

A YEAR IN REVIEW

ReachOut Australia

2022/2023

REACHOUT

Contents

| | |
|----|---|
| 3 | A message from the Chair and CEO |
| 5 | A message from our Youth Board Director |
| 7 | A year of significant impact |
| 11 | Georgia's story |
| 13 | Telstra Foundation: Powering us |
| 14 | Community for positive change |
| 16 | Emi's story |
| 18 | Audi Foundation: Supporting parents and carers |
| 19 | Partnering for impact |
| 20 | Catherine's story |
| 22 | Doritos: Reaching young people where they're at |
| 23 | A great place to work |
| 24 | Our backers |
| 26 | Financials |

Content warning: This report mentions suicide and self-harm.

This report covers the period 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present. We recognise connection to Country as integral to health and wellbeing.

We also acknowledge people with living-and lived-experience of mental ill-health and recovery, along with their carers, families, and supporters. We value the courage of those who share their unique perspectives for the purpose of learning and growing together to achieve better outcomes for all. We recognise their vital contribution to the sector and to the development of ReachOut's service.





A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

And just like that, 2023 is coming to a close. The past year has been another challenging one for young people in Australia. The influx of negative news has compounded the fatigue felt by many during this time. Conflicts and political unrest, a spate of natural disasters and the cost of living crisis have no doubt amplified the distress and frustration experienced by many.

Despite these challenges, we are optimistic for the future. In recent years, we have seen recognition of the growing need for mental health and wellbeing support. COVID was the catalyst that brought mental health into the national spotlight and has created a new sense of urgency needed to address this epidemic.

At ReachOut, 2022–2023 was another momentous year. We celebrated our 25th Birthday and have spent time reflecting on our achievements, learnings and journey. Over the years, we've supported millions of young people with our resources, and our impact is growing. In the last 12 months, 2.6 million people turned to our services for mental health and wellbeing support.

ReachOut's goal is clear and simple – to help young people feel better. In the last 12 months, we have made significant strides towards this. We have continued to listen to, learn from and collaborate with young people to ensure our services are accessible, easily understood, and responsive to their unique needs. Our impact data shows that ReachOut plays an important role in stopping the negative spiral many young people experience when they are distressed.

As the world's first online youth mental health service, we have developed a deep understanding of how technology can improve mental health service provision. This year, we have made substantial investments in enhancing our technological capabilities. These changes have opened up new opportunities and more effective ways of delivering support.

We have built on the early success of our new one-to-one digitally delivered peer support service, PeerChat. PeerChat connects young people with trained peer workers who offer perspective, learnings and support through their own lived and living experience



of mental health challenges. Services like this are critical to breaking down the barriers to help-seeking by providing cost-effective and easily accessible early-intervention support. In 2023, we invested in growing the team, and we will continue to scale the service in the year ahead.

We have also taken steps to adapt to the changing regulatory environment, ensuring that we always deliver best-practice services that safely and effectively meet the needs of young people in Australia. In December this year, we were one of the first mental health organisations in Australia to be accredited under the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards.

This year we also started to transform our impact measurement. Initial results have been encouraging, with 9 in 10 young people who use our support services stating that our content is easy to understand (91%) useful (90%) and trustworthy (87%). By embedding this culture of continuous improvement into the organisation, we know we can be more impactful with our services.

ReachOut is also doubling down on our commitment to improving social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for First Nations young people. This year, we launched a suite of new social and emotional wellbeing resources that were developed in partnership with First Nations-led organisations, communities and young people.

The Voice to Parliament referendum and surrounding public debate have made it a particularly challenging year for First Nations communities. As a youth mental health service, we had, and continue to have, a role to play in supporting First Nations young people with this outcome. We remain committed to the Uluru Statement from the Heart and will continue working in partnership with First Nations communities to develop culturally appropriate support.

Looking forward, we are excited for the year ahead. We will continue identifying new ways to connect with and support young people and their networks to help them

feel better. Better in the moments when they most need help and better about who they are and their place in the world.

We are incredibly thankful to those who have contributed to ReachOut over the past 25 years. Thank you to our long-standing Board Directors who finished up with us this year, especially to our immediate past Chair, Andrew Wilson. To our inspiring Youth Ambassadors, volunteers, supporters, partners, board members and our team: thank you. Your dedication and commitment to improving mental health outcomes for young people is truly inspiring. We are incredibly grateful to you all. Without you, the work we do would not be possible.

We look forward to growing ReachOut's impact in the year ahead.

Michael Gonski
Chair, ReachOut Australia

Ashley de Silva
Chief Executive Officer, ReachOut Australia



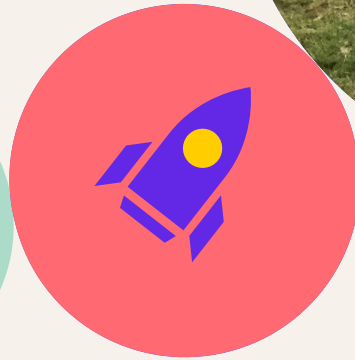
A MESSAGE FROM OUR YOUTH BOARD DIRECTOR

My generation is facing new and emerging challenges as we make our way into adulthood. Financial insecurity, environmental disasters, rising geopolitical tensions and adjusting to life post-pandemic have produced a unique environment in which to grow up.

As a young person, I know all too well the impact this environment can have on mental health and wellbeing. It can feel difficult – and at times impossible – to navigate this complex set of challenges. We're moving through uncharted waters, and this uncertainty about the future is resulting in heightened levels of stress and worry.

Today, two in five (40%) young people are experiencing mental health difficulties, and suicide remains the leading cause of death for people aged 14–25. In spite of these harrowing statistics, over the past 12 months, I have developed a renewed sense of hope for the future of mental health support for young people.

This year, I was appointed Board Director at ReachOut, along with four other new Directors who bring passion and diverse experiences to the team. I'm excited by the opportunity to continue to work with ReachOut to improve mental health outcomes for young people, having previously been both a service user and a ReachOut Youth Ambassador for two years.



During my time as a Youth Ambassador, I have watched as ReachOut has continued to break down barriers to help-seeking. From enhancing existing services to launching new ones, ReachOut has consistently shown up for young people and provided them support when they need it most.

Over the past few months, I have had the pleasure of being a part of the conversations helping to shape the ReachOut of the future. I have shared my experiences, learnings and insights to help guide our service delivery and provide a youth perspective.

I am immensely proud of the work that we have done this year and proud of the broader ReachOut team for their commitment to helping young people feel better.

We are leading the way in digital peer work by growing our PeerChat service; we have responded to the needs of our users across a range of relevant issues such as school refusal, ADHD and the Voice to Parliament referendum; and we have advocated for better youth mental health outcomes through our engagement with government.

But there is still more to be done.

As a sector, we must continue to step up and improve our early intervention and prevention service offerings. At a time of unprecedented change and new challenges for young people, it has never been more important

to equip them with the tools and resources they need to manage their mental health and wellbeing. We must work in partnership to break down the barriers to help-seeking and to develop inclusive and accessible support services for all young people across Australia.

I want to thank our dedicated community of supporters, partners, volunteers, staff and board. As a user of ReachOut's services, I am truly grateful for your commitment to supporting young people like myself in navigating mental health challenges. Together, I believe we can empower young people to look after themselves and feel equipped to support those around them.

Tiara De Silva
Board Director, ReachOut Australia

A year
of significant
impact



We helped young people, and their parents and carers, feel better.

- Young people told us ReachOut helped them understand why they were feeling stressed or down, and then helped them feel more calm and less worried.
- Parents and carers told us ReachOut Parents gave them a better understanding of what their teenagers were going through and provided them with practical strategies to support them.
- We launched and implemented a Social Impact Framework. As well as helping drive focus it also:
 - enhances our credibility by explicitly detailing the evidence base that underpins our services.
 - helps guide the continuous improvement of our services.

ReachOut PeerChat is the only service in Australia that connects young people with professional peer workers anonymously and with limited access barriers.

- We delivered 1054 sessions, with 70% of young people indicating they felt better than before the chat.
- We shared PeerChat's innovative development approach at eMental Health International Annual Congress 2022, the Mental Health Services Conference, and the International Mental Health Conference.

'If someone asked me a year ago what service do you want to see or use to navigate the world of mental health? An anonymous and digital service like PeerChat is what I would have described. I'm happy to know it exists and that [ReachOut] is the one that's brought it to fruition'





Social and Emotional Wellbeing support for First Nations communities.

- We worked with ten First Nations content creators, as well as agency Studio Gilay, to produce new resources to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- We recognised the impact the public conversation around the Voice to Parliament would have on First Nations communities, and developed bespoke resources to support social and emotional wellbeing.

‘Cultural load can be overwhelming and exhausting. I hope that by sharing my own experiences I have been able to connect with young people who may be going through similar challenges.’

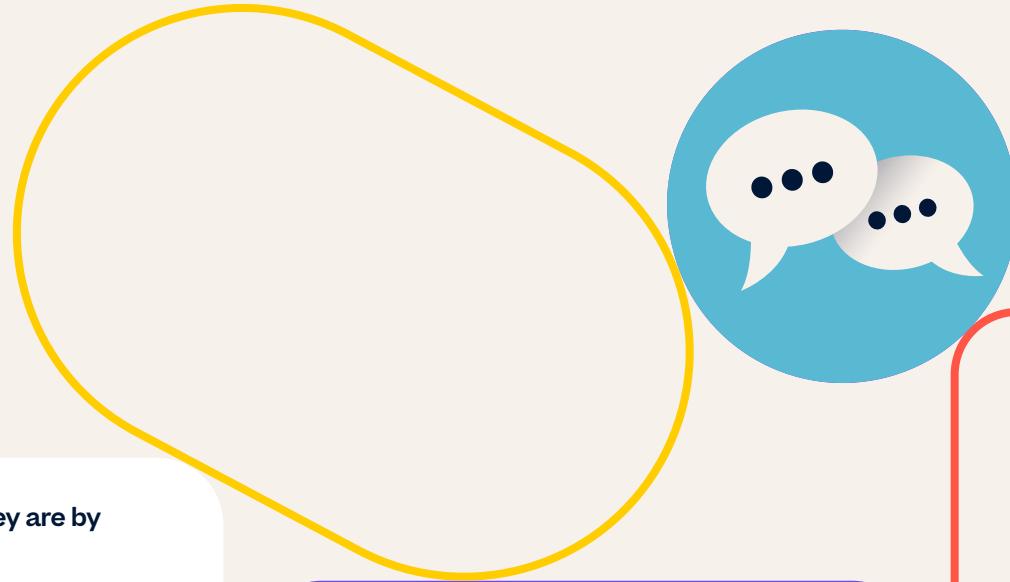
Uncle Mot, Taungurung creator

We focussed on the topics and issues that are having the biggest impact on young people.

- We had more than 3000 responses from young people, and parents and carers to surveys or calls for consultation as part of ReachOut’s research and evaluation activities throughout the year.
- We created new content on school refusal for young people, parents and carers, and schools, and became a leading voice on this topic, contributing to the discourse and participating in a Senate Inquiry.
- We created new, strengths-based resources and content around ADHD for young people and their parents.
- In response to our report – *What are you worried about?* – we developed new sleep content.

We were recognised for our work.

- ReachOut was named “Not-for-Profit Technology Innovator of the Year” in the 2023 Australian Not-for-Profit Technology Awards.
- Ian Thorpe AM, ReachOut Board Member and Patron, was awarded the Lived Experience prize in the Australian Mental Health Prize 2022.
- Ashley de Silva, ReachOut’s CEO, was awarded the Innovation Leadership award for Australia at the 2022 eMental Health International Congress.
- ReachOut received one silver and three gold Indigo Awards (2023) for branding and design, partnering with Yonder Creative.
- ReachOut’s PeerChat service was awarded Gold Winner for commercial services, partnering with Deepend Group and How To Impact.



We met young people where they are by partnering with:

- Doritos who created ‘Chippy’, a bold new face of comedy who inspired more than 90,000 people to scan QR codes on Doritos packs to learn more about ReachOut and their mental health.
- Maybelline who created the *Through Their Eyes* campaign to create awareness of the harassment females and LGBTQIA+ streamers experience in online gaming.
- SnapChat who developed *Here For You*, an in-app initiative to foster mental health and wellbeing. And, at World Pride, we celebrated LGBTQIA+ allies with a bespoke filter.
- Instagram to develop *Reel Talk*, a campaign that shows parents and young people having real conversations around wellbeing, social media and being safe online.

We provided a safe place for young people (and parents and carers) to chat anonymously and find support.

- Our ReachOut Online Community was a safe place for 179,412 people to connect. 3065 young people completed our ‘Daily check-in’ and described what they were experiencing as ‘a lot to handle.’
- And, we connected 120,721 parents and carers to others in similar situations for solutions and support.
- We worked with The Benevolent Society and more than 800 parents and carers, developing individual support plans that helped them help their teens. They reported our program helped them feel more confident about their parenting.

‘I feel supported, I have some strategies and I am not panicking. I was looking forward to this call today and I would definitely recommend this service.’

Parent, September 2023

‘The program is tailored and not prescriptive, lets you bring what you need to the sessions and unpack what is going to help us in the context of the session outlines. It’s been really good to see how far I have come at the end of the journey.’

Parent, August 2023



We were there when they needed us most.

- On ReachOut.com, our 'Urgent Help' page was viewed more than 17,300 times, and more than 7300 users engaged with 'How to make a [suicide] safety plan'.
- We responded to 1135 duty-of-care instances across our services to ensure that users were safe, and to connect them with urgent support when needed.

'Sometimes it's hard to figure out what support you need, especially when you're in an emotionally highly strung state. Having that support helps take some of that sting out for me.'

We reached young people, parents and carers, and secondary schools across Australia, connecting them to the information and tools they need to understand their experience and feel better.

- We provided information that helped young people boost their knowledge and confidence.
- We delivered tools and support that gave young people effective self-help strategies that helped improve their mental health status, reduce suicide risk and increase help-seeking behaviour.
 - 2,038,924 unique Australian visitors to ReachOut.com for young people
 - 455,658 unique Australian visitors to ReachOut Parents
 - 159,386 unique Australian visitors to ReachOut Schools

We increased our tech capabilities to be even more responsive.

- Improved compliance with web accessibility standards.
- Developed a new data ethics framework based on input from young people around personalisation and privacy of their data.
- Ensured each ReachOut service and product has a defined Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), analysing how we collect, use, share and maintain personal information.
- Kicked off a series of experiments to deliver a more personalised service for users.

We empowered the broader community to make a difference.

We built a community of 63,900 mental health advocates and supporters through *Laps For Life*, *Make A Move* and our newest event – *StepOut For ReachOut*, empowering them to improve their own wellbeing while supporting young people across Australia currently experiencing mental health challenges.



'I wanted help, but I didn't feel up to leaving my room or even speaking to someone on the phone.'

Content warning: This story mentions self-harm.

I was always a bit of a nervous child. I was anxious all the time, had attachment issues and problems sleeping. But I was lucky. My family and friends were kind and supportive and I had a lovely childhood.

But life took a turn when I was around 11 years old and my family hit very tough times. A family member developed a serious mental health condition, and they were in and out of hospital a lot. I didn't understand what was happening and I found it really confronting and difficult to wrap my head around.

My family was stretched thin from stress. Our family dynamics suddenly became strained and complex. It was at this point, as I neared high school, that my anxiety and self-esteem issues kicked into high gear. By the time I was in Year 8 my school attendance was plummeting. I felt like there was no safe place for me – no safe haven. I stopped interacting with my friends. I quit dancing and soccer. Nothing brought me joy anymore.

My family tried to take me to a professional, but it was too much – I just wasn't ready to accept help yet. I was refusing to acknowledge my anxiety, let alone to try and manage my symptoms.

I had a panic attack in the car on the first day of Year 9 and through that year my presence at school became almost non-existent. I abandoned all extracurricular activities, and one-by-one I lost my friends. At the end of the year I decided to leave school permanently. My depression had become unmanageable, and I remember thinking, 'This is my absolute rock bottom'.

Once I'd left school my self-esteem was at an all-time low, and I



Georgia's

story



became my own worst enemy. Looking back at my negative self-talk, I can't believe how horrible I used to be to myself. Around this time, I began self-harming and I developed an eating disorder. I would just lie in bed for days doing nothing. I didn't want to be here anymore. I didn't want to die. I just wanted to disappear.

It was at this point I started to search for support. I wanted help, but I didn't feel up to leaving my room or even speaking to someone on the phone. Then I found ReachOut – and it changed my life forever. Reading the articles and joining the Online Community helped me realise I wasn't alone or the only person in the world who

'I wish I could go back and tell my younger self that it's okay to open up and talk about how I was feeling.'

felt this way. In fact, there were lots of us!

Reading other people's experiences, so similar to my own, made me feel validated and acknowledged. I bookmarked pages and read them over and over. And I still use the app I found through ReachOut to regulate my panic attacks.

After reading through all this validating information, I told myself I had to do something to help myself. Knowing other people were fighting the same battle that I was, helped motivate me. Hearing other people's experiences made me realise that they'd equipped themselves with tools to manage their mental health conditions, and I could too. And I did!

Just before I turned 16, I enrolled in an alternative school, I started getting out of the house a bit again, using self-care strategies to manage my mental health, and I began seeing a mental health professional - something that a few years before I was completely against.

As I've gotten older, I'm more willing to talk about how

I'm feeling – and my mental health is all the better for it.

I wish I could go back and tell my younger self that it's okay to open up and talk about how I was feeling. I'd tell younger Georgia, "Don't beat yourself up, because it's okay to feel this way. Whatever you're feeling – there are other people who are going through the same thing. Try not to worry. There is light at the end of the tunnel."

The future does still make me anxious sometimes, but the way I think about it has changed: rather than wishing I could disappear, I now truly can't wait to live my life and find out what the future has in store for me.

Today I have a purpose in life. I'm confident with the tools I've equipped myself with, anxiety won't stop me from doing what I want to do – help others learn they're not alone, just like the ReachOut Online Community did for me.

Remember: there are a lot of people fighting similar battles, and there just might be someone out there who really needs to hear your story.



Telstra

Foundation:

Powering us

One of the many good things about working in corporate philanthropy is you get to support some terrific non-profits doing great things. Not only do you get to be a part of their work in a small way, you get a peak under the bonnet. It's a privilege and you learn a lot about people – how they work, how much they care and how they face tough issues with hope. Most of all, you learn when effort and resources rally strategically around a problem, with the right humans with the right skills in the mix, impactful change happens.

At Telstra Foundation we have been lucky to have a long association with ReachOut and the wonderful humans behind this online youth mental health service. In fact, our very first annual report profiled our partnership almost 20 years ago. Track forward two decades and we've covered a kaleidoscope of different ways to work together: program grants, untied and operational funding, capacity building, matched and shareholder donations, employee and customer giving. And one of our longest standing collaborations is our shared co-Chairing of the Technology Wellbeing Roundtable,

a civic sector thought leadership community that explores the 'youth and tech' space.

Reflecting on this history, there are some things that I think make us hum together.

ReachOut was an early adopter of tech for good, recognising in the late 90s that this thing called the internet was going to be a gamechanger. However, unlike many platforms at that time (and still today), ReachOut genuinely puts young people in the driver's seat when designing their online services and takes time to do this inclusively. They move at the speed of trust – there's no breaking things because people are worth that care.

The team also mix optimism with pragmatism. You see this from the Board and management, right through the organisation – they are crystal clear on the mission, excited to deliver it and know what good looks like for them and the young people they are supporting. The clarity and commitment is blinding.

Born digital, they also deeply understand the importance of building online and offline communities because they know the power of the village and have the skills to rally it.

But perhaps the most important thing to mention is that ReachOut everyday enables young people to tap into resources to understand mental health more, helps them feel more connected to others and supports a deeper understanding of the challenges young people experience. They deliver for young people, their carers, parents and teachers when and where it is needed.

We're really proud to partner with the ReachOut team, whether we're supporting, collaborating or jumping in a pool for *Laps for Life!*

Jackie Coates
CEO, Telstra Foundation



Community for positive change

In the last year, ReachOut signature events – *Laps for Life*, *Make a Move* and *StepOut for ReachOut* – have seen a community of more than 63,900 people band together to support youth mental health.

Our supporters showed their commitment by raising awareness and funds for ReachOut, as well as doing something positive for their own wellbeing by taking on a month-long challenge that brings people together through a range of movement and mindfulness activities.

The funds raised are enabling us to provide relevant and impactful services to support youth suicide prevention. We will help more young people find a safe space online to connect to others to feel less alone, to feel better in the moment and connect to the mental health support they need. In the next 12 months, the funds raised will support the ongoing delivery of our one-to-one text-based PeerChat service, the redevelopment of our Parents service, and the continued investment in the technology infrastructure that underpins our service delivery.



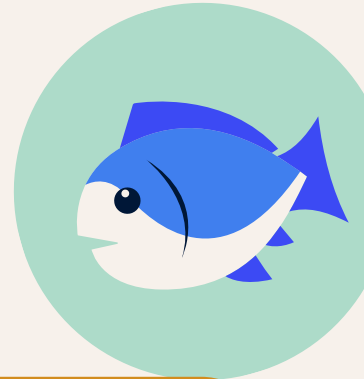
Our events also raise awareness about mental health and create more opportunities for meaningful conversation within the community. Creating safe spaces for participants to connect with each other helped foster an environment of mental health champions.

Supporters were able to initiate conversations about mental health and the impact of suicide within the community, and also be more open to safely having these conversations within their own networks – with their family and friends and at work and school.

In 2023 we celebrated the fifth anniversary of *Laps for Life* and had the largest turn out we have seen – with more than 10,000 swimmers across Australia participating in the event. We want to thank each and every lapper who has joined us and swam to save lives since the event launched in 2019.

We also launched a new event – *StepOut for ReachOut*. It was wonderful to watch the event evolve with more than 2000 people taking part. We recognised some familiar faces and also got to introduce a lot of new people to the ReachOut community.

From everyone at ReachOut we would like to extend a huge thank you to the amazing community supporting all our events and making an incredible difference in providing better mental health and wellbeing support to all young people.



'ReachOut provides valuable services that help vulnerable young people in our community and Drummoyne Swimming Club is excited to participate in the Laps for Life fundraiser again this season. Laps for Life encourages our members to think about their own mental health and the challenges that their friends and others can face. At the same time it provides a swimming goal that's about more than just personal bests and it helps bring club members together with a common focus, creating a real sense of community. We encourage other swimming clubs to participate and challenge them to match and exceed our fundraising efforts for this good cause!'

Adrian Bell, President of Drummoyne Swimming Club and Laps for Life Champion 2021, 2022 and 2023.



'I felt like I needed to escape the person I hated; myself.'

Content warning: This story mentions self-harm and suicide.

When I was around 14 I started experiencing the first symptoms of anxiety. I received a diagnosis of anxiety and depression around this time too. It wasn't until I was a young adult that I was also told I had Borderline traits.

I left home in Sydney at 18 to go to University in Wagga Wagga; a place where I knew nobody. As a teenager I'd seen a psychologist, but in Wagga I had no support systems. I did begin to see a psychologist there, but the wait period was long and I struggled to pay the fees as a full-time student.

Even though I made new friends at Uni and met my partner, I continued to struggle silently with my mental health. I couldn't regulate my emotions, I had an intense fear of abandonment and rejection, and experienced debilitating waves of numbness. On some days I went from one extreme emotion to the next in a matter of hours. I was emotionally and physically exhausted.

I self-harmed when I was younger and I found myself turning back to it as a coping mechanism in my early adulthood. I didn't understand why I was the way I was, or why I did the things I did. I felt lost and confused. Like the world was moving on and I was left behind.

My anxiety evolved to ongoing panic attacks. I felt a huge loss of control. My mind spoke the most negative things to me about myself. I was overwhelmed, stressed and struggling to cope. I began feeling hopeless, like the world was not worth living in, that the people in my life would be better off without me. I felt like I needed to escape the person I hated: myself. I was terrified of my thoughts

Emi's

story





and the steps I'd put in place to take my own life.

I went to the Emergency Department multiple times for self-harm and suicidal thoughts. It was always a friend who'd convinced me to go because they were worried about my safety. I was scared and confused, and I needed help.

'ReachOut helped me better understand my diagnosis through resources that normalised conversations about mental health'

Finally, I entered the Wagga Mental Health Recovery Unit and I lived there for 8 weeks. It was there I felt the first inklings of hope. I started Cognitive Behavioural and Dialectical Behavioural therapy, I learned how to challenge my thoughts and accept my emotions, and I started to feel more optimistic towards recovery. I linked in with a regular psychologist and other community services and it was around this time I discovered ReachOut.

ReachOut helped me better understand my diagnosis through resources that normalised conversations about mental health. Using ReachOut helped me strengthen my relationships through reading the articles about communication, and I developed realisations about my thinking styles and fears through their information about trauma. I also began to accept that taking medication to help myself was okay and normal.

ReachOut helped me realise that I wasn't as alone as I thought I was in my experience, that lots of other people like me had the same struggles, and that this organisation had been created to help people like me feel supported.

I can proudly say that the Mental Health Recovery Unit I stayed in for 8 weeks back at the start of my recovery

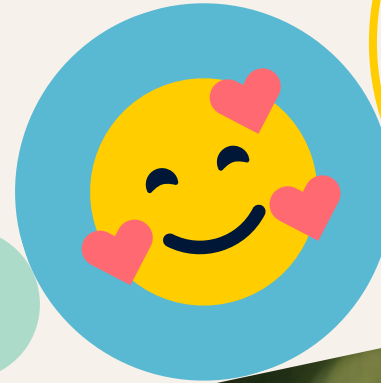
journey, is now my place of work as a Peer Support worker. It's where I can use my lived experience to support and advocate for patients. It's simultaneously the most challenging and rewarding work I have ever done.

ReachOut's PeerChat service is an online avenue for young people to talk, via chat, to Peer Support workers, like me, in a supportive, safe and confidential environment. When I've used PeerChat I liked being able to talk to somebody who could relate to my experience. They were friendly and welcoming and gave the option for us to learn a little bit about each other before we talked, which really alleviated some anxiety for me.

I like that PeerChat offers non-clinical support from someone who can relate to your experience and share the strategies they found helpful themselves. It's also great if you need someone to talk to about day-to-day stressors. Having conversations about the little things is a good way to stop issues from becoming bigger.

It's taken a lot of work to get where I am now. And I do still have those debilitating days. I just have better skills and coping strategies to use when I do feel them coming. I also know where I can go to find support, and I'm not as afraid now to reach out for it.

Audi Foundation: Supporting parents and carers



The Audi Foundation is proud to be a partner of ReachOut Australia for the last 6 years. Championing accessible and digital mental health for young people is pivotal in this day and age, and The Audi Foundation is dedicated to supporting ReachOut's mission to provide a safe space for young people to turn to when they need it most.

The Audi Foundation is proudly supporting the continued growth and innovation of ReachOut's Parents Service, recognising the need to support the carers and families of young people through a personalised and trusted service.

ReachOut is transforming the way young people and their families access mental health support, and The Audi Foundation is dedicated to work with the ReachOut team to create and advocate for positive change in the community, including for our staff, our customers, and in the lives of all young people and parents across Australia.

Hayley Nissim, Head of Audi Foundation
The Audi Foundation





Partnering

for

impact

We are proud to be supported by a wide range of partners that are dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of young people across Australia. From corporate partners to trusts and foundations, our network of supporters allows ReachOut to continue to grow, develop and innovate our service to provide accessible mental health support when life doesn't go as planned.

The generosity of our partners has provided ReachOut with the opportunity to invest in new ways to innovate what digital mental health support looks like in Australia. The launch and future growth of PeerChat has brought one-to-one peer support to ReachOut's service offering, championing the lived experience of our peer workers and providing young people with the agency to take their mental health journey into their own hands.

Our strategic partnerships are key to increasing our brand awareness and reaching new audiences to provide support to young people and parents who wouldn't have otherwise found us. ReachOut was

thrilled to be able to partner on a number of marketing and awareness campaigns throughout the year including Doritos' *Be Bold. Reach Out.*, Maybelline's *Brave Together*, SnapChat's *Here For You* initiative and Instagram's *Reel Talk*. These campaigns allowed ReachOut to directly connect with young people where they are most receptive and advocate for youth mental health in both digital and offline spaces.

Partnering with ReachOut provides an opportunity to bring mental health and wellbeing into our supporters' workplaces. We were thrilled to be able to host a number of wellbeing sessions both in person and online, as well as have ReachOut's Youth Ambassadors be welcomed by our partner's staff to share their lived experience, highlighting how their support and generosity makes a genuine impact in the lives of young people.

Thank you to all of our partners for another incredible year. We couldn't have done it without you.

'I would constantly wear a "mask" of happiness and confidence to get by.'

Content warning: This story mentions suicide.

Growing up, my home environment was very difficult. When I was 12 I felt I had to set an example for my younger siblings and be a support for my parents. Even though I was surrounded by family and friends, I felt extraordinarily alone. I felt low almost every day, and I told myself I was bringing my family down, so I would constantly wear a 'mask' of happiness and confidence to get by.

Studying became my coping mechanism. I felt, if I worked hard enough and achieved high marks, everything would be ok. I came across as a confident person with good grades. From the outside, I looked completely fine. But I couldn't keep it up forever.

It wasn't long before the mask started to show its cracks. My thoughts spiralled out of control and I was afraid people were starting to see through me. I was mentally exhausted, and it was beginning to affect my memory. At one point I was even convinced I had early-onset dementia.

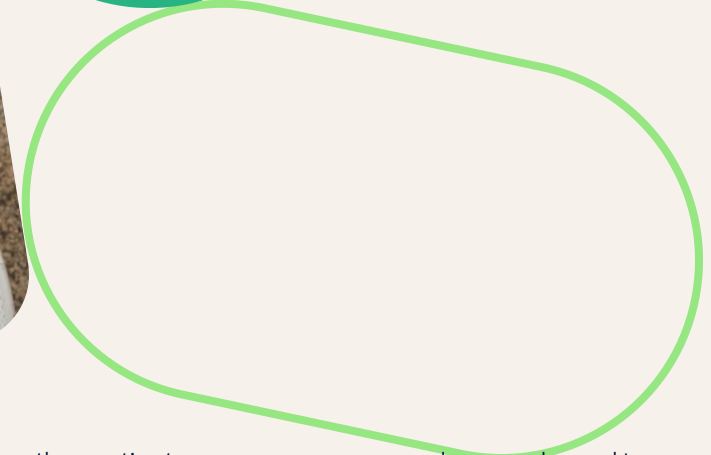
I stopped doing homework because I was too exhausted. A single day at school would leave me physically and mentally drained. I quit hobbies and sports because I was so tired and scared that if I devoted any attention at all to extracurricular activities, I'd fail my classes. When exam time came around, I was breaking down every day. I had nothing left in the tank.

Eventually, I turned to the internet for answers. I remember hoping that it might be a physical problem that could be fixed with pills or surgery because I wanted so badly for these feelings to just stop.

Through my googling I found ReachOut. I read some articles and realised I should see a doctor. My GP referred me to a psychologist

Catherine's

story



who told me I had depression and an anxiety disorder and that the breakdowns I was experiencing were panic attacks.

I gave my parents some of ReachOut's factsheets to read so we could look at treatment together. The factsheets helped get us all on the same page, so we could communicate better about my mental health.

I did regular therapy for about a year but I was disappointed – I didn't feel like I was getting better. I felt validated to have a diagnosis, but deep down I still saw living with mental health conditions as being 'flawed' or 'weak'. I hadn't truly accepted that mental health conditions are absolutely normal, and it's okay to seek

treatment and support. This was a real barrier in my response to treatment.

By 16, I felt like I'd tried everything but wasn't getting better. I was still taking a lot of days off school and I struggled to get out of bed or remember to feed myself. My depression wasn't being managed effectively so my thoughts were distorted. I felt like a burden to my family.

It was around this time that I decided I wanted to end my life. I started making plans, and even wrote a goodbye note to my family. Then, my mum came across the letter – it was an awful experience at the time, but looking back I'm so thankful she found it when she did.

I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. And I'll be honest with you, the idea of it frankly terrified me. I assumed it just meant I'd sunk as low as I could go. I had a pretty negative view of the type of people who would be in the hospital, and what it said about me that I needed to go there. But once I was there I realised just how incorrectly stigmatised psychiatric care is – the

other patients were average, everyday people, and I met incredibly creative, talented, smart and strong individuals. I was the youngest in my ward, but I was able to find a community of doctors, parents and other patients who became friends and a part of my support system. Going to that hospital turned my life and my treatment around.

Today, I know where to find help when I need it. I've learnt plenty of important skills which allow me to take care of myself physically and mentally, like exercise, meditation, journaling and art. I've learned that speaking up and sharing my own story is a key part of my recovery. It allows me to further integrate my experiences and learn how to manage my symptoms. That's why I became a ReachOut Youth Ambassador.

When I look back today, I realise that the combination of hospital, a strong circle of loved ones, and ReachOut's digital resources are what supported me through the most difficult times of my life. They're what helped me come out on the other side.

'I've learned that speaking up and sharing my own story is a key part of my recovery'

Doritos:

Reaching young people

where they're at

Doritos is proud to have partnered with ReachOut for the second year of the *Be Bold. ReachOut.* campaign to drive awareness of and encourage young consumers to take action for their mental health.

At Doritos, we believe in harnessing the scale of our brand reach for good. Through this year's campaign, we reached over 13 million people across Australia, encouraging them, in a uniquely Doritos way, to utilise ReachOut's services and expertise in mental health to support themselves and others in need. We are thrilled that this year's campaign successfully encouraged thousands of young people to take action for their mental health and employ ReachOut's incredible resources and services, demonstrating the strength of utilising an iconic, trusted brand to create social impact.

Doritos is proud of the success of this campaign and we're excited to continue to drive real impact for the lives of our Gen-Z consumers through our ReachOut partnership in the future.

Vandita Pandey, Chief Marketing Officer
PepsiCo



A great place to work



At ReachOut we believe that people thrive and do their best work when they feel safe, valued and supported. In 2023, we launched our new Employee Value Proposition (EVP), which was developed with input and feedback from our team. Together, we reviewed and updated our company values to ensure they were aligned with our overall strategy, helping us to embed a future-fit culture. We built on our existing flexible working policies and learning and development opportunities to create a workplace that fosters innovation, empowers employees and nurtures professional and self growth.

Learn and grow

At ReachOut, every day is an opportunity to learn and grow. In the past year, we have increased our investment in Learning and Development programs for our team. We have rolled out new personal development plans (PDP) linked to our strategy, culture and aligned to personal ambitions. We have also launched our *My Impact* Program, ReachOut's extension and enhancement of our current Performance Development Planning work.

Feel rewarded

While doing meaningful work can be a reward in itself, ReachOut places a high emphasis on recognising and rewarding our team for their contributions. We appreciate the value that every person brings and the contributions they make to delivering our purpose. This year, we also launched our new reward and recognition program, where team members are celebrated for personifying the values.

Fabulous flexibility

We know that everyone's life is different and has its own rhythm, so there's no one way of working at ReachOut. Whether it's hybrid or compressed working arrangements, or swapping your public holidays, we've built flexible ways of working so that everyone can find the right balance between work and life for them.

Walking the talk on wellbeing

As a mental health service, the wellbeing of our people is a priority and we have a range of programs designed to support this. This includes Reflection Leave, which is an additional five days of leave each year for our staff to focus purely on their wellbeing. We also provide extra leave at the end of the year so that our team can take a much-deserved break.

Our backers

We'd like to acknowledge our government partners, the Australian Government Departments of Health and Social Services for their funding and support of our work.

Thank you to all of our incredible partners for their generosity. Thanks to you, ReachOut can continue to support young people and their families when life doesn't go as planned.

This year, we have been able to provide 2.6 million people with the mental health support they need to feel better. From one-to-one support from experienced peer workers, to online communities, as well as tips, stories and resources, thanks to our incredible partners we've been able to continue to provide a wide range of support options that allow young people to engage in the ways they want to, when they want to.

Thank you for everything – we couldn't have done it without you.

Government

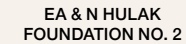
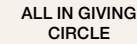
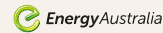
Platinum Partners

Diamond Partners

Gold Partners

Silver Partners

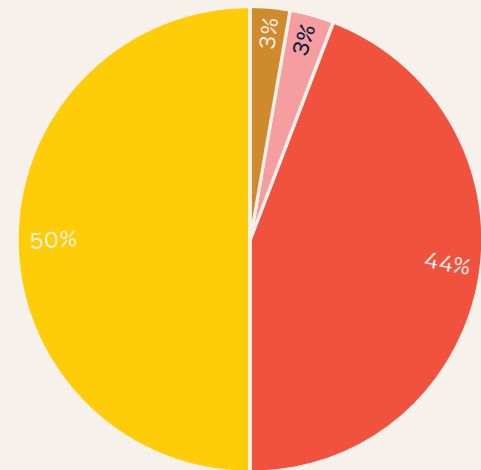
Bronze Partners



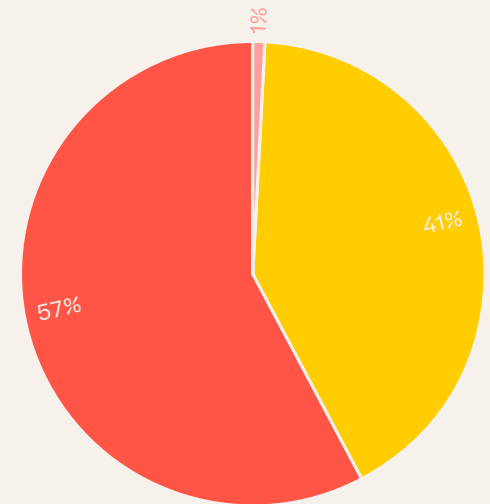
Financials

| | \$ | \$ |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 2022/2023 | 2021/2022 |
| INCOME | | |
| Government grants | 7,157,353 | 7,871,161 |
| Donations | 8,014,137 | 5,696,386 |
| Non-government grants | 564,777 | 0 |
| Interest income | 432,753 | 168,925 |
| Consultancy and other income | 7,933 | 24,054 |
| Total Income | 16,176,953 | 13,760,526 |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| Employees | 7,856,984 | 7,652,291 |
| Design and delivery of services | 2,610,888 | 3,145,988 |
| Marketing | 1,398,571 | 1,171,214 |
| Fundraising | 976,861 | 1,226,413 |
| Administration | 702,040 | 579,222 |
| Occupancy | 341,845 | 358,238 |
| Depreciation and amortisation | 23,349 | 11,803 |
| Total Expenditure | 13,910,538 | 14,145,169 |
| OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME | | |
| Net fair value gain/(loss) of financial assets | (22,861) | (8,916) |
| (Deficit)/Surplus | 2,243,554 | (393,559) |

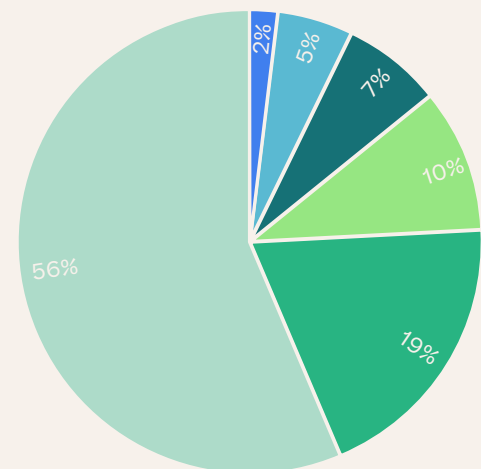
Income 2022/2023



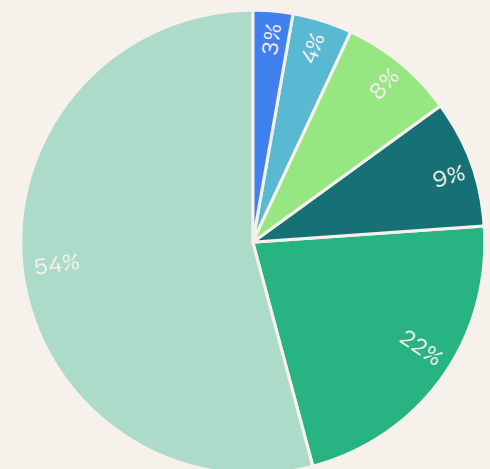
Income 2021/2022



Expenditure 2022/2023



Expenditure 2021/2022





© ReachOut Australia 2023

ABN 27 075 428 787 DGR 442 641

Gadigal Country
Suite 2.04, Level 2, Building B
35 Saunders Street
Pyrmont NSW 2009
Call us on +61 2 8029 7777
or email info@reachout.com

ReachOut provides a safe, online place for young people to chat anonymously, get support, and feel better. And, ReachOut's resources for parents and schools provide valuable information and advice to help them better support the young people in their lives.