Hey everyone! I want to start by thanking you all for being here today. I'm Josh and I'm really excited to talk to you about KYDS, an amazing organisation that has helped me through many tough times in my life. KYDS is a mental health service that is specifically designed to benefit young people, and it's thanks to the support of everyone here that it continues to provide effective services.

When I was 13 years old, I started going to KYDS for counselling. I was struggling with the worst depression and anxiety I had experienced in my life at the time, and I saw three different counsellors on and off until I was 19. I'm now 21 years old, and I'm working at Masada College four days a week while studying part-time at Macquarie Uni.

KYDS is a fantastic organisation because it's tailored to meet the unique needs of young people. As a child, I excelled academically, but I struggled socially. I had difficulty connecting with others in a conventional way, and I went to therapy for anxiety when I was just 7 years old. When I got to high school, things got worse. I was diagnosed with clinical depression and anxiety, and I felt completely suicidal. Unfortunately, I didn't feel adequately supported by any of the schools I attended for systemic reasons. A speech for another day perhaps.

That's when I turned to KYDS, and I'm so glad that I did. KYDS is like a toolbox of mental health services for young people, and the best part is that it's completely free. All of the counsellors at KYDS are warm and welcoming, and many specialise in different aspects of therapy.. But my best experience at KYDS was with Anthony. As someone who didn't have much of a social outlet in my life, I found our conversations to be incredibly productive. We talked about how I was feeling, but we also talked about my interests, conventional therapy like cognitive behavioural therapy never produced positive outcomes for me, in my sessions I positively reacted to talking about my interests like football and foreign policy. And that's what I

love about KYDS – it allows young people to take control of their mental health and shape their own sessions, this being an important value for resilience in greater society.

I'm also here to tell you about the KYDS Youth Advisory Council, which I'm a part of. We're a group of young people who take on projects to improve the service and fundraise. Right now, we're working on painting a new mural for the waiting room, and we're almost ready to finalise our next fundraising event, which will be selling Krispy Kremes. We're all very passionate about KYDS and mental health advocacy, and we hope that some of you will participate in one of our events in the future.

Now, I want to share some perspective on youth mental health as a wider issue. Rates of mental health conditions are on the rise, particularly among young people. According to the 2021 Youth Mental Health Report by Mission Australia, only 22.5% of young people reported seeking help from a professional for their mental health concerns, with primary concerns being cost and accessibility. Some people think that the increased trend of youth mental health conditions is due to global issues such as COVID and climate change, some people believe that the increase is due to the further recognition and destigmatization, while others are sure that it's due to demographic trends such as secularisation. Whatever the reason is, it's important to ensure that mental health services become more and more available to young people.

KYDS is an extraordinary organisation that can only exist due to the support of everyone here. It's a safe and welcoming space for young people who are struggling with their mental health. Thank you for listening, and I hope that you'll consider supporting KYDS in any way that you can.