Prevention supporting the use of ‘expert providers’ and ‘evidence based workshops’ aimed to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors to support youths. Our program is also congruent with the Northern Territory Suicide Prevention Strategic Action Plan 2014-2018 which encourages greater awareness of warning signs and risk of suicide to promote the ability of individuals and communities to respond to those in need.

Mind Blank programs brings together many of the key features of traditional mental health promotion approaches in an engaging and entertaining manner, developed and presented by young people for young people.

The Mind Blank interactive theatre approach promotes self-agency via experiential learning and bringing choices to awareness, keeping the young people firmly in control of the action in the unfolding drama. This actively encourages young people to hold in mind the thoughts, feelings and motivations of the characters in the drama.

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in order to influence the characters’ choices, and thus, in the longer term their own and others thoughts, feelings, motivations and choices.

In this alliance we aim to address important factors in the promotion of mental health and resilience by providing young people with a forum to discuss and improve their social relationships at the peer, family and school levels; reduce stigma around mental health issues; increase their problem solving abilities and mental health literacy; and improve knowledge of help seeking strategies.

2.3 Evidence of participation of mental health consumers in the planning, implementation and evaluation.

Mind Blank programs are evidence based practice that work in parallel with health professionals and researchers to develop script content and methodology.

Mental health consumers are included in the planning of a new program. This commences with identifying a story of lived experience with mental ill health. Commonly what will happen is an individual is selected to share their story with one of the actors. The selection process is commonly through a partnership with the local health district or a school. This story is turned into a stage script. The actors then host a rehearsal session with a health professional present to ensure that the team are capturing true integrity of the story, as well as avoiding portraying stereotypes to encourage authenticity of the lived experience.

From here a private session is hosted as an open rehearsal where invested stakeholders are in attendance for final feedback. After this point the actors will work on implementing changes, and then the program is ready for the public.

A majority of the actors who are in the Mind Blank team have come from a place of lived experience. This is not a mandatory requirement. Mind Blank recruitment is based on strong values and passions for the cause.

Program evaluation for the NT tour project was majority lead by TeamHEALTH. This was due to their extensive experience working within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities. Due to this program including all ages and literacy levels a happiness scale was incorporated into a survey. Origins of this method were
influenced by Tomyn, Norrish & Cummins (2011)\textsuperscript{8}. In their study a successful implemented a happy (emotional) scale for their survey design measured wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders youths.

Example: Performance Feedback form.

Please circle your answer and comment below

1. I enjoyed the performance

2. I learnt something new

3. This performance taught me life skills

4. This furthered my understanding of mental health

5. I feel more confident to seek help

2.4 Evidence of Partnerships and Linkages (collaboration for continuity between organisations).

In 2017 an MOU between both Mind Blank and TeamHEALTH was drawn up. Both organisation are dedicated to prioritising self-suitable strategies to continue an annual program. The 2018 tour is due to commence on May 15th the scheduled agenda (below). 2018 will be bigger and better than the previous year.

Some changes being made to the program this year are:

a) A local creative artist from Darwin has been hired to add further cultural adaptations to the script content.

b) The Mind Blank team has hired an NT Creative Artist to join the team of professional actors. Joshain, 16, is a young Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander actor who is very much looking forward to working on tour and performing in front of his peers.

c) An additional week has been added to the tour. This will allow for our team to service more schools, as well as include servicing the Kathrine area.

**Dates May 15- June 1, 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 15:</td>
<td>Arrival day and Rehearsal day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 16:</td>
<td>Rehearsal day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, May 17:</td>
<td>Gunbalanya/ Jabiru</td>
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<td>Friday, May 18:</td>
<td>Gunbalanya/ Jabiru</td>
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<td>Weekend</td>
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<td>Sunday, May 20:</td>
<td>Weekend</td>
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<td>Monday, May 21:</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
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<td>Tuesday, May 22:</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Wednesday, May 23:</td>
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<td>Thursday, May 24:</td>
<td>Darwin/ Palmerston</td>
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<td>Friday, May 25:</td>
<td>Darwin/ Palmerston</td>
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<td>Saturday, May 26:</td>
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<td>Sunday, May 27:</td>
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<td>Monday, May 28:</td>
<td>Darwin/ Palmerston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 29:</td>
<td>Darwin/ Palmerston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 30:</td>
<td>TeamHEALTH performance at all staff meeting &amp; Darwin/ Palmerston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, May 31:</td>
<td>Batchelor and Daly River Fly out day</td>
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2.5 Verification and evaluation of the program’s effectiveness

This alliance is outcome oriented and implement program evaluation practices to measure the impact each performance has on the audience. At the 2017 MHS conference Ally Kelly CEO presented on the following topic “MIND BLANK: WHAT IS FORUM THEATRE?” in this presentation some of the NT Program evaluation data was published through the 2017 Proceedings. ⁹

Results from Northern Territory (2017)
An evaluation took place assessing the outcomes of Mind Blank’s tour to the Northern Territory. Our program delivered on tour used a forum theatre designed workshop to promote depression awareness, mental health help seeking and suicide prevention education. Cultural alterations were required to address a range of schools from urban, rural and remote communities across Top End of Australia. Data was collected from two post-test only surveys. A performance feedback form was sent to 1,866 school students and a customer feedback form sent to 27 teachers. The model was considered appropriate in supporting both students and school staff in this important area of work. Extremely positive responses were collected from both surveys. The data indicated that the program was successful in delivering a culturally adaptable model in an engaging and informative manner. In continuing the program more valid research methods are required to strive for stronger foundations of evidence based practices.

TEAMhealth & Mind Blank NT Mental Health Education
20 – 31ˢᵗ March 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL STUDENTS</th>
<th>2523</th>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL SURVEYS</td>
<td>1184</td>
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- 99.54% of students said they agree or strongly agreed to “I enjoyed the performance”
- 68.41% of students said they agree or strongly agreed to “I learnt something new”
- 68.24% of students said they agree or strongly agreed to “This performance taught me life skills”
- 74.65% of students said they agree or strongly agreed to “This furthered my understanding of mental health”
- 65.54% of students said they agree or strongly agreed to “I feel more confident to seek help”

Feedback from a School Teacher: “The actors were excellent in interacting with the students we have at our school. The show was the best I’ve seen in my 3 years at schools in the N.T. The topics covered were age appropriate and addressed the social skills we need at our school. Well done to everyone!! The students talked about the actors long after they had left. Their presence made a big impact on our students.”

When asked if the end message of the program was clear, another School Teacher commented:

“I asked some of my students what they got out of the performance and that is exactly what they said- there’s always someone to help- you just have to ask. You have to communicate if you want people to know how you feel and to help you.”

As you can see from the above summary, the results collected from evaluation were phenomenally positive. The young people and their teachers have reported high levels of engagement with the performance and the positive reactions confirm an effective approach in method and education value. These results show that the program was easily translated into a culturally adapted play. The methodology of choice was versatile in applying to students from different walks of life.

The cultural adaptation to the program was majority due to the support that TeamHEALTH provided in the collaboration. Indigenous young people from rural and remote areas received the team with open arms, this variable was primarily because trust had already been established by the repour that TeamHEALTH has in the communities.

The data collected suggests that is little difference in the results measuring geographical locations or remoteness. It is interesting to note that the highest ranking school with positive results came from the Tivendale school at the Dondale Youth Detention centre. Another interesting observation is that the smaller audience sizes overall ranked higher in all survey questions. Only 7% of all participants choose the rankings of disagree or strongly disagreed in the survey, these responses came from larger audience sizes (e.g. 200+).

3. Conclusion (Up to 1/2 x A4 page)

The Mind Blank and TeamHEALTH alliance has been such a pleasure to be involved in for all invested stakeholders. Straight after the 2017 tour we were asked to present our program evaluation outcomes at the 2017 National Suicide Prevention Conference in the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Learning lab. This was such a privilege for the collaboration, we were the only non-indigenous presenters in this section.

We are applying for this award in the program and services category to showcase our mental health promotion efforts. No matter the outcome from this award we will continue to work on creating good news stories from this alliance.
Together we look forward to creating a self-sustaining future with evolving best practice application. We have commenced creating long term strategic plans to firm up stakeholder support and funding opportunities and we have already started taking initial steps to create local job for NT youths for the 2018 tour.

It is exciting to also share that because of this collaboration further work opportunities have come up for the Mind Blank team working with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders committees. An example Maningrida and Alice Springs community areas are now asking for a tour of the Mind Blank work. Another example of this is that the Mind Blank team have been invited to work in partnership with the Flinders University and the Dunghutti Elders council in Kempsey NSW. For this project Action Research will take place with a particular focus on exploring the important role of fathering and the impact violence has on the family unit and the growth and development of infants. Participants will be invited to yarn with the performers to develop scripts of how family life is currently experienced, incorporating stories of challenge and strengths, and how family life might be experienced if all barriers were removed.

4. **Referees** - nominate two referees.
   Removed for privacy

5. **Appendix of Support Material (up to 8 x A4 pages)**
   Table of content:
   a) Darwin High School Newsletter
   b) NT News “Life Saving Performance Heads to NT”
   c) Photographs from the 2017 tour
Last Friday all Darwin High School Year 10 and Year 11 students participated in the wellbeing program Mind Blank.
Mind Blank is a highly acclaimed interactive performance which addresses wellbeing issues from a student perspective. The performance is a form of education for middle and senior students in the Northern Territory focusing on positive mental health, wellbeing and help seeking techniques.

The forum theatre performance the Year 10 students participated in was 'Understanding Depression: Fill in the blanks', which depicts the real life story of "Dan" and his experience of depression.

Dan finds himself in a variety of social situations that ultimately affect his mental health and present him with various dilemmas he has to navigate through, including dealing with change, peer pressure, family conflict and substance misuse.

The audience is shown a “worse-case” mental health scenario from start to finish. Then the cast of the show replay certain scenes, taking suggestions from the audience as to how the conflicts could be better resolved. This project aims to increase the number of individuals seeking help regarding their emotional and social wellbeing and increase the identification, referral and treatment of at-risk individuals by service systems and professionals.
This was the first time Mind Blank have delivered their performance to an audience this size and was a huge success. You can find out more information on Mind Blank by visiting [http://www.mindblank.org.au/](http://www.mindblank.org.au/).

Anyone who would like more information or support on depression or suicide can contact [Headspace](https://www.headspace.org.au/) or [Beyond Blue](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/).

Darwin High School Year Level Coordinators, Assistant Principals and School Counselors are always available for student support as well.


**Photographs from the 2017 tour:**

i) Dondale Detention Centre located at the old Darwin Prison

ii) Darwin Middle School

iii) Gunbalanya air Charters

iv) Gunbalanya community Hall