SANE
We're people like you.

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

sane.org

WHAT'S INSIDE.

SANE supports all Australians affected by complex mental health issues. We exist to break barriers, raise expectations, and champion the voices of lived experience and their families and communities.

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation SANE acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Lived Experience Recognition

At SANE we recognise that lived experience lives here. SANE respects and champions the individual and collective expertise of people with a lived experience of mental health issues and their families, communities, and people impacted by suicide. We recognise their vital contribution at all levels and value the courage of those who share this unique perspective for the purpose of learning and growing together to achieve better outcomes for all.

RAP

Delivery of SANE's Reflect RAP including appointment of independent Indigenous Chair, and recruitment for identified Indigenous positions

Over **85%** of staff identify as having lived experience of mental health issues, trauma, or neurodiversity

Online community Forum members grew to

41,600

an increase of 14% from the previous year

There were 121,148 Forum posts in FY23 and over

1,000,000

posts since SANE Forums began

SANE grew to

97

staff

70

peer ambassadors

an increase of

17%

from the previous year

There were

11,261

calls to the SANE Support Line

A research evaluation of the Stigmawatch program was completed by The University of Melbourne, formally demonstrating the effectiveness of the program

The Peer Guide pilot program was launched across three PHN regions to an enthusiastic response. Sixteen Peer Guides completed the program and a further 33 signed up to join the next cohort

SANE We're people like you.
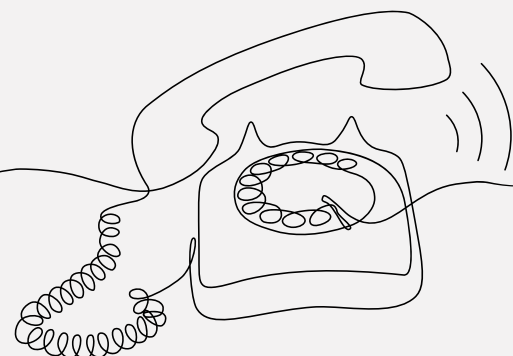
INTRODUCING AUSTRALIA'S FIRST DIGITAL PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICE

The guided service expanded to support more than

2,450

individuals and carers across 13 Primary Health Network (PHN) regions

384 Number of journalists engaged by Stigmawatch resulting in 192 adaptations made to media content

There was remarkable growth of the Stigmawatcher community with

1,372

new participants, bringing the total to well over 6,000 individuals

SANE social media channels saw significant increases in follower numbers and over 494,000 people visited the SANE website during the reporting period

A formal Lived Experience Framework was embedded across the organisation from Board to services

IHCA CERTIFIED

National Standards for Mental Health Services
Quality Accredited Organisation

SANE became the first organisation in Australia to become formally accredited to the National Safety and Quality in Digital Mental Health Standards

The first *Bridging the Gaps* survey had over 1,000 respondents and results were presented to the Commonwealth Government to inform policy decisions

The Dax Centre had

2,595

visitors and was re-accredited by the Museum Accreditation Program. Three exhibitions were delivered and 35 people participated in the Studio Dax program

HIGHLIGHTS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR.

SANE has a long history of amplifying, empowering and championing the complex mental health community.

Grown from the powerful legacy of our founders Anne Deveson AO and Marg Leggatt AM, SANE was built by the lived experience of individuals, carers and families, and almost 40 years later, it still sits at the centre of everything we do.

Today, the voice of lived experience has never been more important as we continue our fight to ensure those impacted by mental ill health have equal rights and access to the support they need to lead a healthy and meaningful life.

Over the past 12 months, we have strengthened this commitment by implementing a new Lived Experience Framework. This framework formally embeds lived experience into our constitution and cascades it down into every part of our organisation, from Board to service design and delivery.

We've created a Lived Experience Advisory Committee that reports directly to the SANE Board. Members include service users from all walks of life to ensure we are guided by a diversity of opinions and experiences. I'm proud to share that every member of the SANE Board identifies as having either a personal experience with mental ill health or as a family member supporting someone with complex mental health needs.

It is these strong community connections that enable SANE to identify gaps in the system and respond rapidly with effective solutions. It's what helped us to achieve the fantastic outcomes in service delivery and stigma reduction you can see in this report. It's what keeps us focussed on the outcome we all want – a world where mental health inequity is a thing of the past.

I would like to especially acknowledge the incredible efforts of SANE staff and volunteers during this extraordinarily busy year. We could not have achieved the outstanding outcomes we have without your continued passion and dedication. I'd also like to extend a special thank you to the SANE Board and CEO Rachel Green for your ongoing commitment to our mission.

Finally, I'd like to recognise all the individuals, families and supporters who have engaged with SANE over the past year. Every bit of feedback provided, every minute of experience shared, every dollar that's been donated has helped us to get where we are today. Thank you for being part of the SANE community and I hope you continue to walk with us as we work towards a brighter future for those impacted by complex mental health issues.

LUCY MYER
CHAIR. SANE

CEO REPORT.

The past year has been challenging for Australians with complex mental health issues. We have seen increased demand on an already overburdened system, rising costs of services and inadequate support for those with acute needs. This has played out against a backdrop of political change, housing insecurity and rising costs of living.

Our own Bridging the Gaps survey in January revealed that many people with complex needs were struggling to access even basic mental health care. An alarming number of people were not receiving any form of mental health support at all.

There is an urgent need to meet this rising demand and I'm delighted to say SANE has stepped up over this past year. Our Support Line, Guided Service, online community Forums, resources and other innovative programs have provided much needed support, assistance and information to hundreds of thousands of individuals and carers from across Australia.

What excites me the most is that we've not just delivered essential programs, we've successfully done it using innovative, highly effective and scalable digital tools. We're leading the way in creating an integrated, affordable and accessible system of care, where there are no gaps for people to fall through and those with lived experience are placed firmly at the centre of it all.

This year, SANE innovation was recognised at the highest level as we became the first organisation in Australia, and in fact the world, to be accredited by the new Australian Digital Mental Health Standards, administered by the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Healthcare. The fact we achieved this significant feat with a relatively small workforce and minimal operating budget is testament to the passion and skill of SANE's staff and volunteers.

Among these remarkable achievements, we've also delivered significant outcomes against our ten-year vision of eliminating stigma, discrimination and exclusion for those impacted by complex mental health.

A particular highlight for me has been the opportunity to use the privilege that comes with my role as CEO to advance our efforts towards reconciliation. I am incredibly proud to have reinvigorated our Reconciliation Action Committee and appointed Kamilaroi/Gomeroi man, Tom Brideson, as an independent Chair. We have delivered new reconciliation focussed training and events organisation-wide, commenced planning for deeper partnerships and co-design and commissioned new artwork to advance our reconciliation story.

SANE is committed to amplifying the needs and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, starting with a change to our Constitution, whereby at least one Indigenous Director must be included on the SANE Board at all times.

Our commitment in 2024 will only grow, with further co-design to develop culturally appropriate social and emotional wellbeing programs within our Model of Care, and the creation of new identified leadership positions and workforce teams, and new partnerships with leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led mental health and suicide prevention organisations and communities.

We do this work because we know what it's like to live with complex mental health needs and trauma. We know what needs to be done to give us all a brighter future. With 85 per cent of our staff identifying as having lived experience, and a long legacy of leading by example, we truly are people like you.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our staff, volunteers, donors and partners for your ongoing support and I look forward to delivering even more services and programs for our community in the next 12 months.

RACHEL GREEN
CEO. SANE

VISION AND

Our vision

A brighter future for people, families and communities facing complex mental health issues.

Our ten-year goals

1. End mental health inequity through systemic change.
2. Eliminate stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion.
3. Ensure equal employment and economic opportunity for people with complex mental health issues.

Spurred on by increasing need for affordable and accessible mental health support, SANE developed an ambitious ten-year plan in early 2022 with the vision of removing mental health inequity and creating a brighter future for those affected by complex mental health.

This vision and our ten-year goals were underpinned by a comprehensive plan, taking a multi-level system reform approach combining grassroots activation, digital excellence and local partnerships, to meet the scale of the issue at hand.

This plan recognises the need for urgent action and reinforces the SANE pioneering legacy of taking positive action to overcome challenges and obstacles.

Strategic focus for FY23–25

In response to a changing and unpredictable funding environment, SANE placed initial focus on the following strategic objectives to achieve the greatest impact for the complex mental health community:

• Bridging the gaps between systems of support as Australia's leading digital mental health organisation.

• Breaking through the barriers of stigma and discrimination.

Enormous progress has already been made against these objectives, as outlined on the next few pages.

STRATEGIC PLAN.

PROGRESS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.

Goal 1 : Bridging the gaps between systems of support as Australia's leading digital mental health organisation.

Objective 1 : Deliver connection, community, continuity, creativity and contribution through a new Model of Care, leading digital mental health programs, and lived experience programs.

✓ The SANE Model of Care was updated and embedded across SANE programs.

✓ After launch in May 2022, the digital SANE guided psychosocial support service successfully expanded to deliver support to more than 2,450 individuals and carers across 13 Primary Health Network (PHN) regions.

✓ Ongoing evaluation of the guided service shows the service is reaching those most in need and resulting in statistically significant improvements in recovery and quality of life.

✓ An independent evaluation of the guided service was undertaken by the Institute for Social Services Research with collaborators at the University of Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research, the Monash University Health Economics Group, and the Queensland Centre for Intellectual and Development Disability.

✓ SANE online community Forums were syndicated to over 50 national and local mental health organisations and reached a significant milestone in FY23 with over 1,000,000 member posts since launch and a 14 per cent growth in engagement.

✓ SANE's Peer Guide pilot program was launched across three PHN regions to an enthusiastic response. Sixteen Peer Guides have completed the program and a further 33 have signed up to join the next cohort.

✓ A new approach to aftercare for suicide prevention was developed and trialled, supporting flood-affected communities in country South Australia.

✓ The Studio Dax program was successfully delivered to 35 people to overwhelmingly positive feedback with a digital version now in design stages.

✓ SANE became the first organisation in Australia to become formally accredited to the National Safety and Quality in Digital Mental Health Standards by the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care.

Objective 2 : Grow, diversify and support a strong, culturally safe and inclusive workplace for our peer, lived experience and mental health workforce.

- ✓ Design and implementation of a formal Lived Experience Framework including the embedding of lived experience of mental health issues and lived experience as a family member or carer at every level of the organisation including the CEO role.

- ✓ Developed new workforce metrics revealing 85 per cent of SANE staff identify as having lived experience of mental ill health with 46 per cent personal lived experience, 13 per cent carer experience and 26 per cent both personal and carer experience. Eighty-five per cent of the SANE Board identify as having lived experience.

- ✓ A growth in the SANE service workforce means there are now 20 trained Peer Workers, 38 Counsellors and seven Mental Health Support Workers.

Objective 3 : Walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and partners to implement cultural governance and social and emotional wellbeing practices within our Model of Care in support of national Closing the Gap targets.

- ✓ Development and delivery of the SANE Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) including appointment to the SANE RAP Committee of an independent Chair with extensive experience in Aboriginal health workforce development, Mr Tom Brideson.

- ✓ Creation of new Indigenous identified roles within SANE staffing and governance structures.

- ✓ Active, public support for the Uluru Voice from the Heart in the lead up to the Voice Referendum.

- ✓ Commissioned a new artwork to illustrate SANE reconciliation pathway and reinforce our commitment.

Goal 2 : Break through the barriers of stigma and discrimination.

Objective 1 : Improve and grow the diversity and representation of people with lived experience in the media through Stigmawatch and stand up against individual and structural discrimination, exclusion and racism.

- ✓ The SANE speakers program was rejuvenated after the pandemic, with Peer Ambassadors invited to present or contribute to a number of organisations including Victorian Police Academy, La Trobe University, The University of Melbourne and the Australian Embassy in Beijing.

- ✓ SANE Peer Ambassadors participated in the development of the Draft National Stigma and Discrimination Strategy compiled by the National Mental Health Commission. SANE also provided feedback to the final draft.

- ✓ In FY23, SANE Stigmawatch embarked on a new funding partnership with Mindframe to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination in media reporting. A new brand identity was developed to reflect this.

- ✓ During the reporting period, 484 Stigmawatch reports were received, contact was made with 384 journalists and 192 significant adaptations made to media content.

- ✓ There was remarkable growth of the Stigmawatcher community, with 1,372 new participants, bringing the total to well over 6,000 individuals.

- ✓ A research evaluation of the Stigmawatch program was completed by The University of Melbourne, formally demonstrating the effectiveness of the program.

- ✓ Ten articles featuring SANE Peer Ambassadors were placed into media.

- ✓ In November 2022, SANE hosted a special masterclass on stigma in the media in partnership with the Melbourne Press Club. Featuring SANE CEO Rachel Green, Ambassador Osher Günsberg, Everymind Director Dr Jaelea Skehan OAM and journalist Sophie Scott OAM, the event was well attended by media professionals from across Australia.
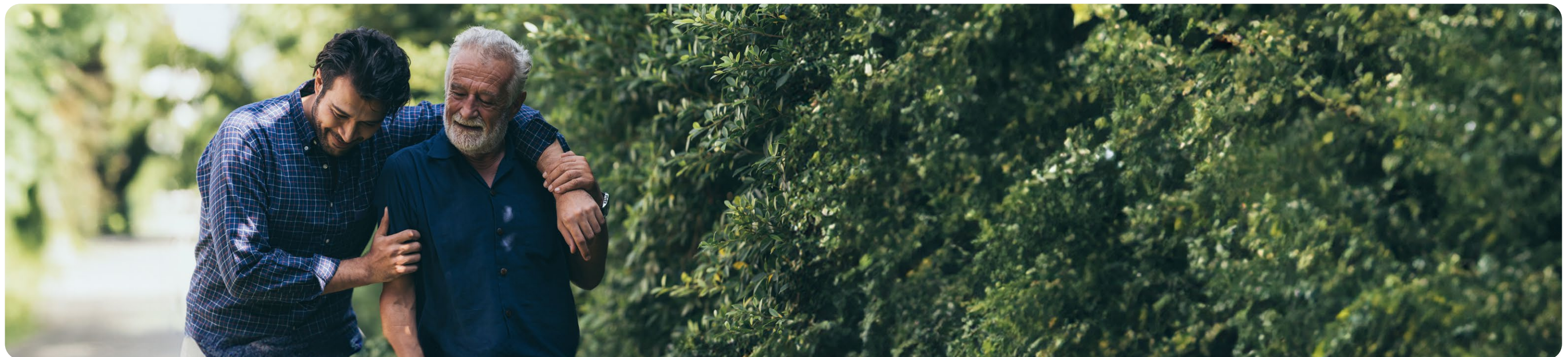
Objective 2 : Champion and amplify the collective intelligence of people families and communities facing complex mental health issues to influence, advocate and educate for greater inclusion and reach those most in need by growing awareness of SANE and becoming a household name.

- ✓ In January 2023, SANE conducted its first Bridging the Gaps survey as a pulse check of our community. With over 1,000 respondents, results clearly showed the current mental health system fails to be accessible, affordable and adequate for people living with complex mental health needs.

- ✓ Survey results and findings were promoted widely via media and presented to Commonwealth Ministers at the Better Access and Equity Forum held in Canberra in early February.

- ✓ The Dax Centre had 2,595 visitors and was re-accredited by the Museum Accreditation Program. Three exhibitions were delivered during the reporting period including the Adopted exhibition that explored the lived experience of inter-country and inter-cultural adoption, the WIP exhibition featuring works by Studio Dax participants, and the Medicated man exhibition, featuring artworks by the late Graeme Doyle and his close friend, award-winning artist Peter Wegner.

- ✓ A partnership with oOh!media and Folk saw SANE's new brand displayed across large and small retail billboards in shopping centres across Australia, as part of an in-kind donation.

- ✓ An adaptation of Anne Deveson's book *Tell me I'm Here* was performed at the Belvoir Theatre in Sydney with SANE support and involvement.

- ✓ SANE Express newsletter was distributed quarterly to 10,866 individuals, an increase of over 1,000 subscribers since FY22.

- ✓ Social media channels saw significant increases in follower numbers and reach, driven by organic growth and paid engagement. Of particular note, was a 185 per cent increase in overall followers on the SANE Facebook page.

- ✓ SANE website had over 494,000 visitors during the reporting period.

Objective 3 : Invest in strategic partnerships with the wider mental health sector, Aboriginal-led, lived experience, LGBTIQA+ and digital mental health organisations to amplify our impact.

- ✓ SANE currently partners and engages with 13 PHNs representing a presence in every state and territory. Active approaches have been made to many of the remaining PHN regions in Australia.

- ✓ SANE engaged or partnered with a range of local and national mental health organisations including Mental Health Australia, National Mental Health Commission, Mental Health Victoria, VMIAC, Suicide Prevention Australia, Black Dog Institute, ReachOut, Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia and Mind Australia.

- ✓ Connections were also made with key health-based peak and research bodies including RACGP, Australian Counselling Association, Climate Council, Connecting Climate Minds Community, and The University of Melbourne.

- ✓ CEO Rachel Green presented on behalf of SANE at the global Salesforce conference "Dreamforce" in San Francisco.

- ✓ Strong connections and plans for the future were made with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health organisation Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit).

- ✓ SANE held a design thinking workshop in March 2023 with GPs, lived experience advisers and RACGP representatives to explore practical ways SANE's guided service could better support the role of GPs and strengthen primary care.

- ✓ Strategic partnerships are a focus for FY24.

ENABLERS FOR SUCCESS.

As with all ambitious strategies, enablers are required to align the organisation with strategic goals, foster and drive innovation, and create a work environment that promotes engagement, wellbeing and success.

Six enablers were identified as being critical to the first stage of our ten year vision. Progress against these is outlined below.

1. Lived experience, reconciliation, diversity and inclusion.

- ✓ Establishment of the Lived Experience Advisory Committee.
- ✓ Launch of the SANE Lived Experience Framework.
- ✓ Development and implementation of the first SANE Reconciliation Action Plan including recruitment of an independent Chair.
- ✓ Development of a diversity and inclusion roadmap for SANE.

2. Workforce stability, capability, culture and workplace health and safety.

- ✓ Restructure of service workforce to increase the minimum required skill level, improve onboarding and training processes, prioritise recruitment of Peer Workers with more extensive and diverse lived experience and recovery insights and introduction of credentialling.
- ✓ Introduction of technology to streamline and fast-track recruitment processes.
- ✓ Implementation of regular workforce surveys to build our safety focus and culture.
- ✓ Introduction of a new Learning Management System to support compliance learning requirements, credentialling and core policy understanding and awareness.

3. Strengthened governance, safety, quality and financial sustainability.

- ✓ Development of a governance action plan supporting continuous improvement and best practice.
- ✓ Further maturation of resource use oversight including a comprehensive and seamless monthly update of financial forecast enabling timely decision making as we strive to strengthen the balance sheet and bottom line while investing appropriately for growth in our services.
- ✓ Strengthening of supplier reviews to improve value for money and adjustment of the balance between personnel and external contractors to ensure financial sustainability and internal capacity to deliver into the future.
- ✓ SANE passed the National Standards for Mental Health Services in November 2022, then went on to be the first organisation accredited by the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards in March 2023.

4. Digital design, data, analytics and collective intelligence.

- ✓ Increased investment into our technology and analytics workforce.
- ✓ Creation of an-in house analytics team commencing work under SANE's data strategy, and the introduction of Power BI reporting to enable real-time evaluation and service adjustment.
- ✓ Review and update of referral pathways and service user journeys using a customer experience lens to increase service participation.
- ✓ Investment into online marketing tools including social media advertising and Google analytics to drive engagement and build understanding of the service user population.
- ✓ Streamlining of feedback processes to ensure rapid translation of customer experiences into improved outputs.
- ✓ Improvements to SANE's IVR phone line through the implementation of a second option which directs callers to our Mental Health Support Workers who provide advice, information, and service navigation.
- ✓ Work is underway to introduce interoperability where SANE platforms can be safely and securely linked with other health records and reports.

5. Co-design collaborate, research and innovate through the Anne Deveson Research Centre.

- ✓ Comprehensive external and internal evaluation of the SANE guided service enabled development of rigorous data sets and evaluation protocols.
- ✓ SANE supported two postgraduate students in their final years, both advancing understanding of stigma and stigma reduction.
- ✓ Collaborative research completed with the The University of Melbourne and Everymind to evaluate the Stigmawatch program and inform and expand future activities.
- ✓ Supporting University of Melbourne researchers to use Natural Language Processing to examine which parts of forum posts are most useful for those searching for answers.

6. Diversify revenue sources.

- ✓ Recruitment of new fundraising team members has seen the growth of core fundraising programs including regular giving, twice yearly appeals, corporate sponsorship, community fundraising activities and philanthropy.
- ✓ We have diversified our government income from a single source to receiving income from multiple state and federal departments.
- ✓ Our growing partnership activity has already generated income from NGO and corporate organisations.
- ✓ A number of funding proposals from new funding streams were completed during this reporting period, with plans underway to expand even further.

OUR JOURNEY TOWARDS RECONCILIATION.

SANE acknowledges the significant intergenerational impact that colonisation has had, and continues to have, on the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Statistics and stories of lived experience tell us that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately affected by the discrimination and inequality that frequently accompanies mental ill health and suicide.

During this reporting period, SANE has worked in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations to implement cultural governance and social and emotional wellbeing practice within our model of care in support of Closing the Gap targets.

This work included:

- Formation of a refreshed SANE Reconciliation Action Plan Committee, led by esteemed Indigenous mental health expert and advocate, Tom Brideson, and including a diverse range of staff and lived experience volunteers.

- Building connections with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodians to develop guiding principles to better serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- Creation of a culturally safe workplace for First Nations employees including endorsement of a First Nations online cultural training program for delivery to all staff and an immersive training experience for management and people leaders.

- Collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Islander Community Controlled organisations, researchers and other partners to develop a Social and Emotional Wellbeing workforce approach to supporting First Nations service users.

- Working with First Nations people to ensure our services are culturally safe, including our online Community Forums co-design project.

- Engagement in key cultural events to walk alongside our First Nations community as part of our reconciliation initiatives.

Heal the People, 2023, artwork by Kelly Marie Taylor (Yankunytjatjara/Kokatha Descendant)

TOM'S STORY.

SANE is working towards an integrated community of support model as the following story highlights:

Tom is a young Arrente father in his 30s, living on Gadigal Country in NSW who initially connected with SANE to find support with managing his mental health which is affected by his significant past lived experience of trauma; as well as ADHD, anxiety and the impacts of racism and social exclusion.

He was finding it hard to maintain work and daily routine and cope with anxiety and frustration. Tom reached out to SANE initially as a member of the SANE online community Forums. He needed additional, step-up support and SANE helped him to self-refer into the guided service.

Part way through accessing the guided service Tom moved from accessing counselling support to peer support to better meet his needs and help him focus on his goals in a trauma-informed way.

"Talking to SANE allows me to express how I feel and be myself. I get to practice the skills I want to have, in a safe place."

Tom set and achieved goals relating to improving his social networks within his local community, and re-engaged with primary care and mental health treatment and support; whilst also continuing to engage as a member of the forums in between peer support sessions.

He found having individual peer support to discuss coping strategies as well as access to the SANE online community Forums to debrief and connect with others was helpful to alleviate some of the isolation he was experiencing; allowing him to share how he was feeling and process things through journaling and engaging with the forum community.

"It gives me somewhere to talk through my anxiety and I love that I can already look back at the times that were the hardest where I struggled the most and I can see how far I've come."

Tom feels that it is important to highlight that when people are supported in a way that suits them, they can learn the skills they need to meet their goals.

SANE's tailored, flexible support has made him feel heard and provided him what he needs for his recovery to maintain his wellbeing and role in his family, workplace, and community.

"I'VE NEVER HAD A SERVICE LISTEN TO ME AND MEET WHAT I NEEDED BEFORE, LIKE THE WAY SANE HAS."

GUIDED

SERVICE.

Meeting demand for quality, affordable, accessible and scalable psychosocial support services is an urgent and persistent problem.

Funded by a pilot grant from the Australian Government, SANE developed the highly innovative guided service to address this demand and act as a critical bridge between primary care and specialised services.

Designed to support people with complex mental health needs as well as family and carers, this personalised service delivers counselling, peer support and access to recovery groups and communities of support, to empower individuals to build skills that improve recovery and quality of life.

The SANE guided service offers:

- Rapid entry to a structured, 14-week program offering the choice of free counselling, peer support, mutual self-help peer support groups, online community Forums and guidance to access online and other mental health services.

- Access via self-referral or referral by GP, health or other service provider, family or carer. Currently available to people aged 18 and over living in designated regions across every Australian state and territory.

- A cutting-edge digital platform, co-designed with a diverse group of people with lived experience, and actively inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, veterans, people with psychosocial or intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, Autistic people, and those with co-occurring issues such as substance use or homelessness.

The SANE guided service is an Australian Government initiative. We'd also like to thank The Ian Potter Foundation and the Paul Ramsay Foundation for their generous support of this program.

Achievements and milestones

Launched in May 2022, the SANE guided service achieved a number of critical milestones during this reporting period:

- Expansion of delivery areas from three Primary Health Networks to 13, encompassing every state and territory of Australia.

- A focus on building, testing and refining consumer marketing strategies enabled significant growth of self-referrals via online advertising. This is a unique strength of this program that enables engagement with a high proportion of 'hard to reach' priority participants, unlikely to be in contact with any other mental health services at the time of referral.

- Rapid review and refinement of internal processes, alongside rapid workforce growth, saw an increase in capacity and a significantly shorter time between referral and 'Welcome Call'.

- To date, there have been 3,912 people referred or self-referred into the service, with 2,565 completing a Welcome Call and 1,499 progressing to 1-on-1 support sessions. Twelve thousand calls have been completed in total.[1]

- Internal evaluation results show highly promising early results, with statistically significant improvements in overall recovery and quality of life for participants. There were larger effects on Recovery Assessment Scale (RAS) subscales scores assessing personal confidence and hope, willingness to ask for help and experiencing less domination by symptoms.

- Supporting these findings, an analysis also showed a decrease in the number of days that people reported being totally unable to work, study or manage their day-to-day activities because of their symptoms.

- According to many existing service users, the most valuable offering from the guided service is the free access to counselling or peer support. In fact, for many participants, the guided service provided their first opportunity to engage with Peer Workers.

- An independent evaluation was completed by a team led by the Institute for Social Services Research with collaborators at the University of Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research, the Monash University Health Economics Group and the Queensland Centre for Intellectual and Development Disability. While final results are yet to be released, initial feedback showed the enormous value of a different model, with self-referral and choice of support provider highlighted as strongly positive service features.

A SNAPSHOT OF GUIDED SERVICE USERS.

In the 17 months since the full service was launched on SANE's co-designed consumer portal in mid-May 2022[2]:
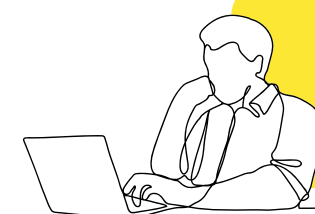
3,908 people were referred or self-referred into the service.

2,450 people were engaged to explore the service from right across Australia.

1,372 people progressed to have one-to-one peer or counselling sessions following initial welcome and planning session, with an average of six sessions each.

12,000 appointments were completed.

65% identify as female.

37yrs average age of people using the guided service.

28% report their only source of mental health care to be a GP.

11% report no mental health or primary care support in place at time of referral to SANE.

Supporting people with a broad range of mental health conditions and high rates of complexity

60% live with two or more mental health conditions

20% history of drug and alcohol use

10% homeless or at risk of homelessness

14% experiencing or at risk of domestic violence

11% recently hospitalised

70% report trauma or complex trauma

11% at risk of self-harm

4% recent suicide attempt

60% report co-occurring complex issues, including but not limited to family violence, homelessness and/or issues related to alcohol and other drugs.

Reaching people who often face barriers accessing mainstream services

20% live in rural, regional, or remote Australia.

20% autistic or living with intellectual disability.

9% Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Queer, Intersex, Asexual+.

6% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

BELINDA'S STORY.

I've been in and out of hospital and had a variety of different diagnoses over the years. The one that has stuck with me is complex PTSD, a result of years of abuse from previous relationships.

I came across the SANE guide service via a Facebook ad. I'd recently had an emotional breakdown at work and was on Workcover. I was seeing a psychologist but they didn't have a lot of experience with PTSD and would often forget where I was at in terms of recovery.

Starting at SANE was the first time I had someone who helped me get started and focus on what I needed to do for myself. The biggest benefit of the guided service was being given the knowledge, confidence and tools to start my recovery journey. New strategies and ideas started to emerge for me – things like having a plan and having goals for recovering.

I think of my mental health as being a big messy room. I know I need to clean it up but it was so overwhelming that I didn't know where to start. The guided service helped me to take that first step and find a pathway through the mess.

Having someone just recognise who I was and what I was going through was so helpful. People like me don't always have support from family and friends, we're often shunned and avoided.

I'm finally looking at ways of coping with it and what I've learnt is that no one can do it but yourself. You have to dive into the abyss and fend off the sharks and learn how to swim.

"I HAVEN'T FINISHED MY JOURNEY BY ANY STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION BUT WORKING WITH SANE HAS SET ME OFF ON A GREAT START. IT IS NOW MY GOAL TO GET BACK AND HELP OTHERS."

WORKFORCE.

SANE workforce stability, capability, culture and safety have been in the spotlight during this reporting period.

This was in response to the urgent need for rapid increase in workforce size and diversity due to program and service expansion, but also to recognise the requirement for our people to experience personal engagement and career satisfaction.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES.

SANE has focussed on the following activities during the reporting period:

- Growth and diversification of the guided service workforce to increase the minimum skill level, prioritise recruitment of highly experienced Peer Workers and introduce increased training, qualification and credentialling requirements.

- Launch of a new Diversity and Inclusion journey to complement our Reconciliation Action Plan. This included the delivery of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion survey, designed in accordance with Diversity Council of Australia guidelines and the scoping and recruitment of Indigenous identified roles as part of SANE's broader reconciliation efforts.

- Using a data driven approach, journey mapping was completed for the main employee personas within SANE. This enabled the implementation of customised onboarding and offboarding programs to support staff at scale and improve attachment and retention.

- Implementation of new feedback mechanisms for safety and culture including the People@Work survey which generated over 80 actions, many of which have been completed.

- Introduction of a new Learning Management System, Sentrient, to support learning requirements, credentialling, core policy understanding, onboarding processes and core compliance.

- Safe and culturally appropriate embedding of lived experience into all levels of the SANE workforce, led by the recruitment and implementation of the SANE Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC).

2023 Lived Experience Advisory Committee Membership

- Co-Chairs Dr Owen Harris and Margaret Tayar
- Anubhav Dhingra
- Alisha Aitken-Radburn
- Luke Marshall
- Christine Middleton
- Andrea Whitmore
- Craig Locke
- Jennifer Freer
- Lachlan Squire
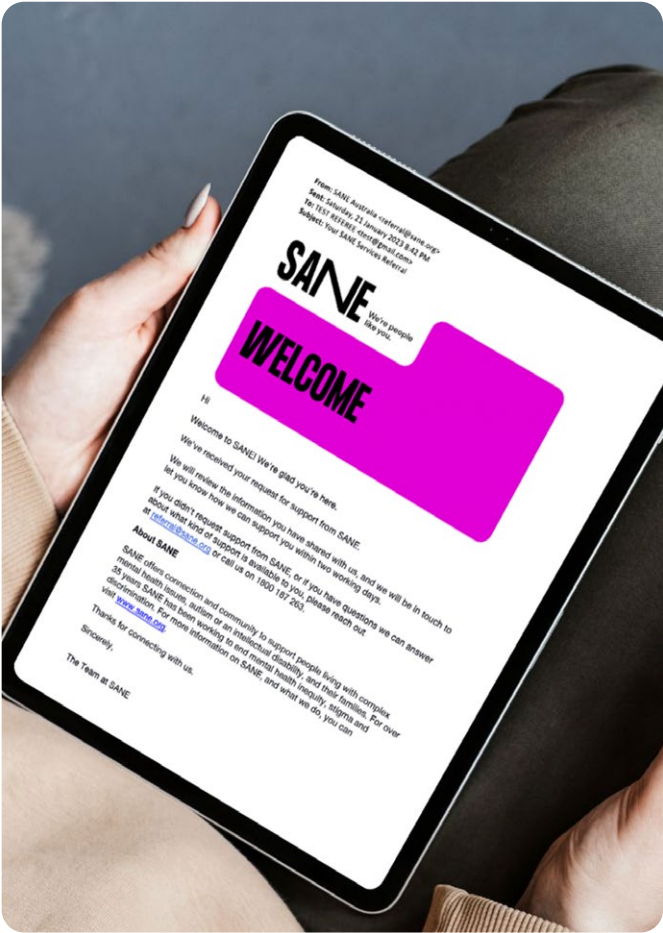
QUALITY AND DIGITAL STANDARDS.

In 2023, SANE became the first organisation in Australia to have their digital mental health services formally accredited for safety, efficacy and security by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

While digital mental health has shown great promise in addressing current challenges with mental health care access, there are concerns among service users and referrers about the variable quality and safety of existing services.

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care released the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health (NSQDMH) Standards to address this issue. These Standards form the basis of the world's first digital mental health accreditation process.

Digital mental health refers to any service accessed via phone, online, SMS, video conference or app. The NSQDMH Standards are a formal benchmark outlining the level of care users should expect, therefore improving and standardising the quality of available digital mental health services and protecting those who use them from harm.

In 2023, SANE was delighted to be the first organisation to undertake this process and, more importantly, the first to pass with flying colours.

"SANE presents as an outstanding organisation in terms of their visionary and robust leadership, governance and operational management; comprehensive documentation; high calibre of staff; focus on training and development; quality of services provided, and extensive evidence of engagement with people with lived experience in planning, developing and delivering services."

Independent auditor

This is a huge achievement and demonstrates SANE's commitment to safety and quality – speaking volumes to the strengths of being a lived experience-led organisation, strongly focused on partnering with the people and families who our services are co-designed to support.

PARTNERS.

PHILANTHROPY AND FUNDRAISING.
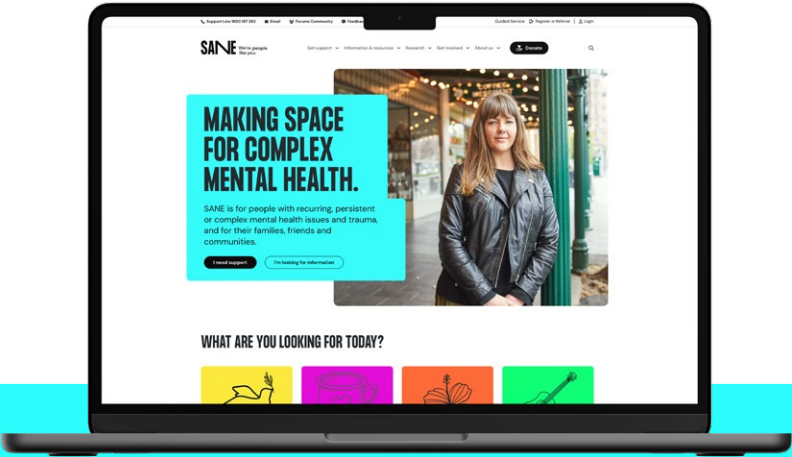
SANE places great focus on working collaboratively with the mental health sector and the broader health and social services system.

This year, SANE partnered with a number of service providers, peak bodies and health organisations to understand people's health needs in each region, connect with local providers, provide information and resources and develop pathways to enable smoother system navigation for service users.

We'd like to acknowledge the following Primary Health Networks who supported delivery of our guided service and contributed valuable feedback throughout the initial periods of evaluation and growth:

- North-Western Melbourne PHN
- Western Victoria PHN
- Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN
- Brisbane North PHN
- Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN
- Capital Health Network

- Western Sydney PHN
- The Hunter, New England and Central Coast PHN
- Central and Eastern Sydney PHN
- Adelaide PHN
- Northern Territory PHN
- Tasmania PHN
- WA Primary Health Alliance.

We'd also like to acknowledge our valued forum partners and note their important contribution to the growth and development of our forum community. Funded by the Australian Government, SANE Community Forums have been providing 24/7, moderated peer support and connection for ten years. Over 50 local and national organisations syndicate the SANE Forums to their communities and we thank them for their support.

SANE could not do what we do without the support of our donors and funders. Many generous individuals, families, foundations, bequestors, and businesses help us to continue to bridge the gaps and ensure critical mental health support is available when and where it's needed.

SANE Support Line Appeal

A big thank you to all who donated to our national Support Line Appeal in May and June 2023.

The SANE Support Line is a vital service providing free counselling sessions and information to people living with complex mental health and their families. The funds raised during that appeal will help keep our Support Line open and free and able to meet the growing demand across Australia.
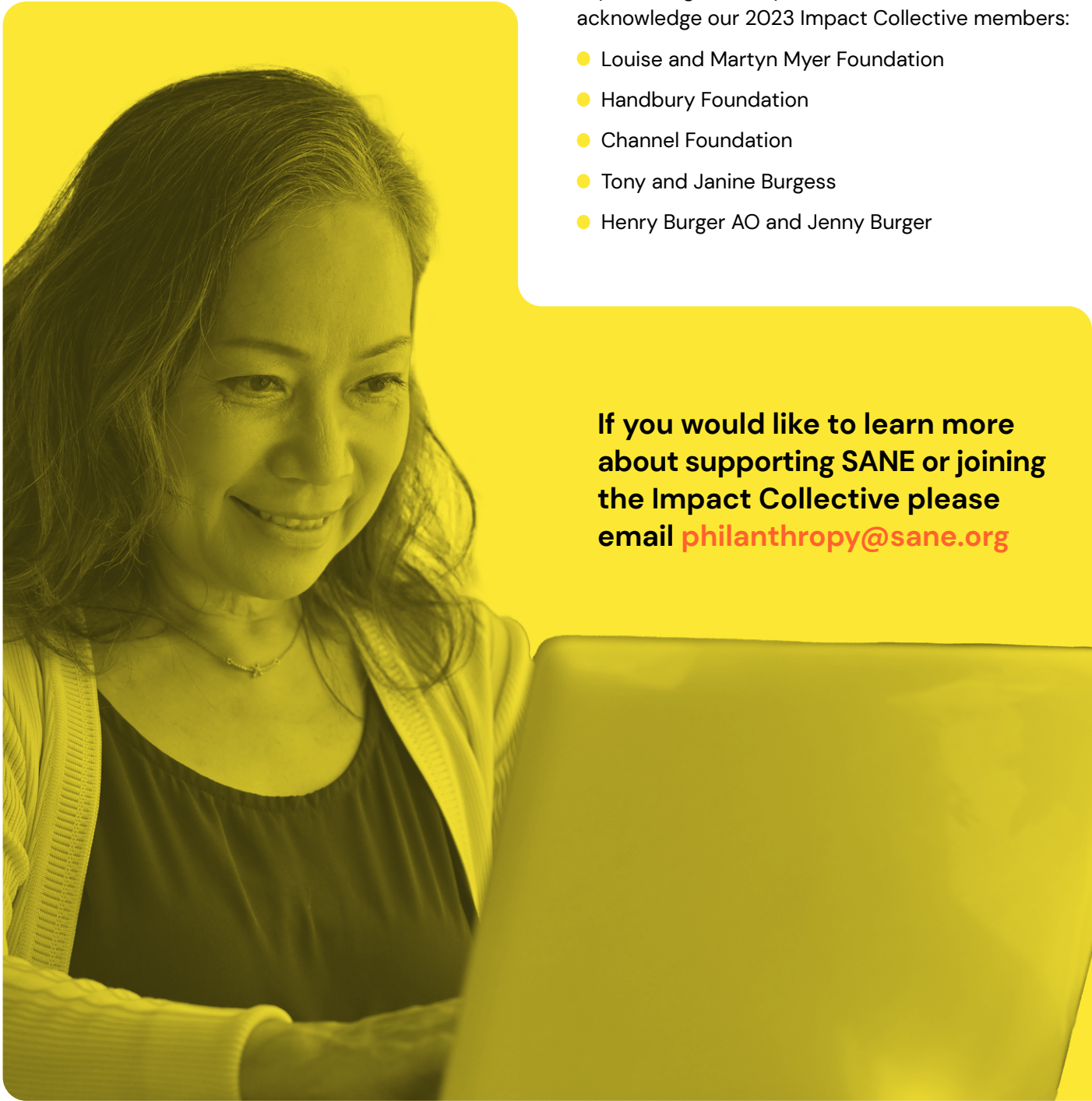
SANE Impact Collective

SANE Impact Collective members provide strategic funding to support us to deliver on our ambitious strategic plan and goals. The critical, multi-year funding provided by this group enables us to build internal capacity and skills, explore new avenues and rapidly respond to increasing demand for service and support in the community.

The Impact Collective is Chaired by SANE Director and experienced business and not-for-profit expert Craig Connelly. We would like to thank and acknowledge our 2023 Impact Collective members:

- Louise and Martyn Myer Foundation
- Handbury Foundation
- Channel Foundation
- Tony and Janine Burgess
- Henry Burger AO and Jenny Burger

If you would like to learn more about supporting SANE or joining the Impact Collective please email philanthropy@sane.org

SANE 2023 PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS.

Thank you to all our partners and funders over the past financial year, we are so appreciative of your help. SANE would like to acknowledge the following individuals, families and organisations who have contributed to SANE during this reporting period.

In Memoriam

The Estate of Kenneth Mansfield

The Estate of Jill Robyn Sewell

Pro bono and in-kind support

Folk

King & Wood Mallesons

oOh!media

Hall & Wilcox

Lander & Rogers

SANE supporters

The Ian Potter Foundation

The Neilson Foundation

The Myer Foundation

Perpetual

Harry Secomb Foundation

Collendina 5 Foundation

Cooper Investors

The Knox Foundation

Government

Commonwealth Department of Health

NSW Government

SA Government

The Dax Centre supporters

Margaret Lawrence Trust

Perpetual

Our special thanks

SANE would like to extend special recognition and acknowledgement to Tamara and Richard Wraith and Amber's White Light for their ongoing support and valued contributions to SANE activities. SANE would like to thank John Canning at King & Wood Mallesons and Simone Laity at Melbourne Connect for many years of support.

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING.

We saw a number of fantastic community fundraising events held during this reporting period, such as Ashlie's Mops off for Mental Health fundraiser which raised almost $5,000 for SANE support services.

Jordan Biglin, a Geologist from Western Australia chose to participate in the Perth Run for A Reason 12 kilometre run with seven friends and raised nearly $4,000 for SANE.

"I couldn't think of a better organisation to support than SANE. After a diagnosis of a mental health condition, I know how important SANE's services are for people living with complex mental health conditions and their friends and family. I wanted to show how we can spread the messages of supporting SANE by raising much needed funds and breaking down stigma so more people can receive the support they might need."

"As someone that has gone through my own scraps with my mental health and witnessed those that I care for do the same, I wanted to do something to contribute to a positive change. The current health system and attitudes towards mental illness are far from ideal and rather than rip my hair out in frustration, I've shaved it off in an attempt to do something about it.

I decided to chop my locks off to open up a conversation about mental health within my community, increase awareness around the supports available, and to raise money for SANE who is a great cause and provides assistance to those in need."

A big thank you to all of our community fundraisers who have supported SANE.

SANE
We're people like you.

HELP US TO HELP OTHERS.

There are many ways you can help us deliver on our ambitious vision:

- one-off or regular giving
- hold a community fundraising event
- leave a gift in your Will
- support a particular program through your Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, or join workplace giving
- make a gift through your Trust, Foundation or Privacy Ancillary Fund
- donation of in-kind services or expertise.

Please contact us to have a chat about how you'd like to support the work of SANE on **teamsane@sane.org** or **(03) 9190 0610.**

To make a tax-deductible donation please visit **sane.org/donate**

FINANCIALS.

During this reporting period, SANE has further developed capability in planning, organising, directing and controlling financial activities. This includes the establishment of robust monthly financial planning, performance measures and analytics to enable improved decision making and unpredictability around funding for organisational goals and objective.

We have diversified our income relative to 2021 when we were reliant on a single entity, we have now diversified government revenue and are rapidly growing a diverse and stable fundraising income.

Financial controls have been strengthened even further with initiatives such as the end-to-end overhaul of HRIS and payroll systems and processes and the regular review of contracts and arrangements to ensure value for investment.

2023 SANE company revenue has grown by 38 per cent over 2022. We have balanced continued investment in digital capability and functionality to support innovation in services with an almost neutral bottom line.

Our ongoing strategy is to continue to balance investments for growth while maintaining and strengthening the balance sheet.

FY 22/23	$000's
Revenue	11,948.3
Expenditure	12,340.4
Surplus / (Deficit)	(-392.0)
Non-Cash Items	
Amortisation of right to occupy building	142.2
Depreciation	445.3
Operating result	(195.4)

ELEANOR'S STORY.

Eleanor is a 20 year old university student from Queensland. She joined the guided service while struggling with significant depression, social anxiety and neurodiversity.

I first came across SANE when I was in my last year of high school and struggling with my mental health. I had overwhelming anxiety and depression and was finding everything about my life to be really stressful. At times I felt completely alone, like I was different and disconnected from everyone around me.

After unsuccessfully trying to get help from a few different places, I was eventually referred to the SANE guided service by the Strathpine headspace service. They thought it would be a good fit for me because I could access the service from home and was able to fit it around my school schedule.

SANE counsellors are very experienced in supporting neurodivergent people, which was great because I really needed someone who understood who I was and the kind of support I needed. I was dealing with undiagnosed ADHD along with the depression and anxiety; I felt like I was going crazy, and I felt guilty for it. After being referred, I was immediately linked into my counsellor, Matthew, who stayed with me the whole time I was engaging with the service.

He created an understanding environment, which was a relief after having so many experiences with services being judgemental and distant towards me. It helped me to open up about things I was afraid to talk about and understand that my feelings were valid.

In our first session we talked about how I was feeling, and we worked together to identify what practical steps I could take to make my life better. We discussed what coping strategies I could use to manage my anxiety around

schoolwork and the social anxiety that was limiting my ability to form good relationships with others.

He helped me understand that it was okay to take time for myself and not dedicate so much of my energy towards pleasing other people. With his support, I learnt how to set boundaries with people and know that my worth as a person wasn't connected to what I could do for other people. This led to me being much happier in my relationships with friends and family and had a huge impact on my overall mental health and wellbeing.

I'm now at university and studying a Bachelor of Design. University life can still be stressful, and it has been a big transition, but I feel a lot more prepared for it and I've been able to make some great friends.

Obviously, depression and anxiety don't just go away overnight. I still have to work on the strategies I learnt in the guided service – I practice them nearly every day – but it's definitely getting easier.

My regular sessions with Matthew have stopped now, but I know I can always go back if I need to, or use their drop-in counselling service or forums if I need urgent or immediate support.

"I WOULD ABSOLUTELY COME BACK TO USE THE GUIDED SERVICE AGAIN IF NEEDED. I ACTUALLY REALLY MISS SPEAKING WITH MATTHEW!"

CONTACT US

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📞 +61 3 9682 5933

SANE's free support services
🖥 www.sane.org/get-support
📞 1800 187 263

The Ian Potter Foundation

Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

IHCA CERTIFIED
National Standards for
Mental Health Services
Quality Accredited Organisation

SANE We're people
like you.