



Barnardos
Australia

NextGen

Evolving an Established Brand for a Younger Audience

NextGen was the internal name for a new youth-focused visual system I developed at Barnardos Australia. The project grew from a wider marketing goal to build awareness and trust with younger audiences without losing the recognition of the existing Barnardos brand. My role was to shape the visual direction, develop the system and carry it through social, motion and supporting brand applications.

The Challenge

There was no neat one-page brief. The project grew from Barnardos' FY22 marketing strategy and conversations within the Marketing team about a gap in the audience we were reaching. The existing brand had become warmer and less corporate, but most communication still centred on young children, parents and an older supporter base. The challenge was to create something that could speak credibly to younger people about mental health, stress, finances, inequality, racism and other serious issues without looking like a completely different organisation. It needed to feel younger, but it still needed to feel like Barnardos.

Younger audience.

More serious topics.

Still Barnardos.



Finding the Direction

I researched how other organisations were speaking to younger audiences and looked closely at what Barnardos already had before adding anything new. I did not want to solve the problem by inventing another brand.

The opportunity was sitting inside the existing identity. Barnardos already had strong colours, a standalone B icon, playful illustration elements and an established typeface. I kept those ingredients but changed their importance. Secondary colours became dominant, small decorative graphics became much larger, the photography became more raw and the B was given a much bigger role. The brand stayed familiar, but the mood changed.

Mission Australia, Headspace and Batyr



Refining the Balance

The early NextGen exploration happened alongside a wider refresh of the Barnardos brand, so the first concepts naturally shared a lot of the same visual language. I tested three different approaches: Icon-ic pushed the B icon and playful illustration; Green heart kept a stronger connection to the familiar Barnardos palette and graphic shapes; and Type-centric relied more heavily on bold copy and oversized brand elements.

The second direction, Green heart, was closest to where NextGen eventually landed. It had the right balance of recognisable Barnardos elements, simple motion and a stronger visual presence, but it still felt too close to the main brand.

From there, the focus shifted to colour. Several palette revisions helped separate NextGen further, eventually landing on navy, purple and peach as the dominant colours, with Barnardos green used more selectively as the link back to the parent brand.



A System, Not A Single Campaign

The standalone B icon became the centre of the system. It had previously been used mainly where the full Barnardos logo was too large, but I saw an opportunity to give it a voice of its own.

From there came the “B.” language: B. brave, B. safe, B. strong, B. informed, B. yourself and more. It gave us a way to introduce difficult subjects without making the communication feel hopeless. A topic such as depression could still be treated seriously while “B. brave” gave the viewer a more positive point of entry.

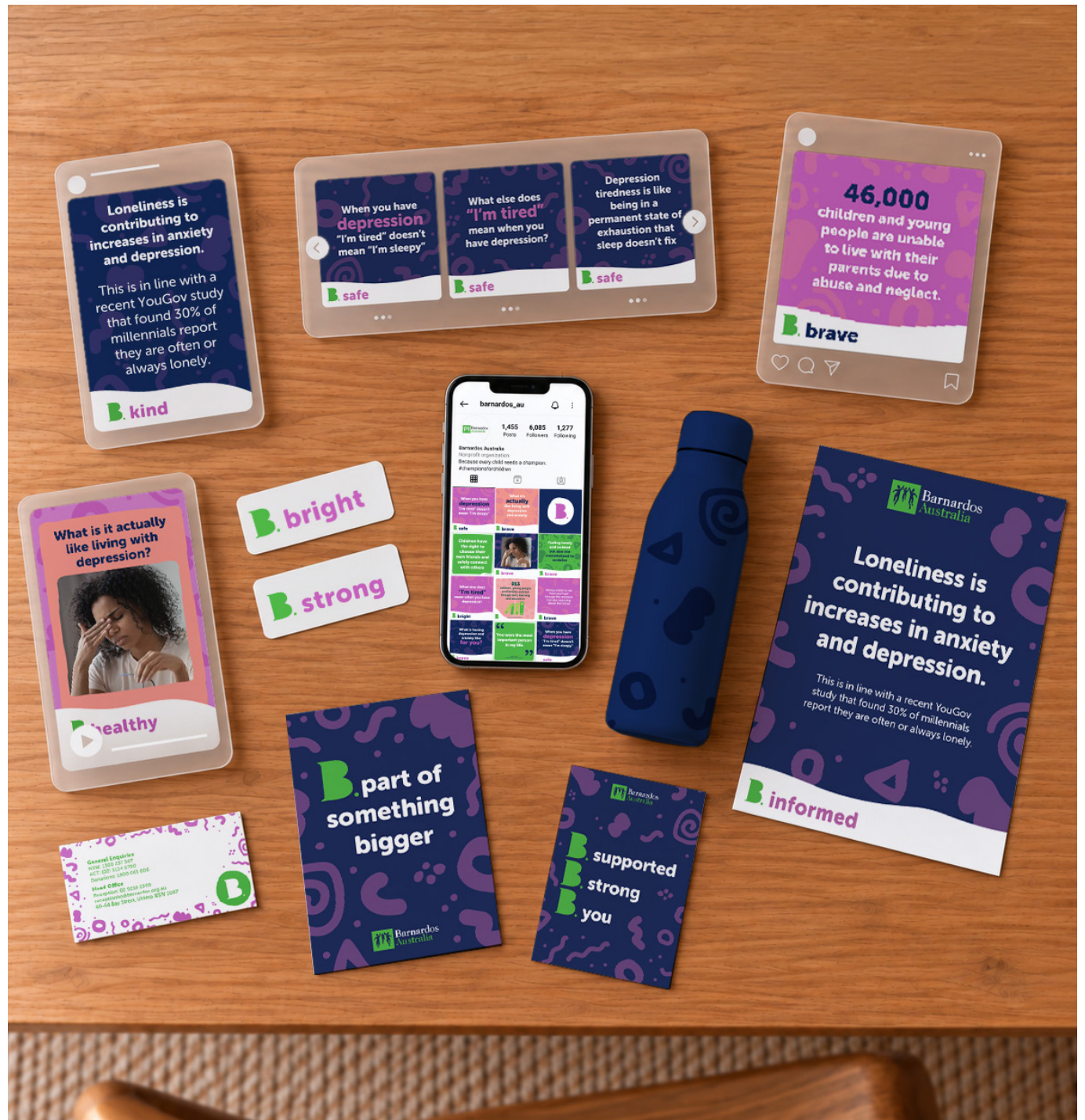
The system was deliberately flexible because the subject could change from one week to the next.



Designed To Move Between Formats

NextGen was created as an ongoing communication system rather than a single launch campaign. I developed copy-led posts, image-led posts, carousels, animated Stories, B animations, reusable Story templates, video supers and stationery applications.

The social team could move between serious and lighter subjects while keeping the work recognisable. Motion was considered from the beginning rather than added at the end, allowing simple elements such as the B, typography and graphic shapes to create movement without needing complex production.



Outcome & Learning

The final direction was approved and put into use by the Social team. It continued to appear in Barnardos communications after I left the organisation, which was important to me because the intention had always been to create something repeatable rather than a one-off piece of design.

I left before the project had been running long enough for me to review the audience data, so I cannot attach a genuine engagement uplift to the work. What I can point to is an approved system that gave Barnardos a new way to speak to younger audiences while remaining recognisably itself.

The project reinforced something I still use in my work today: an established brand can stretch much further than people assume. Knowing the rules well is what lets you know which ones can bend.

