

2025

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

Creating generational change in mental health



We begin with gratitude for, and acknowledgement of First Nations people across Australia

We recognise and pay respect to First Nations people and Elders past and present from across Australia.

We acknowledge the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and community for the wellbeing of all First Nations children and their families.

The Smiling Mind team recognises and pays respect to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work.

Our Reconciliation journey

Reconciliation is an ongoing journey, and we're committed to listening and learning alongside First Nations people as we work towards a world where every mind can thrive.

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) support organisations to engage in reconciliation in meaningful, accountable ways. They provide a structured approach for learning, relationship-building and taking action, guided by First Nations voices and priorities.

Smiling Mind has completed our Reflect RAP, strengthening understanding across our organisation, building relationships with First Nations stakeholders, and identifying where we can have meaningful impact.

We're now looking forward to implementing our Innovate RAP over the next two years, deepening relationships, embedding learning into practice, and piloting strategies that support further reconciliation commitments in ways that are authentic, accountable and empowering.



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Who We Are



Smiling Mind is Australia's leading not-for-profit dedicated to building children's mental fitness.

Since 2012, we have pioneered evidence-based, preventive approaches that support children's wellbeing at scale.

Through national programs delivered in schools and accessible tools for families, Smiling Mind strengthens mental fitness where children live and learn.

Trusted by millions of parents and educators globally, we equip the next generation with lifelong skills to thrive and aim to create generational change in mental health. Every dollar we raise fuels impact for children, not profit.

Find out more at: www.smilingmind.com.au

Our vision

We aim to create generational change in mental health, providing proactive tools and programs that help every mind thrive

Our mission

Lifelong Mental Fitness



Our Mental Fitness Model, through a child-focused lens

It's been one year since Smiling Mind launched our **Mental Fitness Model**, a major evolution in our approach to best support children's wellbeing through skill-building and prevention focused activities.

Mental fitness is developed through practising and building the skills and habits needed to feel calm and confident, cope with life's ups and downs, and build healthy relationships, much like regular movement strengthens physical fitness.

Evidence shows there are a range of skills that underpin mental fitness. Just as physical fitness is built by training different muscles over time, mental fitness is developed by practising the different skills to navigate challenges, manage emotions, build strong relationships, and thrive in everyday life. When started early in life, these skills create a powerful foundation that supports wellbeing now and shapes lifelong trajectories. This is why we focus on supporting children, as early in life as possible.

In practice, maintaining mental fitness is about consistently and intentionally developing the mental skills children (and the adults in their lives) can draw on to respond to setbacks, handle change and uncertainty, sustain healthy relationships, and make effective decisions. These skills can be proactively developed helping children build confidence and capability as they grow.

Our Mental Fitness Model includes five core skill sets that children, and the adults in their lives, can practise and strengthen over time:

Live Mindfully - helps children notice what's happening in the moment, focus their attention, and calm their body when they feel distracted or overwhelmed.

Embrace Flexible Thinking - helps children manage big feelings, try different ways to solve problems, and bounce back when things don't go to plan.

Grow Connections - helps children build strong relationships by communicating, showing empathy, and feeling safe and supported with others and themselves.

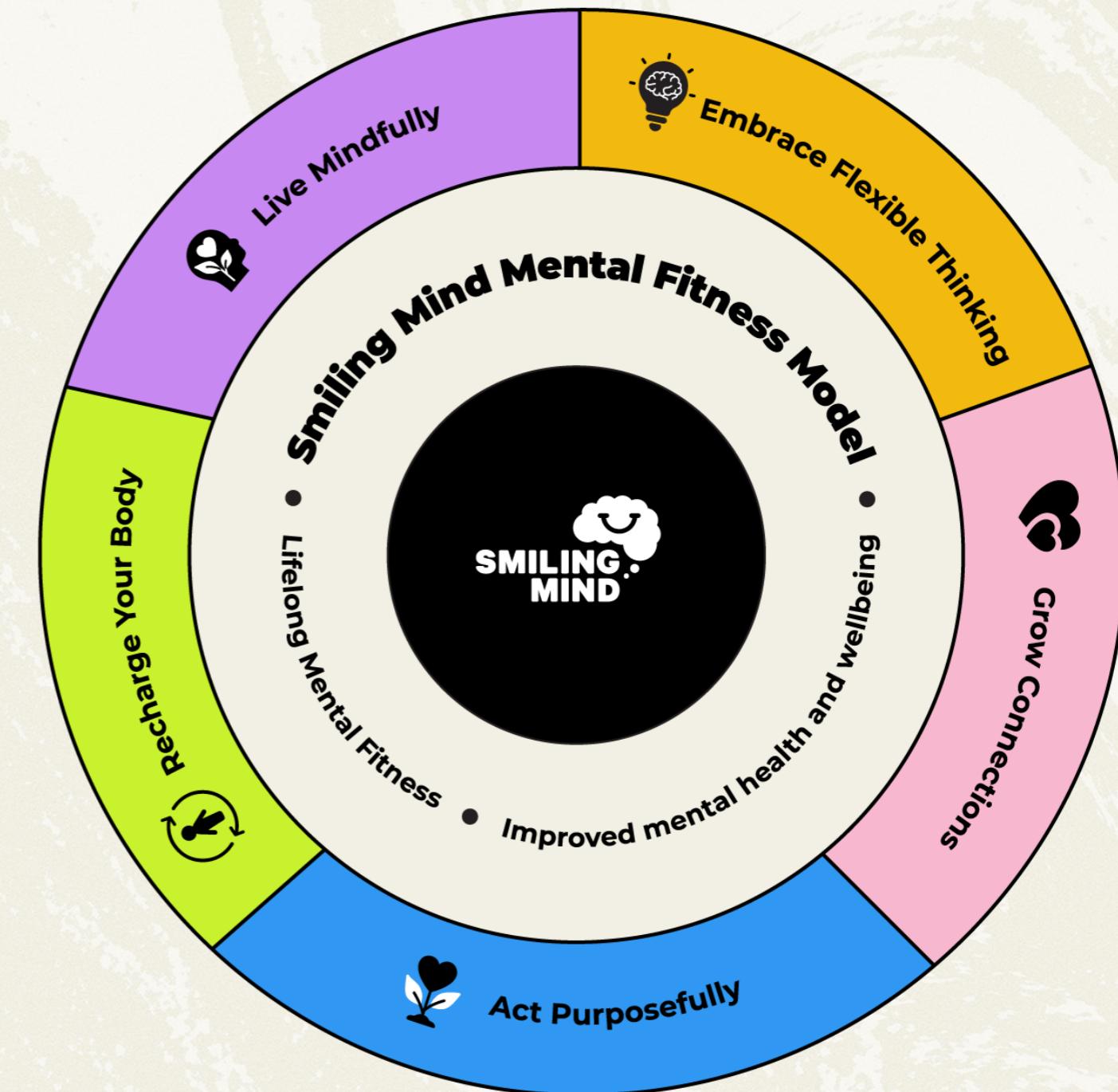
Act Purposefully - helps children understand what matters to them, use their strengths, and make choices that build confidence and a sense of direction.

Recharge Your Body - helps children look after their body and brain through movement, rest and sleep, so they have the energy to learn, cope and thrive.

Together, these skill sets provide a shared, child-focused language for mental fitness, a strengths-based, accessible way to describe how children can build lifelong mental fitness through everyday practice.

Find out more at:

www.smilingmind.com.au/mental-fitness



Smiling Mind Mental Fitness Model

A Note From our CEO



At Smiling Mind, we exist for one purpose: to create generational change in mental health, by equipping children and the adults around them with the lifelong mental fitness skills to thrive.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that 2025 was a challenging year for so many Australians. The youngest members of our community are not immune from these challenges and sadly too many children are carrying more than they should. Yet our work continues to show something powerful: when children are supported early, and mental fitness becomes part of everyday life at home and at school, their wellbeing and life trajectory can shift for the better.

Despite the many barriers we face in delivering impact, this truth drives my passion and deep unwavering belief in our work, and how critical it is for us to continue fighting for the needs of children and the adults most influential to them.

Supporting children to develop the mental fitness skills they need to thrive in life and prevent mental health challenges is at the heart of our Theory of Change. We strengthen mental fitness through two key pathways, in schools and at home, because these are the environments where children learn, grow and are shaped every day.

“It’s not enough to react when children are in distress, we must build resilience from the ground up, before challenges become a crisis.”

Deepening impact, strengthening foundations

This year we celebrated the first anniversary of our Mental Fitness Model - which we continued embedding across our school program, our app and our public advocacy, bringing a strengths-based, accessible language for wellbeing for children, parents and educators.

Throughout 2025, we strengthened our evidence base through ongoing evaluation, reinforcing what we consistently hear from the classroom: mental fitness skills help children feel calmer, manage big emotions, build connection and engage more confidently in learning. The evaluation data from our school program this year showed significant increases to wellbeing and impact following updates we made in January 2025.

We also continued improving the Smiling Mind App, responding directly to user feedback, strengthening safety, and launching new features to support sustained skill-building over time. This included the launch of ‘Pathways’ to better support the needs of women and girls, helping them build mental fitness skills through structured programs that have proven to be some of our most popular.

Reimagining childhood, and advocating until change occurs

In 2025, our *State of Mind* insights report and *Our Kids Count* advocacy platform continued to make one thing unmistakably clear: children’s wellbeing cannot be separated from the wellbeing of the adults who care for them. Parents’ mental wellbeing directly affects children’s mental health, and when caregivers are under sustained stress, children feel it too.

Our evidence also reinforces that mental fitness skills are not just helpful, they can be protective. Regular practice is associated with higher wellbeing outcomes for children, parents and caregivers, showing real potential to shift trajectories for millions when delivered early and consistently.

“Imagine the world we could create if every child grew up practising mental fitness, supported at school and at home.”

In 2025, we reactivated the *Our Kids Count* campaign, ahead of the federal election, and launched the *Our Kids Count* White Paper on World Children’s Day. Our blueprint calls for meaningful policy and funding reform that rebalances Australia’s mental health system toward prevention and early support for children and families.

“We will continue fighting for the needs of children until Australia commits to the reforms they deserve, including sustained investment in prevention and equitable access to early support for every child, in every postcode.”

A world-leading Home–School Ecosystem, for every child

While I am extremely proud of what we achieved alongside our supporters and our incredible community in 2025, our focus is firmly on what comes next. Our ambition is bold: to see Smiling Mind’s Primary School Program embedded in every primary school in Australia, so every child has the human right to build mental fitness as part of everyday learning.

In 2026 and beyond we will realise a bold ambition - to accelerate the impact of our home and school programs by building an integrated home-school ecosystem. A world leading, connected approach that truly puts the child at the centre, providing families with the very best evidence-based supports, enabling them to close the home/school loop and strengthen visibility and supports across both these crucial environments.

This is not simply a product evolution, it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how mental wellbeing support is delivered. By connecting the two environments that influence children most, we can create a scalable preventive model that supports every child consistently, at school, at home and across the moments in between.

Thank you

None of this is possible without the people and partners who believe in children’s mental health and wellbeing. To our funders, partners, educators, community supporters, donors, our team and Board, thank you. Your support fuels impact for children and enables us to keep delivering evidence-informed programs at scale.

Together, we are reimagining childhood, advocating for societal shifts from crisis response to prevention and skill-building, and building a future where every child grows up with the mental fitness to thrive, for life.

**Sarah La Roche
CEO, Smiling Mind**

Building a generation with the mental fitness to thrive, for life

Reimagining childhood, from crisis response to skill-building

Australia is at a pivotal moment in how we support children's wellbeing. Recent national evidence shows that while many children are doing well, too many are being left behind, and emerging risks are widespread.¹

This is a call not only to respond when children are struggling, but to reimagine childhood: shifting from crisis response to proactive skill-building, so every child has the foundations they need to thrive.

Recent data shows psychological distress is rising among young people, developmental vulnerability is increasing as children enter school, and school attendance is declining.¹

These trends reflect growing pressure on children, families and education systems and reinforce what evidence has long shown: prevention and early intervention are more effective than waiting for challenges to escalate.¹

That's why Smiling Mind exists. We help children, and the adults around them, build lifelong mental fitness, the everyday skills and habits that support calm, confidence, connection and resilience.

1. UNICEF Australia & Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). (2025). The State of Australia's Children 2025: Summary Report.

Mental fitness is strengths-based and accessible: like physical fitness, it grows through regular practice. When started early, these skills create a powerful foundation that supports wellbeing now and shapes lifelong trajectories.

Smiling Mind supports minds of all ages and stages through engaging, evidence-informed programs and services used in homes and schools. Together, we can help build the first generation of children who proactively care for their wellbeing and develop the mental fitness to thrive, for life.





Key evidence: why early, proactive support matters

Australia is at a tipping point in children's wellbeing¹

22.2%

of young people experienced psychological distress (2022) - rising from 15.2% in 2017-18.¹

23.5%

of children are developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school (2024).¹

88.3%

School attendance has declined to 88.3% (2024), down from 91.4% in 2019.¹

1 in 7

children aged 4-17 experience a mental disorder (pre-pandemic), reinforcing the scale of need.²



Evidence shows prevention and early intervention deliver stronger outcomes than delayed responses, strengthening the foundations children need for lifelong learning, wellbeing and participation.^{1, 2}

1. UNICEF Australia & Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). (2025). The State of Australia's Children 2025: Summary Report.

2. Sahlberg, P., & colleagues. (2023). Reinventing Australian Schools: Discussion Paper.

Impact at Scale

For over 13 years we have supported millions of children, families and educators through our programs and services across homes and schools.

All time,

9.8M

App downloads: Global, 9.8M.
Australia, 5.4M.



In 2025,

+505K

App downloads: Global, 505K.
Australia, 278K.

14.7M

Children and young people (under 25)
supported via the app and programs:
Global, 14.7M. Australia, 9.45M.



+698K

Children and young people (under 25)
supported via the app and programs:
Global, 698K. Australia, 454K.

678K

App users identifying as parents:
Global, 678K. Australia, 407K.



+60K

App users identifying as parents:
Global, 60K. Australia, 36K.

1,792

Australian schools have participated in the
Smiling Mind Primary School Program.



+80K

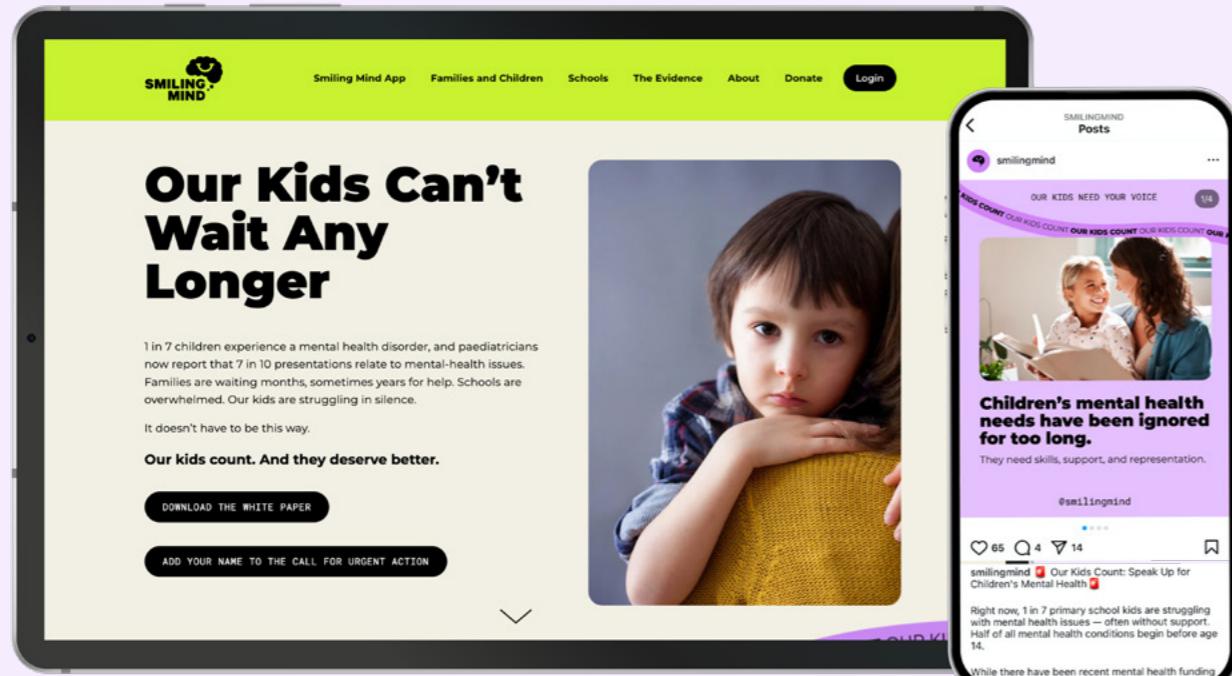
Australian students and 5.7K educators
participated in the Smiling Mind Primary
School Program

Shifting the National Mental Health Dialogue



Our Kids Count: Advocating for kids' mental health and wellbeing

Smiling Mind's Our Kids Count advocacy campaign sets out our long-term position on what needs to change in Australia's approach to child mental health and wellbeing. Reactivated ahead of the 2025 federal election, Our Kids Count calls for increased national support for children's mental health and wellbeing.



Our Kids Count is our platform to advocate for greater focus on the mental health and wellbeing needs of children, which has been remarkably absent in policy thinking for too long. Australia needs a system that supports children from a young age, that prevents distress early and builds lifelong mental fitness.

Since launching, the campaign has built strong public momentum, with more than 13,000 adding their signatures and thousands more sharing their stories in support of urgent national action, alongside support from partner organisations across the country. This momentum reflects a growing movement of families, educators and community leaders calling for change.

Our Kids Count is grounded in a clear evidence base:

50%

of lifetime mental health disorders emerge before the age of 14,¹ making early, proactive investment essential.

7 in 10

of the most common presentations to Australian paediatricians relate to mental ill-health,² yet over half of children with mental health challenges do not receive professional help.²



mental ill-health has increased substantially among young Australians, with the rate of mental illness among 16–24-year-olds increasing by 50% from 2006 to 2020.³

These trends reinforce what evidence has long shown: prevention and early intervention are more effective than waiting for challenges to escalate,⁴ and deliver stronger outcomes than delayed intervention.⁴

A national blueprint launched on World Children's Day

On World Children's Day, Smiling Mind launched the Our Kids Count White Paper, outlining an evidence-based blueprint to rebalance Australia's mental health system, starting with prevention and early support for children and families.⁵ To mark the day, Smiling Mind CEO Sarah La Roche spoke publicly about the urgent need to close service gaps for children and families and shift policy upstream.



Find out more at: www.smilingmind.com.au/our-kids-count

Mental fitness as the solution

At the heart of Our Kids Count is Smiling Mind's strengths-based belief: children deserve more than a system that intervenes only once they're in distress. Like physical fitness, mental fitness grows through regular practice, developing skills that support calm, confidence, connection and resilience.⁵

Smiling Mind's evidence-informed programs provide preventive, accessible tools for children and the adults around them, designed to reach families early, equitably and at scale.⁵

“

My son was suicidal at age 9, and there was almost no help. Imagine being a parent in that moment and hearing ‘there’s a waitlist’.

”

“

My youngest son told me he wanted to take his life when he was 5; he tried unsuccessfully at 13; he had recurrent thoughts at 17 and 18; he survived until May 2023, two days before his 23rd birthday. I loved and supported him every moment of every day.

”

I garnered and accessed as much mental health help as I possibly could for him, often waiting months for expensive appointments. Mental health issues can and do start as early as my son’s. Please help our children no matter what their age.

”

“

I work as a counselor in schools... We’re told to triage, but there’s nowhere to refer these kids. They’re ‘too bad’ for Headspace, ‘not bad enough’ for CAMHS, and private care is unaffordable. The system is broken.

”

“

I am in rural Victoria, only 1½ hours from Melbourne. I have two neurodiverse children. There were few to no services here. When we asked for help with our child, we got the police instead of the needed ambulance, more than once.

”

“

Getting mental health support for my daughter is nearly impossible. The waitlists are too long, and the cost is too high, even with a rebate. Families like ours are being left behind.

”

The economic case for prevention

Smiling Mind continues to advocate for prevention because it is not only effective, it’s economically sound. Evidence shows that interventions targeting 10-year-olds yield a higher return on investment than those targeting 19-year-olds,⁶ and that school-based prevention for anxiety and depression delivers a long-term return on investment of \$147 for every \$1 invested.⁶

OUR KIDS COUNT

⇒ Why change is urgent

- 50% of lifetime mental health disorders emerge before age 14.¹
- 7 in 10 common paediatric presentations relate to mental ill-health - yet over half of children don’t receive professional help.²
- Mental ill-health among 16–24-year-olds increased by 50% (2006–2020).³

⇒ Why prevention makes sense

- Prevention and early intervention deliver stronger outcomes than delayed response.⁴
- Prevention programs show strong returns, including a ROI of 147.4 for school-based anxiety and depression prevention.⁶

⇒ Momentum + what we’re calling for

- More than 13,000 people have signed the Our Kids Count petition, supported by partner organisations nationwide.
- Smiling Mind is calling for **greater investment in prevention and equitable access to early support**, including funded digital services designed for children and families.⁵



1. Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62(6), 593–602. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593>

2. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. (2021). National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020–21). National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Canberra: ABS.

4. UNICEF Australia & Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). (2025). The State of Australia’s Children 2025: Summary Report.

5. Smiling Mind. (2025). Our Kids Count White Paper (launched World Children’s Day). https://info.smilingmind.com.au/hubs/White%20Paper%202025/SmilingMind_WhitePaper_2025.pdf

6. Stelmach, R. D., Kocher, E. L., Kataria, I., et al. (2022). The global return on investment from preventing and treating adolescent mental disorders and suicide: A modelling study. *BMJ Global Health*, 7, e007759. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmigh-2021-007759>

2

Impact in Schools



Evaluating our primary school program: student and educator outcomes

2025 evaluation findings show strong wellbeing benefits for students and educators

Smiling Mind's Primary School Program is designed to build children's mental fitness early, strengthening the skills that support calm, confidence, connection and learning readiness. Program evaluation continues to play a core role in ensuring the program remains evidence-informed and effective at scale, building on the independent ACER evaluation published in 2024.

In 2025, the Primary School Program supported 80,080 children and 5,720 educators. Our ongoing evaluation continued to show strong benefits for students and educators, with clear positive outcomes reported by both children and the adults supporting them in the classroom.

A subset of 37 schools participated in the evaluation. Insights were collected from 229 educators and 4,206 students. Educator respondents were primarily from NSW (31.9%), WA (28.8%) and VIC (23.9%), with smaller representation from QLD (15.0%) and SA (0.4%). Geographically, just over half of respondents were from Major Cities (54.0%), with the remainder from Inner Regional (23.5%), Outer Regional (16.4%), Remote (4.0%) and Very Remote areas (2.2%).

In 2025, student-reported wellbeing benefits increased to 75%, up from 67% in the previous ACER evaluation, signalling stronger perceived impact for children. Educator satisfaction and confidence remained high, while new findings also showed meaningful benefits for educators' own wellbeing, reinforcing the program's whole-school value.



“

After you do it you feel calmer.

— Year 3 student

”

2025 Evaluation Highlights

What students told us

88%

enjoyed the program

75%

reported benefits to their mental wellbeing

Students identified a wide range of positive impacts, including:

91%

felt calmer

85%

better able to manage “big emotions”

92%

clearer on what matters to them

What educators told us

94%

saw benefits in students

Educators also identified a wide range of positive impacts, including:

81%

said it improved student mental health and wellbeing

70%

said it improved educators' own mental health and wellbeing

92%

said lessons were easy to use

81%

felt more confident teaching SEL

Student outcomes (rated by students): calmer, more self-aware and regulated

In 2025, most students reported enjoying the program (88%).

Three quarters (75%) said it benefited their mental wellbeing. Students identified a wide range of positive impacts, including:

91% calmer

88% happier

88% refreshed

87% more aware of their thoughts and feelings

83% closer to friends and family

83% learned something new

85% better able to manage their “big emotions”

92% knowing what’s important to them and what they care about

Student reflections show how practical and transferable these skills feel, not only at school, but beyond the classroom:

“
I learnt to take a break, take some breaths and calm down then focus on the task ahead.

— Year 5 student

Some students also described deeper emotional learning and stronger self-awareness:

“
Smiling Mind helped me notice my feelings instead of ignoring them... and taught me ways to breathe, pause, and feel more in control.

— Year 6 student

Student outcomes (rated by educators): benefits visible in behaviour and learning readiness

Educators consistently reported that program benefits were visible in students’ day-to-day behaviour and classroom readiness. In 2025:

94% of educators saw benefits in their students

81% said the program improved their students’ mental health and wellbeing

Educator outcomes (rated by educators): improved wellbeing and confidence to teach SEL

In 2025, the program continued to support educators themselves, reinforcing that successful implementation starts with staff wellbeing and confidence.

70% of educators said the program improved their own mental health and wellbeing

92% educators found the lessons easy to use

85% educators were satisfied with the program

81% felt more confident teaching social and emotional learning (SEL) skills

Teachers described Smiling Mind as an effective “reset” after breaks and a consistent tool to support self-regulation and transitions:

“
Students are more settled...Some of them ask to do the Smiling Mind meditations when they come in after lunch... demonstrating that self-regulation and self-awareness has grown amongst students.

— Year 6 classroom teacher

Educators also described the value of a shared language that supports emotional literacy and everyday problem-solving:

“
The students have been given the language needed to express their needs and thoughts about social and emotional learning experiences.

— Foundation/prep classroom teacher



Why it matters

These findings reinforce that mental fitness can, and should be developed early, through consistent practice in the place where children spend most of their time: school. In 2025, students reported feeling calmer, more connected and better able to manage big emotions, while educators reported stronger wellbeing outcomes and growing confidence to teach these skills.

Smiling Mind's ambition is bold: to see our Primary School Program embedded in every primary school across Australia, ensuring every child has access to evidence-informed mental fitness skills as part of everyday learning.

We are deeply grateful to the funders and partners already committed to this vision, whose support enables schools to implement the program, and helps build the foundations for generational change in mental health.

Our Theory of Change

Designing (and measuring) for Impact

School program evaluation data collected across 2024 and 2025 confirms elements of our Theory of Change:

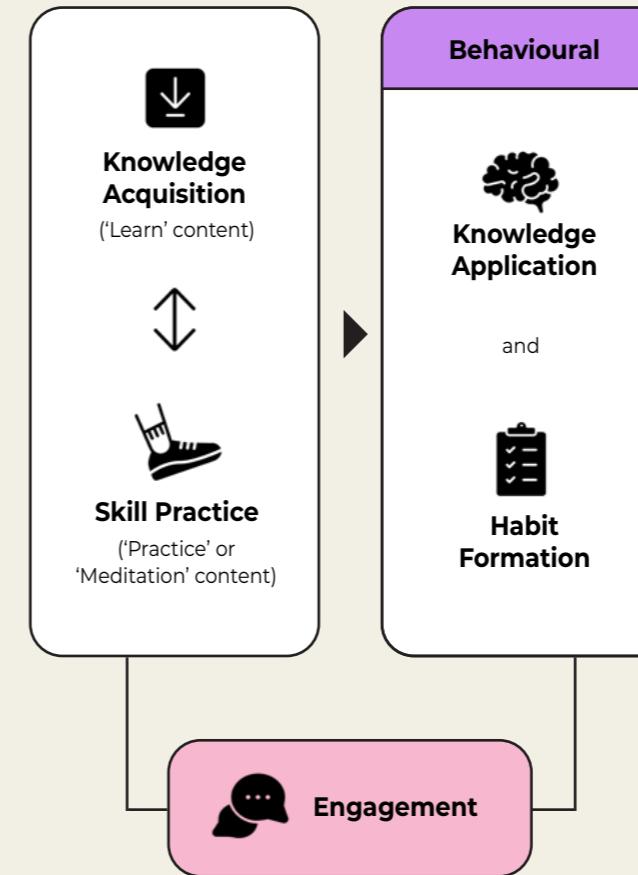
- ✓ Program use is associated with more mental fitness skill development
- ✓ Engagement (enjoyment and interest) with the program is associated with mental fitness skill development
- ✓ Mental fitness skills practice associated with wellbeing

As we continue to evaluate our programs we aim to further evaluate the pathways to change and the broader impacts of the program including school engagement, school climate and long-term mental health outcomes.

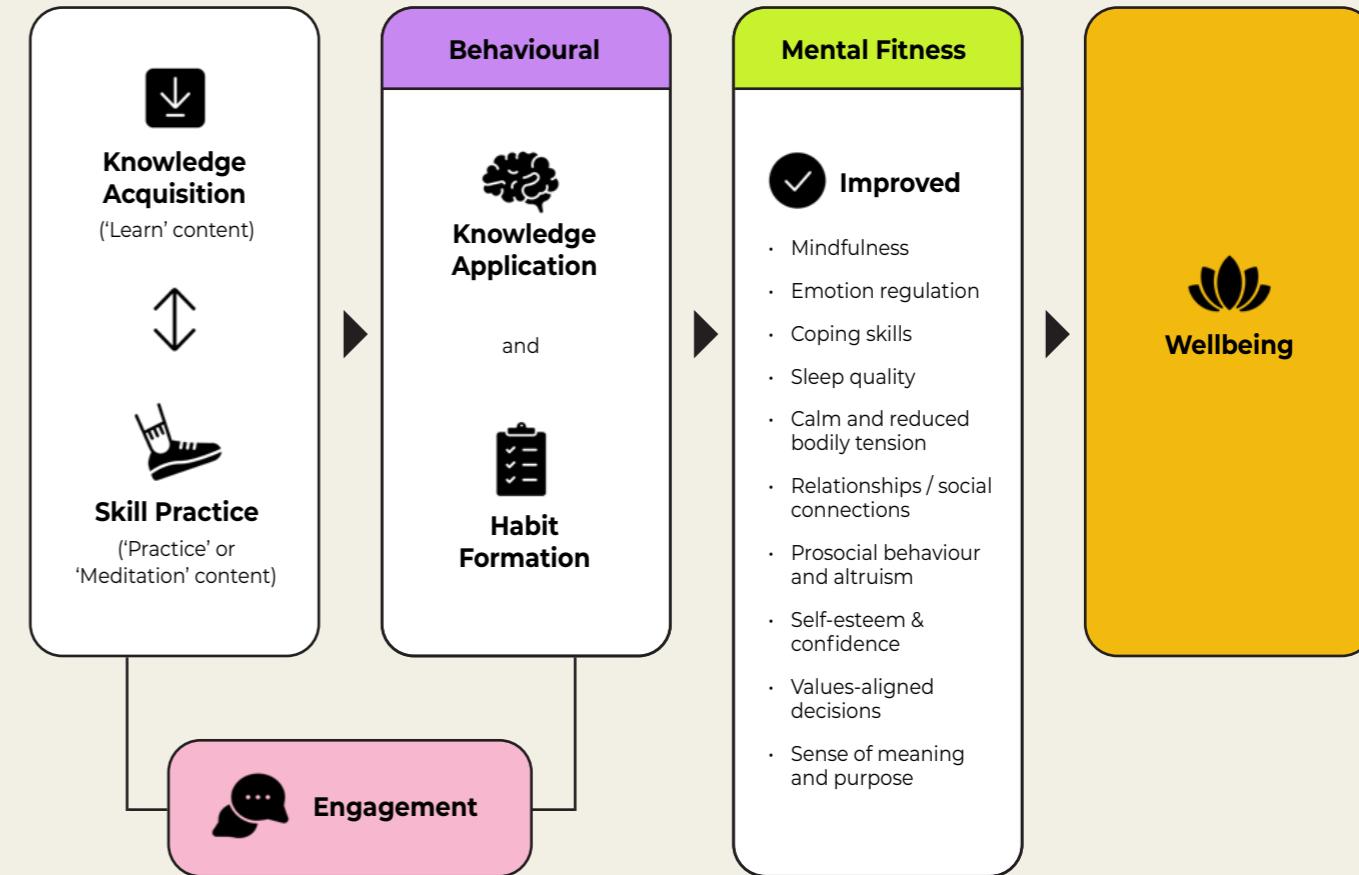
PROXIMAL OUTCOMES



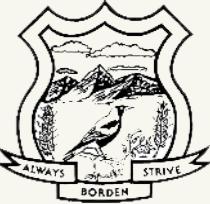
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES



DISTAL OUTCOMES



Borden Primary School, WA



Building calm, focus and self-regulation through everyday practice

Borden Primary School is a small, multi-age K–6 school in regional Western Australia. Like many rural and remote schools, staff support students with diverse learning needs while having limited access to specialist wellbeing services.

The school was seeking a simple, evidence-informed approach to strengthen students' self-regulation, reduce low-level classroom dysregulation after transitions, and build a shared language for wellbeing across the whole school.

The approach

Borden Primary School implemented Smiling Mind's Primary School Program as a whole-school routine embedded into the existing school day.

- All classes from Kindergarten to Year 6 participate, creating consistency and shared expectations.
- A short 5–7 minute guided practice is used daily as a post-lunch reset.
- A longer weekly lesson draws on Smiling Mind's digital classroom resources.
- Practices are adapted by age: movement-based activities in Early Years, and student-led choice in upper primary.

After a short staff onboarding and modelling session, teachers embedded the practices into existing classroom routines, supporting strong uptake and long-term sustainability.

The impact

Since introducing Smiling Mind, the school has observed:

- Calmer starts to afternoon learning sessions
- Faster de-escalation following transitions
- Improved student focus and readiness to learn
- Students independently requesting mindfulness strategies before challenging tasks

The consistency and simplicity of the routine has supported both teacher confidence and student agency, helping wellbeing skills become part of everyday learning.

“

Smiling Mind has given our students practical tools to settle, focus and learn and it's easy for teachers to sustain. It's a small routine with a big impact.

— Viktoria Lance, Principal

”

* Why it matters

Borden Primary School believes access to a consistent, low-cost and evidence-informed program like Smiling Mind could lift baseline wellbeing across Western Australia, particularly in regional and remote communities where specialist support is limited.

This case study reflects how Smiling Mind's Primary School Program supports schools to embed mental fitness skills into everyday practice, strengthening learning readiness, wellbeing and classroom climate at scale.

Agnes Water State School, QLD



Building a culture of kindness, calm and lifelong mental fitness through everyday practice

Agnes Water State School is a regional primary school in Queensland, supporting 218 students in an Outer Regional community. Like many schools, they recognised that learning and wellbeing are inseparable, and wanted a practical, preventative approach to help children build the skills to thrive.

Over time, Smiling Mind has become embedded not just as a program, but as a shared language and way of being across classrooms, staff culture and family life.

“The most beneficial change that has occurred in our school is that culture of kindness, the language of compassion that comes through in everything that the students are doing.

— Leigh Tankey, Head of Curriculum

The challenge

The school was seeking a consistent, whole-school approach to strengthen students' self regulation and emotional literacy, improve calm, focus and readiness to learn particularly after transitions, reduce low level classroom dysregulation, and build staff confidence through shared, strengths-based language.

The approach

Agnes Water implemented Smiling Mind as a whole school wellbeing approach, aligned to Positive Behaviour for Learning and embedded into classroom routines for long term sustainability.

Key elements included classroom delivery across every year level with new concepts explored fortnightly, daily guided meditations paired with reflective discussion to build emotional literacy and help-seeking, student journals and wellbeing spaces including Meditation Corners to support independent regulation, and a range of whole school rituals designed to embed kindness, gratitude and shared language.

These included a weekly Kindness Jar initiative where students acknowledge acts of kindness they have seen or experienced, whole school meditations to open parade, themed initiatives linked to specific lessons such as Acts of Kindness week, and gratitude letter writing in the lead up to World Teachers Day.

Staff wellbeing was intentionally prioritised, with Smiling Mind practices embedded into staff meetings to build consistency, confidence and modelling. Parent sessions and home practice further reinforced skills beyond the classroom, supported by a clear referral pathway through the school's Student Wellbeing Action Team for children needing additional support.

The impact

Over multiple years of sustained implementation, the school has observed meaningful shifts across student wellbeing, relationships and learning readiness.

Teachers reported calmer classrooms, improved focus and smoother transitions back into learning, supported by a shared mindful language that makes redirection easier and more consistent.

Students have developed stronger emotional literacy and self regulation, becoming more able to identify emotions, recognise anxiety and seek help earlier, while reinforcing skills with each other.

“Smiling Mind has made me feel more confident talking about my feelings. It's stopped a lot of bullying.

— Student

Families also reported benefits beyond the school gates, with children using strategies at home to support calm and connection.

“By spending only a few minutes on the program each day the kids are preparing their brains for their learning. These are skills I'm sure our kids will use well into the future.

— Year 5 parent

Staff described personal benefits as well, including improved stress management and greater confidence in teaching wellbeing consistently.

★ Why it matters

Agnes Water State School's story shows what's possible when mental fitness becomes part of everyday school life for every member of the school community. By investing in staff wellbeing alongside student learning, the school has built a sustainable culture where emotional regulation, compassion and gratitude are modelled daily.

When staff are supported to build their own emotional resilience, they are better equipped to teach these skills with authenticity and confidence. Strong leadership belief and commitment has been critical in embedding this approach and strengthening wellbeing and learning outcomes across the school.

“Smiling Mind should be in every classroom, it should be in every school, it should be in every staff room. ”

— Leigh Tankey



3

Impact in Homes



Smiling Mind App: Strengthening the foundations for our next chapter

In 2024, Smiling Mind redeveloped our app into a comprehensive toolkit for building lifelong mental fitness, a major milestone in our evolution and our commitment to keeping evidence-based mental wellbeing support free and accessible for all.

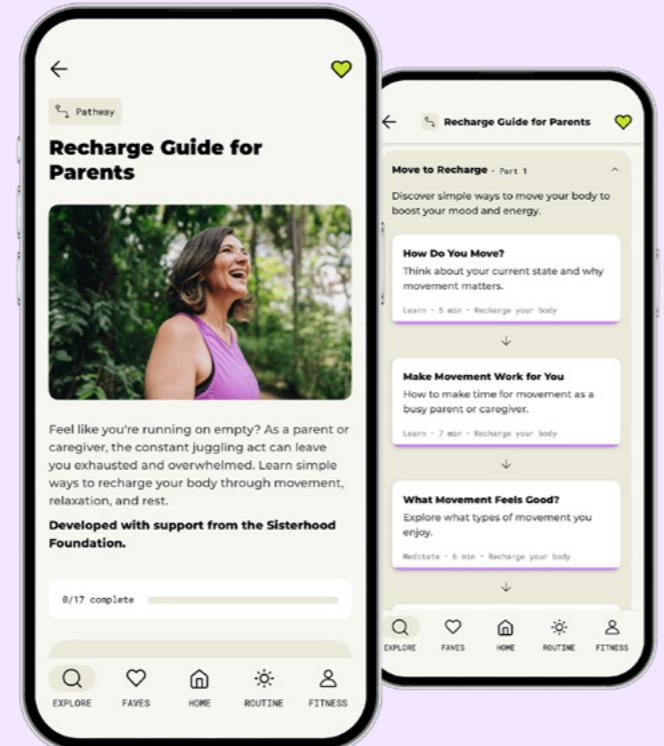
In 2025, we focused on what comes next: improving the day-to-day experience for the people who rely on Smiling Mind, responding directly to user feedback, and building the foundations for our next product evolution.

This year has been about momentum, turning insight into action, strengthening safety and accessibility, and continuing to make the Smiling Mind App simpler, smarter and more supportive.

Making it easier to find what you need, when you need it

We know that access is about more than availability, it's also about discoverability. This year, we focused on helping users find the right content faster. Through keyword optimisation, we increased content discoverability by 65%, improving how content appears and is surfaced across search and browsing.

This work is also shaping one of the biggest upcoming improvements: an overhaul of categorisation and content exploration, responding directly to what users have told us about navigating the new app experience.



Helping users build mental fitness, one step at a time

A major highlight this year was the launch of 'Pathways', a new feature designed to help users build mental fitness skills over time through structured programs.

We launched 'Pathways' with three new programs and 50 new sessions, giving users a clearer, more guided way to develop skills through regular practice. 'Pathways' represents a shift from standalone sessions to more connected, purposeful journeys, making it easier for users to build habits, deepen skills, and stay engaged over time.

Strengthening safety and crisis support

Smiling Mind is a preventive mental fitness service, but we recognise that many people come to the app during moments of distress. This year, we enhanced our referral pathways to better support users who may be struggling, including links to crisis services in and outside of Australia.

This is part of our ongoing responsibility to ensure that our app is not only engaging and helpful, but safe and supportive, especially when users need it most.

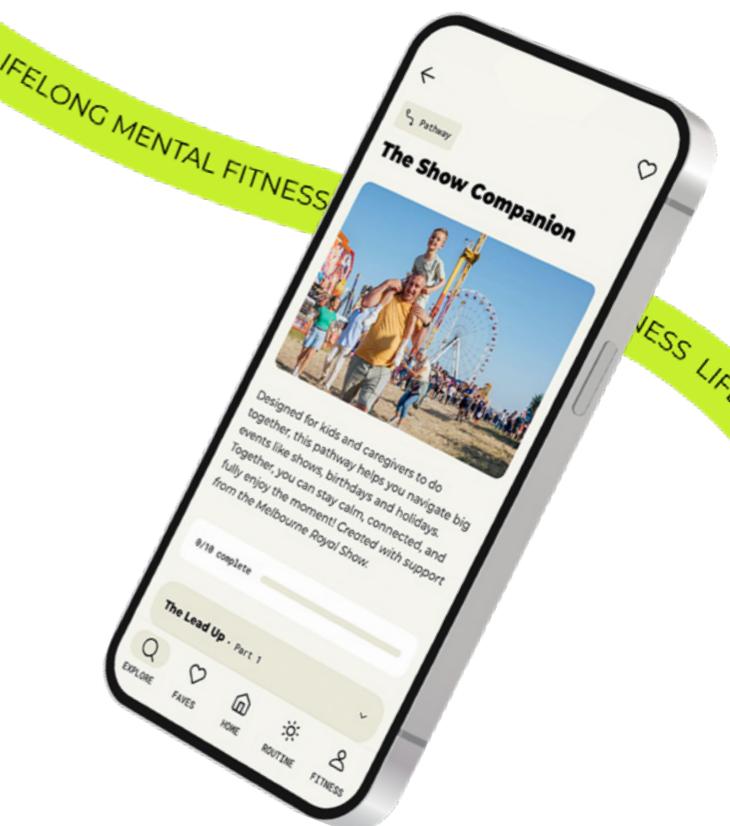
Listening, learning and improving, together with our users

Throughout the year, we made a wide range of improvements based directly on user feedback. This feedback reaches us through many channels, from casual conversations with the community, to surveys and research studies, customer service enquiries, and app reviews.

Some of the user-led improvements included:

- **Reducing visual clutter:** Users told us the interface felt too busy, so we removed textured headers to reduce visual noise and create a calmer experience.
- **Reducing scrolling fatigue:** Users reported fatigue navigating long content lists, so we added a floating "back to top" button to make browsing easier.
- **More control over announcements:** Users wanted less persistent announcements and more control, so we moved announcements into a drawer that can be closed, and reopens only when new updates appear.
- **Extending practice:** Users wanted the option for background audio to continue beyond spoken content, so we enabled extended audio play and introduced additional controls to adjust volume or turn audio off entirely.

These are just a small snapshot of the work delivered this year, but they reflect a guiding principle: Smiling Mind is shaped by the people who use it.



Strategic partnerships expanding reach and impact

This year we also progressed strategic partnerships to extend the reach and relevance of our mental fitness approach, meeting people in the moments and settings where wellbeing support matters most.

Highlights included:

- **Melbourne Royal Show:** As part of our partnership with the Melbourne Royal Show, we developed an app collection to support families leading up to high-stimulation experiences, regulating while at the Show and reflecting after it.
- **Virgin Australia:** Launching Smiling Mind content across new channels in partnership with consumer brands, to broaden distribution and access.
- **Paz Sounds:** Introducing new relaxation music and nature soundscapes, strengthening our audio offering and supporting deeper rest and regulation.

These partnerships help Smiling Mind reach new audiences, strengthen the quality and diversity of our content, and build sustainable pathways for impact.

Building stronger foundations for the future

As we continue to evolve the Smiling Mind App, we have also invested in strengthening the frameworks that guide product and content decisions, ensuring the platform remains developmentally appropriate, evidence-informed and safe.

This year, we developed a 'Developmental Stage Framework' and 'Duty of Care Guidelines', in consultation with subject matter experts, to guide future content creation and product design. This work strengthens our ability to design more personalised, age-appropriate experiences, and supports safe, high-quality delivery as we scale.

What's next: the next evolution of the Smiling Mind experience

The year ahead represents an exciting next chapter. Over the next six months, one of our most significant initiatives will be a major redesign of content organisation, discovery and browsing, a direct response to what users have told us, and what we've learned through research. We've listened, tested, and begun designing a new approach, and we look forward to sharing updates as it comes to life.

Alongside this work, we engaged in a discovery project exploring how we can better integrate the Smiling Mind App with our Primary School Program, laying the groundwork for a stronger Home-School Ecosystem.

This ecosystem is the foundation of our next chapter. Through rigorous discovery, cross-functional insight and strategic alignment with education reform, we are designing a future-proof platform that:

- **enables student agency and real growth**
- **supports educator delivery and wellbeing**
- **engages parents and closes the home-school loop**
- **delivers measurable outcomes for policy, research and impact reporting**
- **sustains school engagement and retention, nationally**



A year of progress, and a future full of possibility

The Smiling Mind App continues to serve as an accessible, evidence-informed foundation for lifelong mental fitness. In 2025, our focus has been simple: listen closely, improve relentlessly, and lay the foundations for what comes next.

Every piece of feedback, every suggestion, survey response, and review, has helped shape the experience. To everyone who has contributed: thank you, you're helping build a future where every mind can thrive.

This is the next frontier for generational change in mental health: building a truly connected Home-School Ecosystem where children practise mental fitness consistently across the two environments that shape their lives most.

By strengthening the link between classroom learning, educator support and parent engagement, we can move beyond isolated interventions and create a scalable, preventive model that supports every child. This work represents our next chapter: designing a future-proof platform that helps mental fitness become part of everyday life, at scale, shaping healthier trajectories for generations.



Apple App Store Rating

A mental fitness resource that's accessible anywhere, anytime



I've been using this app for years. It's a great companion during stressful and anxious times, when I have to make decisions, before meetings, when I'm going through tough times, or when I want to focus and not be ruled by my emotions. The self-observation activities are almost like having therapy with a psychologist.

— App User



Recommended by mental health professionals, Smiling Mind provides evidence-based tools that work



My husband is a child psychiatrist and recommends the app to all his patients, and we have been using it for years to teach our now 5 year old skills to regulate his emotions.

— App User



From crisis support to lifelong mental fitness



Thank you for this amazing free app, which has been my lifeline at times. Your meditations bring peace and tranquility, and have helped me get through tough periods of acute anxiety. I use this with my neurodivergent kids as well. Your app has made a tremendous difference in our lives.

— App User

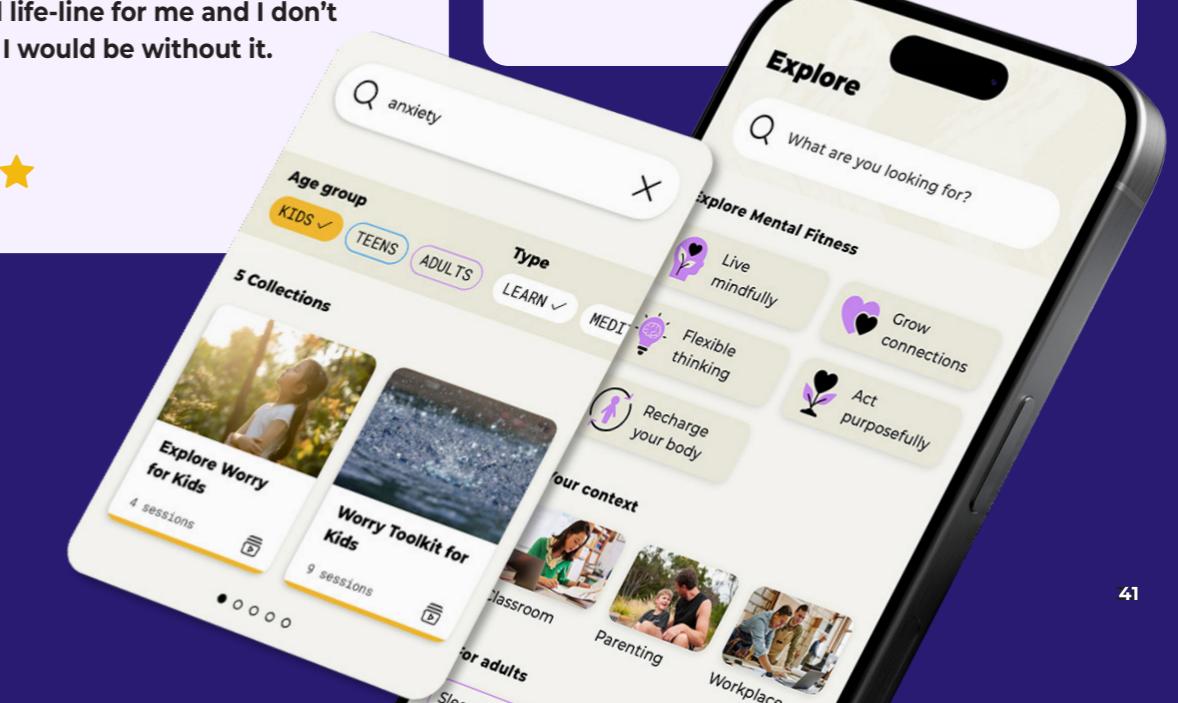


When mental health support feels out of reach, the free Smiling Mind App bridges the gap



I just wanted to thank you for making this app and having it available for free. I found it in desperation at a very low time in my life. Where I live mental health care is very expensive and I have only been able to access it inconsistently. This app has been a literal life-line for me and I don't know where I would be without it.

— App User



Sal & Aria

Finding calm, clarity and connection through everyday practice

Sal is a mother doing what so many parents do: trying her best to support her child through big feelings, without always knowing the right words or tools. Her daughter, Aria, is bright, curious and creative. But for a period of time, Sal noticed Aria becoming increasingly anxious and withdrawn, struggling to name what she was feeling.

One night, Aria looked up at her mum and asked: "What if sad's just your normal?" For Sal, it was heartbreaking, and confronting.

"I worried constantly," she says. "She couldn't explain what she was feeling, and I couldn't fix it. I'm not a psychologist. I didn't have the tools. I just kept telling her I loved her, hoping it would be enough, but I was scared."

Like many families, Sal didn't feel she had access to clear, practical wellbeing resources to support her child early, before struggles escalated. Sal wanted a way to support Aria that felt:

- **practical and gentle**, without needing clinical expertise
- **age-appropriate**, helping Aria name and manage feelings
- **supportive of calm and focus**, especially during stressful moments
- **easy to use** consistently at home, in the rhythm of everyday life

The shift began at school, where Aria's teacher started using Smiling Mind guided practices with the class, giving students a short, consistent reset through breathing and attention.

“

The teacher would put on Smiling Mind and we'd all lie down on the ground to make all of us really calm and relaxed, and we'd focus more.

— Aria

”

Seeing the difference, Sal began using Smiling Mind with Aria at home. They built it into key moments:

- **bedtime wind-down routines**
- **stressful mornings**
- **"big feeling" days when everything felt too much**

What started as a school-based practice became a shared habit, a simple tool they could return to together.

With Smiling Mind as part of their routine, Sal noticed changes in both Aria's wellbeing and their relationship.

Greater calm, focus and learning readiness

Aria began coming home calmer, more settled, and more engaged with learning. "She has gained a beautiful love of learning because she can focus on the work." — Sal

More openness and emotional literacy

Aria became more able to name her emotions and talk about how she was feeling, not only at school, but at home. "I think I've become a better person. And I think I've become more open to my emotions because of Smiling Mind." — Aria

Confidence for parents, without needing all the answers

For Sal, the biggest shift was feeling equipped to support her daughter, without needing to be an expert.

"Watching your child struggle is heartbreaking," she says. "But knowing you might not be able to help them? That's the hardest part."

Smiling Mind gave Sal a way to support Aria early, building skills rather than simply reacting in crisis.

“

Smiling Mind has given me something I didn't know I was missing, a way in. A way to support her without needing to have all the answers.

— Sal

”

* Why it matters

Sal still thinks about Aria's question, "What if sad's just your normal?" But when she looks at her now, calmer, expressive, growing in confidence and self-awareness, she feels hope.

“ The most important tool you can give your child is self-awareness, so that they're prepared for their life ahead. ”

— Sal

This story reflects how Smiling Mind supports families to build mental fitness skills through everyday practice, helping children and parents find calm, clarity and connection, together.



Community Fundraising: Fueling Mental Fitness for Every Child

Powered by people. Driven by purpose.

In 2025, Smiling Mind's community fundraising initiatives helped keep the Smiling Mind App free, and expanded our impact for children in primary schools.

As a 100% not-for-profit organisation, Smiling Mind exists solely to create a positive impact. We believe everyone should have the tools to thrive, which is why the Smiling Mind App has remained free for individuals and families for more than 12 years, supporting millions of Australians each year. Community support makes this possible.

Signature event: The Reimagining Childhood Lunch

Smiling Mind's inaugural fundraising lunch

On Wednesday 1 October, Smiling Mind hosted our first-ever Reimagining Childhood Lunch, supported by Melbourne Royal, in the iconic MasterChef Kitchen at the Melbourne Showgrounds. With 167 guests and an extraordinary culinary experience, to support Smiling Mind's life-changing work in primary schools.

Guests enjoyed a bespoke menu designed by some of Melbourne's most celebrated chefs, including Chris Marshall (Vue de Monde), Clinton McIver (Amaru), Cory Campbell (BistroX) and John Demetrios (Butter Days Bakery), a powerful example of community coming together to reimagine what childhood can look like when children are supported early with the skills to thrive.



Grassroots giving: Sustaining the free Smiling Mind App

Throughout the year, Smiling Mind mobilised community support through our Tax Appeal, regular giving, and community-led initiatives to help keep the Smiling Mind App free for families across Australia.

More than half of our supporters are regular givers, providing monthly donations that sustain Smiling Mind's ability to offer accessible mental fitness tools to millions, without any federal government funding for the free app.



This year, acclaimed chef and devoted father Shannon Bennett climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to raise funds for Smiling Mind and shine a light on the invisible mountains too many children and young people face every day: anxiety, overwhelm, self-doubt and emotional distress.

The climb was a powerful act of community leadership and commitment, helping rally public support for prevention and early intervention to achieve a future where every child has the emotional skills and support to thrive.

Thank you Shannon!

Community & Campaign Supporters

Andrew Bassat
Anthony & Katie Zaccaria
Ben Blackmore
Brendan and Joanna Belcher
Cooper Investments
Chyka & Bruce Keebaugh
Damien Gance
Danielle Moeller
Deborah Lalor & John Lewis
Decjuba Foundation
Evans and Partners
Frank Montagnese Foundation
Glen Norman
Gurner Group
Hatched Media
James Orloff
Jellis Craig Northside
Juan Valenzuela
Michael Williamson
Neometro
Nicole Oatley
Paul Solomon
Pitcher Partners Advisors
Point Trading Group
Radek and Helen Sali
Rachael Antone
Rebecca Bourne Jones
Rebecca Bull
River Capital Foundation
Sam Mularczyz
Sean Connolly
Shannon Bennett
Sasha Robertson
Six Degrees
Spotlight Foundation
Steven Faulkes
The Boncal Family Foundation
Tim & Ashleigh Faulkner
York Park Group



Why it matters

Smiling Mind is proud to be backed by a community that believes in prevention. Every donation helps ensure more children and families can access evidence-based tools to build calm, confidence and connection, and supports a future where every mind can thrive.

**To donate and support Smiling Mind's impact, visit:
donate.smilingmind.com.au**

“

Community support is what makes prevention possible, without our donors, we could not keep the Smiling Mind App free. Our supporters are helping more children build mental fitness skills needed to create generational change in mental health.

— Sarah La Roche, Smiling Mind CEO

”

Our Supporters

Smiling Mind's ambition for generational change is powered by authentic, purpose-driven partnerships. Our Impact Partners are deeply committed to our mission, helping embed prevention and mental fitness into everyday life, and enabling Smiling Mind to reach millions of Australians each year through our free app, our Schools Program and our national advocacy work.

Together, we share a vision of a world where every person has the lifelong mental fitness skills to thrive.

Partner impact in 2025

In 2025, our partners supported Australians to build mental fitness in the moments that matter.

With their support, Smiling Mind makes lifelong mental fitness practical, accessible and part of everyday life. Our work is led by evidence and purpose, helping more people build mental fitness today while shaping healthier futures for generations to come.

We are also deeply grateful for the dedicated efforts and support of Tania Austin, who has contributed significantly to the impact we have been able to achieve this year, alongside Ally Heine and Chyka Keebaugh, who have all dedicated time and effort to strategically support our mission. Thank you all immensely.

Corporate Partners



Commonwealth Bank



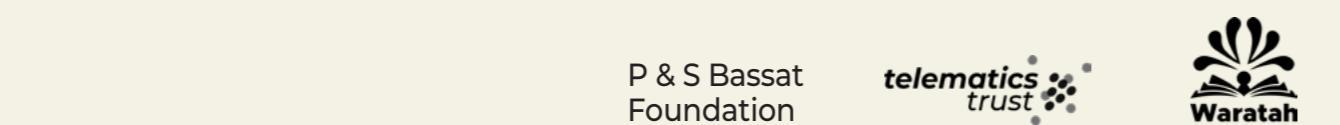
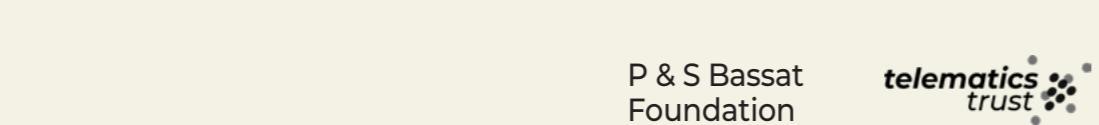
Pro bono Partners



MinterEllison



P & S Bassat Foundation



Philanthropic Partners



Ally & Matt Heine -
Suhara Foundation



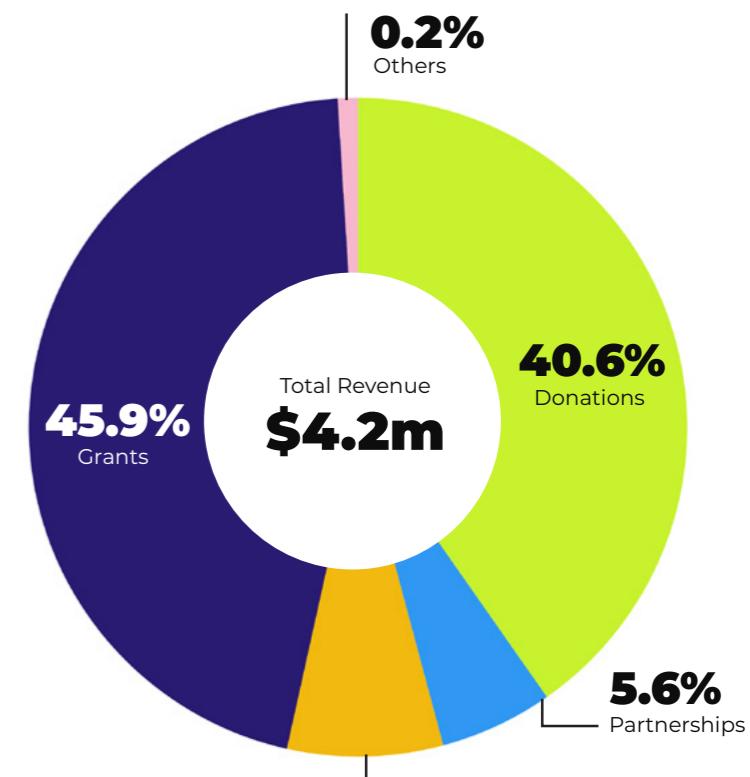
Financial Performance

For the financial year ending 30 June 2025

Smiling Mind is a registered DGR1 Status Charity and our financials are audited annually by Pitcher Partners.

During the 2025 financial year, Smiling Mind recorded \$4.27 million in revenue.

We are grateful that our generous donors contributed \$1.73 million towards our operational and vital programs. A further \$1.96 million in grant funding fortified our capacity and programmatic initiatives.



For more information, including full Annual Information Statements, we welcome you to visit the Annual Charity Register website at <https://www.acnc.gov.au/>

**More information can be found
on the Smiling Mind website**

www.smilingmind.com.au



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info@smilingmind.com.au

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organisation that aims to create
generational change in mental health.**