

**MEDIA RELEASE****EMBARGOED until Tuesday, 23 February 2016**

Free online game for Australian teenagers takes on mental health

A free new online game is being launched into Australian high schools to help teenagers improve their mental wellbeing in a serious yet fun way.

Aimed at students in Years 9 and 10, the locally developed game – called ReachOut Orb – is designed for use in classroom situations, led by a teacher. The game aims to help students understand factors and skills that are useful for mental fitness and wellbeing.

ReachOut Orb is being launched by leading online mental health organisation for young people, ReachOut Australia. In the past 18 months, ReachOut has developed the game in partnership with the Telstra Foundation and Sydney-based creative digital agency, Soap Creative.

ReachOut Orb uses positive psychology principles to teach students to identify and use their strengths, develop and sustain positive relationships and build resilience. Experts have developed the teacher resources for ReachOut Orb and the game has been piloted in four schools in New South Wales.

‘Teachers involved in the pilot reported an extremely high engagement level with students,’ ReachOut Australia CEO Jonathan Nicholas said. ‘Orb is a stimulating and clever new digital product that comes only three months after the Australian Government’s recognition of the value of digital solutions in mental health.’

‘We would like to see Orb played in schools around the country. It’s matched to the health and physical education curriculum and will resonate with principals and teachers looking for innovative ways to engage students in the classroom,’ Mr Nicholas said.

In the game, students develop their own avatar, based on their personal character strengths. They travel in a virtual world overtaken by the negative force of The Glitch, which has drained colour from everything. Students navigate individually through the game, making choices as they interact with a range of characters that are overwhelmed by negativity.

Telstra’s Chief Sustainability Officer, Tim O’Leary, said: ‘By combining science and digital innovation, ReachOut Orb shows the transformational potential of technology. Our partnership – through the Telstra Foundation – gives young people access to a serious game for mental wellbeing as part of their school curriculum.’

ReachOut Orb is available for free download on iPad or desktop from 23 February. Principals and teachers can download the game at ReachOut.com/Orb.

Media enquiries

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About ReachOut Australia

ReachOut is Australia's leading online mental health organisation for young people, providing practical support to help them get through everything from everyday issues to tough times.

Since 1998, ReachOut has worked alongside young people to deliver online tools that address youth mental health and reduce youth suicide. Available anytime and pretty much anywhere, ReachOut.com is accessed by 110,000 Australians each month. That's more than 1.31 million people each year.

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