

Meaningful connectivity:

Orygen Digital &
Telstra Foundation
annual impact
report 2025



Content

Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise and acknowledge the existing, original and ancient connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to the lands and waterways across the Australian continent. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and all the First Nations people and communities we are privileged to work with on our projects. We are enriched by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' contribution to our organisations, and we commit to working together to build a prosperous and inclusive Australia.

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Introduction

For more than 15 years, Orygen Digital and the Telstra Foundation have worked together to imagine and build the next generation of mental healthcare for young Australians.

The Foundation's first investment in MOST in 2011 was catalytic, supporting its earliest innovations. Since then, MOST has secured more than \$37 million in competitive research funding, over \$80 million in government investment grown into a national service, and is now preparing to scale internationally.

We are proud to have backed every significant milestone in Orygen Digital's evolution. We supported the development of Mello, a free app designed to help the 1.8 million young people who experience stuck thinking. We've also been excited to partner on MindVR, seeing its transformation from early clinical trials into a next-generation immersive therapeutic tool.

Together, MOST, Mello and MindVR represent our growing portfolio of co-designed, evidence-based digital mental health solutions that give young people practical, timely support no matter where they are in their mental health journey.

This report shares the progress we've made together over 2025 and the real impact these tools are having on young people across Australia.



Young people are clear: they want support that is safe, personalised and readily available when they need it. They also want options – tools that can be used alongside clinical care, between appointments or before they've entered the mental health system. The Telstra Foundation's long-standing investment in MOST, Mello, and now MindVR has helped make this possible. At a time when traditional services alone cannot meet escalating demand, digital support is not a "nice to have"; it's an essential part of a sustainable youth mental health system.

Professor Mario Alvarez-Jimenez
Chief, Orygen Digital



Throughout our long partnership with Orygen Digital, we've always been impressed by the team's unique talent to develop and scale innovative digital therapies that really work for young people. Their digital services are supercharged by youth and clinician codesign, strong evidence, and privacy and safety features. They're also beautifully designed, highly engaging and clinically effective therapy experiences. The fact that they are portable and easily accessible means young people can get access whenever and wherever they need, which is another thing we love about Orygen Digital's approach."

Jackie Coates
CEO, Telstra Foundation

A system in crisis

Australia's youth mental health system is facing a rate of demand it wasn't built to serve.

Demand for support has accelerated dramatically over the past decade, mirroring global trends. Mental ill-health is now the leading cause of disability worldwide with 75% of conditions emerging by the age of 25¹. At a time when young people should be building their futures and finding their place in the world, many are instead left waiting for care and support that arrives too late, or not at all.

Across Australia, young people encounter long waitlists, limited appointment availability and delays getting the right level of care. Workforce shortages and burnout mean the supply of clinicians can't keep pace with rising need. National prevalence rates have risen by almost 50% since 2007², a shift so steep, even well-resourced systems would struggle. For young people in remote and regional communities, the challenges are greater still: fewer services, longer travel times and insufficient specialist options.

As this pressure builds, more young people are turning to digital solutions for connection, information and support. A lot of the time, what they find is fragmented and largely unregulated. They are navigating thousands of wellness apps, content creators and AI tools without clear indicators of what is safe, or appropriate for their needs. A review of the top 73 mental health apps targeting young people found that just 2.7% had evidence supporting their effectiveness³, despite many claiming to be 'scientific' or 'therapeutic'.

For young people in distress, this can feel like guesswork. It's a choice between waiting months for care or relying on tools that offer little more than a distraction. For many, digital support isn't a convenience. It's the only timely, accessible option they have. Finding the right tool matters—both for them and the system that's struggling to keep up.

1. McGorry, P. and Alvarez, M., et al. The Lancet Psychiatry Commission on Youth Mental Health (2024). The Lancet Psychiatry.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2020-2022)*. ABS.
3. Larsen ME et al. *Using science to sell apps: Evaluation of mental health app store quality claims (2019)*. NPJ Digit Med.



Mello: meeting young people in their hardest moments

Case study: LK

For many young people, the hardest moments hit outside 9am to 5pm – after work, school or in the quiet moments when services are closed. This can make support feel out of reach. These are the times when thought loops spiral and feel impossible to break. These moments are what Mello was designed for – to provide a calm, safe space that interrupts stuck thinking and helps young people find relief.

Getting stuck in thought spirals wasn't something LK* realised they did at first.

"I would have a negative thought, like I couldn't do something, and I would think of it on repeat. All the solutions I came up with would lead to the same negative thought. It felt never-ending."

"I would put constant pressure on myself while writing assignments, thinking what I'm doing isn't good enough, I'm so slow, I won't ever be able to get this done. I would tire myself out constantly thinking those thoughts, which would lead to a decrease in productivity. This reinforced those negative thoughts and started the whole cycle again."

When everything felt too much, LK reached out for help. It was late in the evening, when face-to-face services are hardest to access.

"I called my university mental health triage team late one evening, feeling completely overwhelmed by my emotions. They recommend I try Mello."

"I was surprised it was completely free, no ads or secret charges to access more features."



Day-to-day, I feel more relaxed and happier within myself. I don't go into never-ending loop thoughts or worry as much. When those thoughts begin, I'm now able to recognise the pattern and stop myself from going further.

LK found Mello particularly helpful before bed when their thoughts were spiralling. Unlike other generic wellness apps that offer surface-level advice, LK found that Mello's structured, evidence-based exercises actually shifted how they felt.

"I used to use Mello a lot, but now I only need it once or twice a week, usually before bed or on the bus home after uni."

"Day-to-day, I feel more relaxed and happier within myself. I don't go into never-ending loop thoughts or worry as much. When those thoughts begin, I'm now able to recognise the pattern and stop myself from going further."

"The unstuck feature is my favourite. I enjoy taking a guilt-free moment to complete an exercise."

Having Mello available for free on their phone meant LK could get relief in the moment they need it.

"I once had this moment where I was struggling with an assignment. Every time I worked on it, my thoughts would spiral into lots of negative self-talk. So, I opened Mello, said I was feeling very stuck and did the 'Being kind' exercise. It really put things into perspective for me, putting my words as if they were a friend allowed me to be much kinder to myself."

"If I didn't have Mello, I wouldn't have done anything about my problem... stuck thinking can happen at any time, so booking an appointment for support can be challenging."

For LK, Mello helped turn overwhelming late-night spirals into manageable moments by providing practical exercises that helped them pause, reflect and shift their thinking in the moment.

*Name changed for privacy

A year of digital impact

A note on the data presented in this report:

The data presented in this report is synthesised from a variety of sources covering the period 1 January 2025–23 November 2025. This includes information derived from the Mello, MindVR, and MOST onboarding surveys, optional follow up surveys, as well as real-time product data.

The total number of records analysed (n) varies across report tables because different tables pull from different subsets of the data:



Multi-Source Integration

A report table's n value reflects only the records available from the specific source it uses. The Location data (n=7,622) for example, is higher because it captures the user's location at the point of app download for the Mello app, as opposed to data collected from user at the time of onboarding (i.e. via the onboarding survey).



Product-Specific Availability

The total count changes based on which products contributed data. For instance, Sexual Orientation (n=1,845) is drawn only from the optional MOST survey.



Live Trial Limitations

MindVR usage, satisfaction, and efficacy data cannot be shared publicly at this time due to the potential impact on live trial results, leading to its exclusion from several tables.

Reach:

Onboarding data

Number of young people onboarded to MOST and Mello, and young people who have consented to the MindVR trial (n=6,562). Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

Gender	Count	% of respondents
Mello	532	8.1%
MindVR	94	1.4%
Most	5,936	90.5%
Total	6,562	100.00%

Demographic data:

Age

Mello, MOST, MindVR onboarding survey respondents (n=6,562). Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

Age	Count	% of respondents
12	315	4.8%
13	462	7.0%
14	520	7.9%
15	864	13.2%
16	742	11.3%
17	683	10.4%
18	478	7.3%
19	448	6.8%
20	428	6.5%
21	365	5.6%
22	391	6.0%
23	395	6.0%
24	390	5.9%
25	81	1.2%
Total	6,562	100.00%

Gender

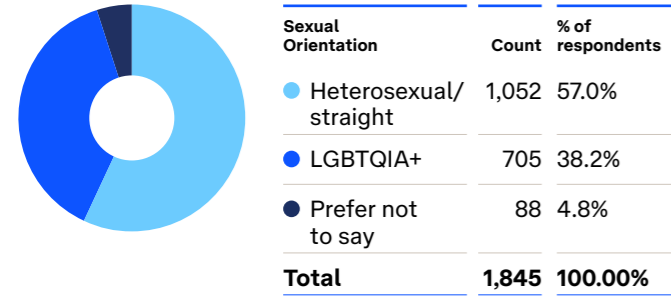
Mello, MOST, MindVR onboarding survey respondents (n=6,498). Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

Gender	Count	% of respondents
Female	4,389	67.5%
Male	1,340	20.6%
Other	716	11.0%
Unsure	53	0.8%
Total	6,498	100.00%

Sexual Orientation

MOST onboarding survey respondents only (n=1,845). Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

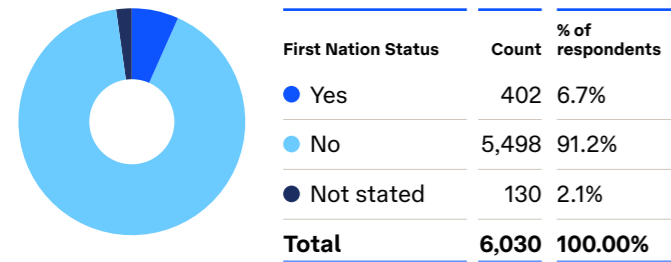
Please note; sexual orientation data not currently captured as part of Mello or Mind VR onboarding.



First Nations Status

MOST and MindVR onboarding survey respondents (n= 6,030). Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

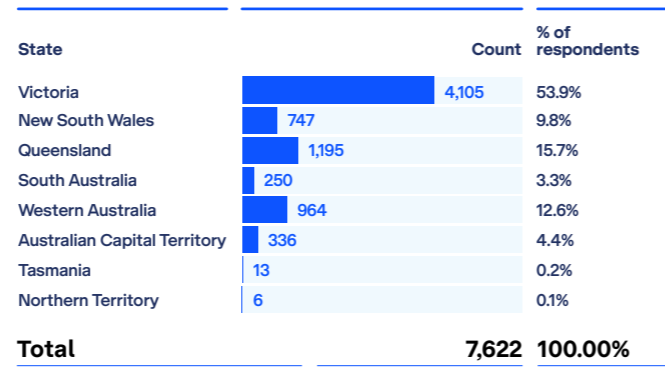
Please note; data not currently requested as part of Mello onboarding.



Location

Mello app store location data (at point of download). MOST and MindVR onboarding survey respondents (n= 7,622). Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

Please note; Location data for Mello is captured on app download as opposed to onboarding, which has increased the n value for this table when compared to overall reach data which captures data onboarding data only.



Satisfaction Data

Mello optional survey and MOST 12-week follow up survey respondents. Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

Please note; MindVR satisfaction data cannot be shared at this point given potential impact on live trial results.



78% feel better after using the product

95% feel safe using the products

98% feel satisfied using the products

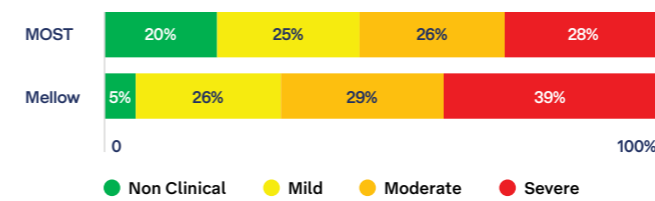
89% would recommend to friends i.e. 9 out of 10 people

Baseline data – PHQ4

Mello and MOST onboarding survey respondents. Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

Please note; MindVR data cannot be shared at this point given potential impact on live trial results).

PHQ4 Scores MOST and Mello

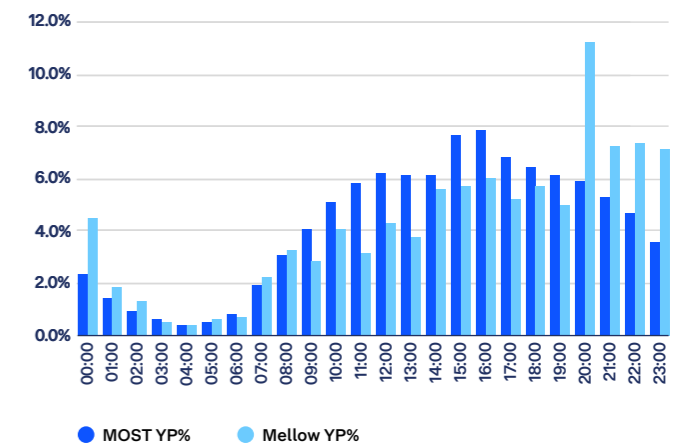


Usage Times

Mello and MOST respondents. Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

Please note; MindVR usage data cannot be shared at this point given potential impact on live trial results.

MOST and Mello Usage Times

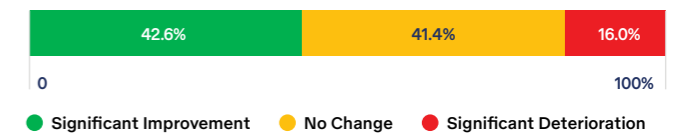


Efficacy data

MOST respondents only. Date: 1 January 2025 – 23 November 2025.

Please note; MindVR data cannot be shared at this point given potential impact on live trial results. Product updates underway to capture Mello efficacy data from Q1 2026.

Effectiveness – PHQ4



MOST: finding calm and connection in a changing world

Case study: Ash

The way young people connect and engage with one another is changing. With the world-first social media restrictions recently in place, many young Australians who have grown up online will now start navigating a different landscape. MOST was designed from the beginning to offer a safe, supported space for connection where they can reflect, build confidence and develop practical skills.

When Ash* joined MOST, they were feeling overwhelmed by the daily juggle. Work, life, relationships, and their mental health were all competing for attention, and they didn't feel they had a space to check in with themselves.

"I needed something I could access immediately that didn't feel intimidating or clinical. MOST sounded like a space where I could get both structured tools and human support without pressure."

"I was looking for support that felt practical, flexible and that I could use without sitting on a waiting list."



There was a post where someone shared something I'd been struggling with but never said out loud. Seeing others respond with kindness made me feel less alone. It was the first time in a while I felt genuinely understood.

MOST quickly became an anchor in Ash's week.

"I jump on for a short check-in throughout the week. Sometimes I browse my toolkit when I'm stressed, sometimes I follow a therapy journey, and other times I just read what people are posting in the community. It's kind of become a daily reset button."

MOST didn't just give Ash access to tools, the combination of human support, guided therapy content and the community helped them feel better and feel more capable.

"Since joining MOST, I have more clarity about my emotions and more confidence in my ability to manage tricky moments. I feel less isolated and more connected to people who 'get it.' My coping feels stronger and more consistent."

"The Journeys give me structure. It's like having a roadmap instead of guessing what to do. And my toolkit is great in the moment because the content in it is bite-sized and immediately useful. The human support is also grounding when I need an outside perspective."

Ash's experience reflects a broader shift among young people – they want support that fits into their day and responds to real life in real time.

"Digital platforms like MOST offer accessibility and immediacy. It's support you can use at midnight, on a lunch break, or when you don't have the energy to talk to someone face-to-face. It feels less intimidating, and you don't need to be in crisis to use it. It's not like social media, it's genuinely helpful."

For Ash, having a safe, steady online space helped them feel less alone and more equipped to manage everyday pressures.

*Name changed for privacy

MindVR: building the next generation of care

Case study: Zane and Lauren

Orygen Digital's latest innovation in youth mental health care is bringing the immersive world of VR into therapy sessions. .

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MindVR brings young people into a virtual world to help them better manage and understand their thoughts and emotions through diffusion, a technique from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

Excitement around the new therapeutic intervention is building. The clinical trial hit its recruitment target in just six months and the young people participating are already reporting meaningful shifts in how they understand and manage their thoughts and emotions.

For Zane, an experienced VR user, the idea of stepping into a new world for the purpose of therapy was unexpected. He'd never come across any VR apps for mental health.

"I was surprised by how welcoming the environment was in Mind when I first opened it. The companion was friendly and the whole Mind world was really well executed," said Zane.

Being able to see his thoughts in front of him meant he could separate himself from those thoughts and reflect on how he thought about things.

"[MindVR] made it easier to step back from my thoughts. The Reshaping your Thoughts activity, where you got to choose what your thought looked and sounded like, helped me feel calmer. I've even used that technique in real-life situations."

Lauren, another MindVR trial participant, entered the trial with a mix of openness and doubt, especially about whether VR therapy could make a meaningful difference for her.

Once she began exploring Mind, Lauren found the shift to a fully immersive environment helped her engage with the therapeutic activities in a new way – even the ones she'd previously dismissed.

"After all the years of therapy I'd done, I was adamant that breathing exercises didn't work for me. But after doing them in [MindVR], I genuinely feel more relaxed. I've even been using those techniques outside of the trial. The full immersion of VR helped me really engage in the [MindVR] world and activities."

This isn't the first time Lauren has used to digital interventions, but none of them have been as impactful as MindVR.

"I've tried a few other apps and feeling trackers, but I haven't found them to be too helpful for me. [MindVR] has been the most effective use of technology to help with my mental health." Lauren said.

Zane's experience of online support echoes Lauren's. "I've tried using online helplines. They're not helpful in comparison to using something like [MindVR]. If I had a choice, I'd use [MindVR] every time."

This early feedback from the trial shows that MindVR is doing more than introducing a new therapy tool, it's helping young people learn skills that transfer into their everyday lives. Techniques that once felt abstract or ineffective are suddenly clicking in the fully immersive environment.

MindVR has the potential to deepen engagement, reduce barriers and create meaningful change for young people who may not connect with traditional approaches.

Partnering for impact

The stories in this report evidence how our sustained partnership has nurtured industry-leading digital tools, helping young people feel seen, supported and confident to manage their mental health.

With Telstra Foundation's support, Orygen Digital has created mental health solutions that are transforming how young Australians access care. The work connects to the Telstra Foundation's social investment focus area # 3: Meaningful connectivity – digital solutions for youth mental health (see Appendix A). Importantly, it delivers on our shared ambition to ensure all young people in Australia can quickly and easily access evidenced based mental health support, where and when they need it.

As the need continues to arise, so does the opportunity to respond. Through our continued partnership, we will ensure even more young people have access to world-class mental health support right in the palm of their hand.

If this is a mission you'd like to be part of, we'd love to hear from you.



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Jackie Coates
CEO, Telstra Foundation

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Appendix A

Telstra Foundation Social Investment Framework

Meaningful connectivity – digital solutions for youth mental health
(key focus area #3)

Our ambition

All young people in Australia can quickly and easily access evidence-based mental health support, where and when they need it.

How we create impact



Scale effective digital tools

- Back organisations with proven digital mental health services to scale their impact.
- Make these tools free and widely accessible for young people who need them most.



Invest in innovation

- Provide funding to partners to explore and test new and emerging technologies to enhance mental health care.
- Identify and scale breakthrough solutions that meet young people's evolving needs.



Build support networks

- Work with partners that provide young people's support networks – clinicians, parents, carers, teachers, and crisis supporters – with tools to better connect with young people.
- Improve the effectiveness of support systems around young people.



Amplify the youth voice

- Ensure children & young people's voices are always included and shape the programs and initiatives designed to support them.

The change we want to see



Immediate outcomes



Increased engagement and participation in learning:

Mental health care feels empowering, relevant, and accessible, driving learning and engagement.



Increased capacities:

Increased mental health literacy among young people.



Greater access & awareness:

Greater access to and awareness of effective mental health resources and services.



Strengthened support networks:

Young people are empowered and supported to navigate the next steps in their mental health journey.



Platform for a youth voice:

Young people see themselves represented in the resources provided.



Medium- to long-term outcomes



Safe, inclusive and enriching digital spaces:

Validation, acceptance, and relief from immediate negative emotions.



Improved wellbeing:

Young people feeling better, more confident, and in control of their mental health journey.



Transformational change

By 2030, one million children & young people in Australia will be empowered to thrive in safe, inclusive digital spaces and shape their own futures.

