

Annual report

2023 – 24



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Sonder acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay respect to them, their cultural and spiritual heritage, and to Elders past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge the ongoing impact of intergenerational trauma that has occurred since colonisation and commit to truth-telling as we walk alongside them toward reconciliation.



Sonder welcomes people from all cultures, faiths, backgrounds, and experiences, and celebrates all identities, genders, sexes, orientations and abilities. We embrace diverse voices in our decision-making to ensure we deliver inclusive services.

Sonder is an inclusive, not-for-profit organisation that has been providing better quality health and support services to the South Australian community since 1993.

We support thousands of children, young people and adults each year to access multiple services that address their needs, delivered from a range of centres located across SA.

Our focus is on supporting individuals across six key domains – mental health, homelessness, Aboriginal health, alcohol and/or other drugs, employment and primary health.

Vision

Better Care, Better Health

Purpose

To deliver high-quality, local healthcare and community services.

Goal

We will be the leading organisation at delivering integrated primary care and community services to the most vulnerable people across South Australia.



Sageran Naidoo
Chief Executive Officer

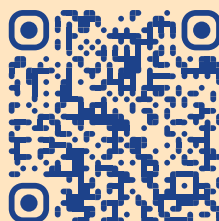
As we reflect on the progress made this year, we can confidently say that the challenges of 2023 are now firmly behind us. This annual report chronicles the remarkable achievements of our teams, who have demonstrated unwavering diligence and impactful work despite the blurring pace of change across Sonder. These changes were essential for cementing the financial reforms designed to address the previous year's deficit and for implementing the new technology systems aimed at modernising every aspect of our service delivery and corporate support.

The modest deficit recorded this year was welcomed by the Executive and the Board as a positive indication that our turnaround strategies have been effective. The reduction in corporate costs was achieved without compromising our commitment to sustained excellence in service provision. The deficit incurred in 2023 resulted from substantial investments in major projects within a single financial year, necessitating a year of repair for 2024. However, these investments have become valuable assets supporting our modernisation efforts.

As we reflect on the progress made this year, we can confidently say that the challenges of 2023 are now firmly behind us.

The impact of our service delivery teams is clearly illustrated in the data included in this report, underscoring our commitment to enhancing activity levels across all service streams. Our focus on improved productivity and data-informed reforms positions us well to meet our contractual obligations amidst the dual challenges facing our sector—increasing costs and funding that has not kept pace with the realities of our operating environment.

This conundrum was evident this year, as we were unable to sustain the losses in our newly established Disability Services portfolio over the preceding two years. In this reporting period, we saw the cessation of the Disability Services portfolio as we struggled to break even with our NDIS-funded services. This erosion of organisational savings has, unfortunately, been a common challenge among many providers in our sector.



Watch video from
Sageran Naidoo

The investments in data systems have now borne fruit. We have a clear understanding of targets and are actively monitoring the gaps that prevent us from seeing more clients and making a meaningful impact on their lives. This drive for efficiency will improve our relationship with funders, and we are determined to continue our quest to be the best provider of services in our sector. And with good data, we can confidently showcase our capabilities.

However, we are mindful that our shift towards leveraging data and advanced analytics to support staff in achieving their goals is not without risk. Such a transformation poses potential challenges to our organisational culture. The expectation from funders for excellence and compliance with targets, despite insufficient funding to cover costs, has eroded some of the positivity that our staff have held for Sonder as their employer. We are committed to working harder to regain that trust and re-establish Sonder as a preeminent employer in our sector.

Alongside these significant changes in service delivery and financial controls, the ongoing reforms to Sonder's Constitution and membership structure, initiated two years ago, continued through this year and are expected to conclude next year. This modernisation of our corporate governance is a crucial element of our sustained reform efforts, enabling us to meet our commitments as outlined in our Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027.

Looking to the future, our focus remains on sustaining financial stability, fostering innovation, and cultivating a culture of excellence. We will continue to explore new growth opportunities, invest in our people, and uphold our commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

In that regard, we look to the new Medicare Mental Health Centre (formerly Head to Health) as a beacon of reform and innovation. This new model of care provides us with the opportunity to redefine what mental health services could look like for consumers and their families. Peer-led services working seamlessly with clinical and medical services in a community setting has been the goal of our sector for many years. If we get this model to work in Elizabeth, we can attract and retain a highly skilled workforce that share our values and be transformative for the communities we serve.

Perfecting this model will position us at the forefront of innovation and excellence – future proofing Sonder, creating stability to navigate sectoral changes, and enabling our staff to feel part of an agency that is committed to societal transformation.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated employees, Members, Directors and stakeholders for their unwavering support and contributions over the past year. Thank you for your continued trust and commitment.



Dr Rizwan Latif
Board Chair

I am grateful for the dedication, innovation and endeavour of the staff and executive team at Sonder and this annual report speaks to their tireless commitment to our clients and their families.

A review of the 2023 financial year would not be complete without a review of the year that came before, and the year ahead. We invested heavily in systems and processes in 2023 and the financial impacts of those reforms was revealed in the extent of the deficit at the end of the 2023 trading year. And so, it is pleasing to note that this most intensive investment in ourselves has now achieved the positive results the Board had hoped for.

We have fully deployed these information systems and are using the advanced data analytics to enhance the services that we deliver. This aligns with our strategic objectives and confirms our commitment to our social justice imperatives. The Board is pleased too that these reforms have enabled us to have robust processes for monitoring expenditure and the Board is pleased indeed that we are returning to a period of break-even budgets. As a medium sized NGO, this financial stability is important for our sustainability in the face of immense cost pressures on our services. I am pleased that the Executive Team has worked diligently to reduce costs and drive productivity gains across all aspects of Sonder's support departments.

The 2023 year also saw the Board having intensive engagement with our Members as we moved ahead with the modernisation of our constitution and changes to our membership structure. Those reforms will be concluded this year and we move ahead now with a modern governance structure. These reforms will enable us to address gaps in our Board composition and ensure we have the skills and expertise at the Board level to meet the complex demands on the organisation.

I am grateful for the dedication, innovation and endeavour of the staff and executive team at Sonder and this annual report speaks to their tireless commitment to our clients and their families. On behalf of the Board, I express my thanks to the many stakeholders who have remained committed to our cause and I am looking forward to many years of stability and impact built on the backs of these major reforms that have been undertaken over the past two years.

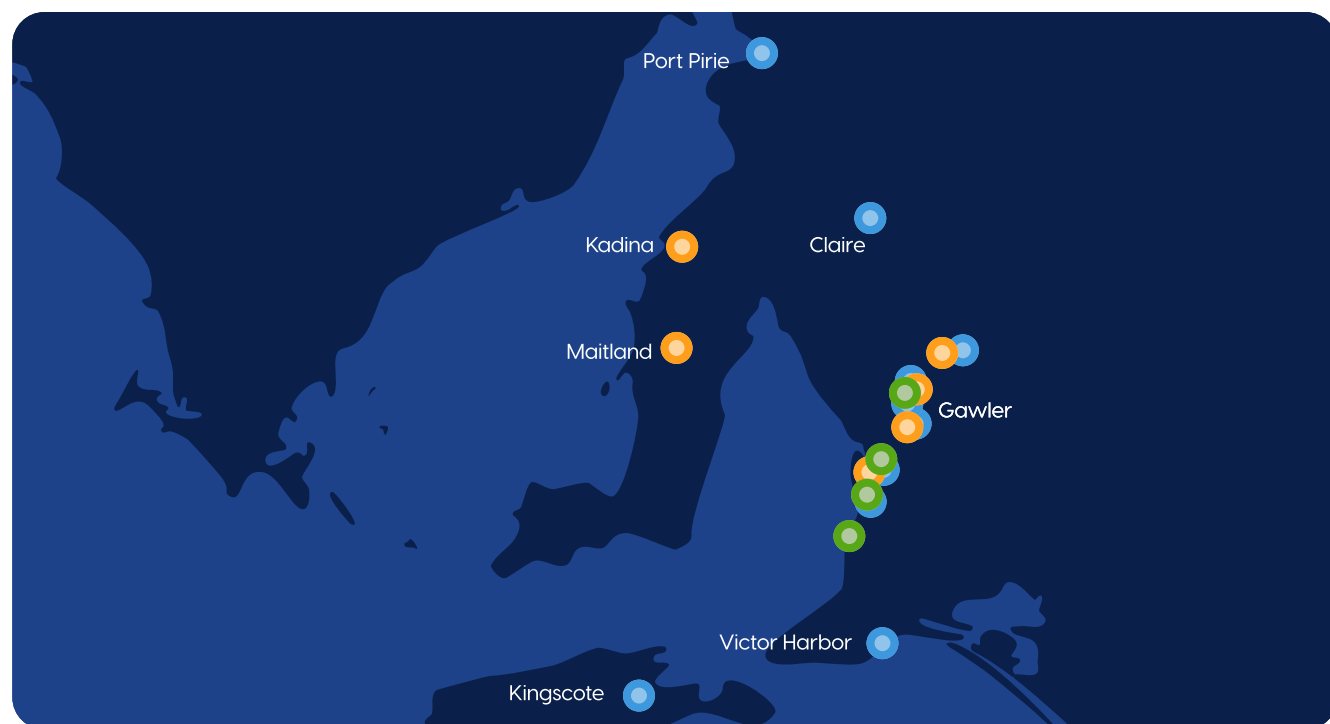


Our impact

Throughout the 2023-24 financial year, we supported **13,686** people in metropolitan and regional communities across South Australia.



We supported individuals in 26 programs and services across mental health, alcohol and/or other drugs, youth, primary health, homelessness and Aboriginal health.



● Sonder ● Headspace ● Other

Mental Health

41%



of clients demonstrated improvements in their wellbeing

6,318

adults, children and
families supported

15,151

occasions
of service

Opened Northern Adelaide Medicare Mental Health Centre (Head to Health)

Services

- Northern Adelaide Medicare Mental Health Centre (Head to Health)
- Enhanced Mental Health Services
- Safe Haven
- Western Wellbeing Hub
- Clinical Care Coordination - Regional
- Booked Psychiatric Assessments
- Shared Care with GPs
- Residential Wellbeing
- Solasta

● — Alcohol and/or other drugs

57%



of clients demonstrated improvements in wellbeing

86%

of In-Home Withdrawal Service clients reduced their substance use

660

people supported

Services

- In-Home Withdrawal Service
- AIM
- Partners Toward Wellbeing

● — Youth

40%



of young people demonstrated reduction in psychological distress

3,960

young people supported

57,611

occasions of service

Services

- headspace Adelaide
- headspace Marion
- headspace Edinburgh North
- headspace Onkaparinga
- headspace Early Psychosis
- headspace Work & Study

4

headspace centres – Adelaide, Edinburgh North, Onkaparinga and Marion

210

young people supported through headspace Work & Study

4.1/5

Average satisfaction rating

500+

Participated in community engagement activities

Primary health

2,748

people supported

7,192

occasions of service



Launched Steady Steps – new falls prevention program for older people

Services

- Healthy Habits
- Integrated Primary Care
- Steady Steps
- Dietetics
- Exercise Physiology

Homelessness

1,200

services provided to support with mental health, alcohol and/or other drug use, and physical health



149

people supported

2,000

services provided to rough sleepers

Services

- Toward Home

Aboriginal health

97%



of clients improved their confidence in managing their health

597

people supported

52,660

occasions of service

3,000+

people attended Closing the Gap Day

Services

- Closing the Gap Integrated Team Care



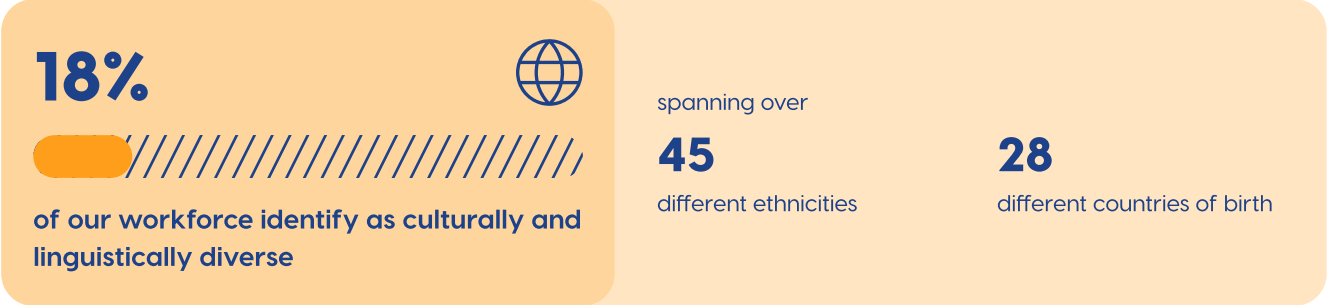
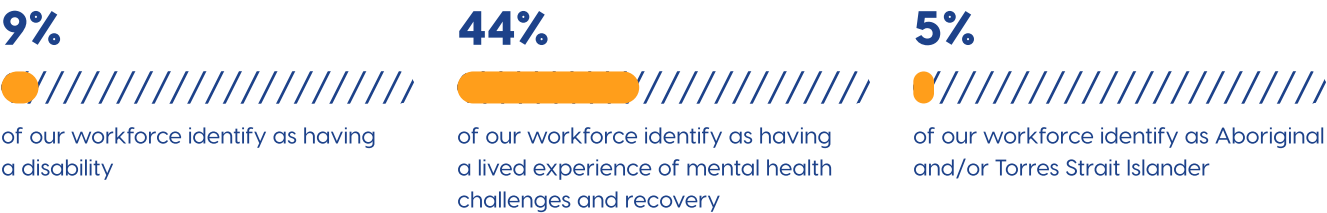
Our people

We are proud of our dedicated and diverse workforce, whose commitment and expertise drive our ability to achieve strategic goals and deliver exceptional services to the communities we serve.



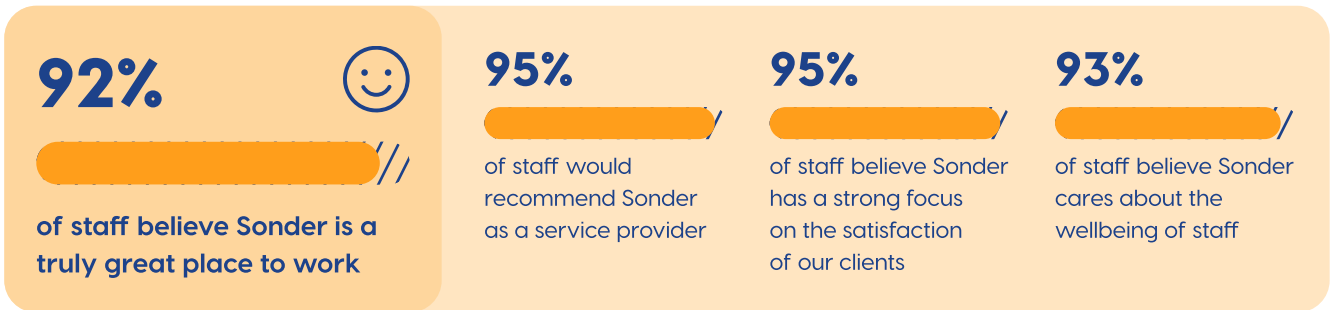


● — Key stats



In 2023, we invited staff to participate in an engagement survey. 75% of staff participated in the survey.

Results indicated a strong commitment and enthusiasm from staff towards their roles and Sonder’s overall objective, with 83% of staff reporting feeling engaged in their roles.



“Working with Sonder has restored my confidence and faith – not only in myself, but in knowing that organisations can care about their people, both clients and staff. That doesn’t mean there isn’t bumps along the roads, things are not always perfect, but to me, Sonder has a willingness and spirit to do the best it can. That’s what sets the organisation apart from other employers.”



Karyn,
Country Mental Health & AOD Clinical Lead

In November 2023, we celebrated Sonder's 30-year anniversary.

For three decades, Sonder has been on a transformative journey of innovation and growth. We have worked tirelessly to deliver high quality services to empower individuals across South Australia to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes.





Research & evaluation

36 people attended our Research Symposium

Supervised PhD candidate to work on the implementation of a new digital self-help tool – icanactnow

Partnered with University of Adelaide for a research project designed to explore service demand issues for headspace Edinburgh North.

Developed Monitoring & Evaluation Frameworks for 5 programs.

5 evaluations completed for services.





Sonder held its second Research Symposium, showcasing research and program evaluations that incorporate co-designed and participatory health practices.

The event attracted 36 attendees from universities, research institutions, government, and NGO organisations.

The symposium featured presentations from researchers and professionals across South Australia and Canberra, followed by a panel discussion on the practical aspects and challenges of conducting co-designed research.

PhD Projects

In partnership with the University of South Australia and the University of Adelaide, Sonder commenced supervision of a PhD candidate.

This initiative stemmed from a prior research project that explored the support preferences of individuals on mental health service waitlists.

The project, titled 'What Consumers, General Practitioners and Mental Health Professionals Want: The Co-Design of a Transdiagnostic, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy-Based Online Intervention to Reduce Distress and Promote Wellbeing Among Australian Adults', utilises icanactnow, a co-designed digital tool offering interactive, personalised, and self-guided support.

Working alongside researchers, Sonder clinicians and consumers, the PhD candidate will co-design the implementation of icanactnow and evaluate its effectiveness in reducing distress and improving wellbeing among users. Through this project, the candidate will gain experience in industry engagement, consumer collaboration, and implementation science, and the translation of research into practice.

Demand management

In response to growing service demand, Sonder partnered with the University of Adelaide for a one-year research project to explore and co-design solutions for service demand issues at Sonder's headspace Edinburgh North centre, and the broader youth mental health system.

In this project, people with lived experience and service providers worked together through a series of co-design workshops, followed by six months of observation to oversee the implementation of emerging solutions. The data from this project continues to be analysed as the PhD candidate progresses through their three-year candidature.

Client experience

During the 2023-24 financial year, we reviewed our client experience practices, working closely with program staff to improve survey accessibility and enable more timely and widespread reporting to enhance opportunities for continuous quality improvement.

Following this review, Sonder transitioned to program-specific surveys and a more user-friendly reporting dashboard. This dashboard provides real-time qualitative and quantitative data, accessible to all staff, facilitating better-informed service delivery.

Enhancing outcomes through monitoring and evaluation

Sonder continued to undertake program monitoring and evaluation to ensure the best possible outcomes for our clients to enable service improvements, innovations and build evidence-based practices.

This past year, we developed several Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks for programs including Northern Adelaide Medicare Mental Health Centre (formerly Head to Health), Palliative Care Connect, Hutt Street Centre, Skills SA and Toward Home.

High-quality evaluations were also completed, including a lifespan evaluation of the Aboriginal health program, Closing the Gap – Integrated Team Care, an evaluation of Closing the Gap Day 2024 event, and evaluations of programs including Safe Haven, In-Home Withdrawal Service, and Steady Steps.



Professional development for health professionals

As an RACGP-accredited provider of quality improvement and continuing professional development, Sonder offers professional development and networking opportunities for individuals in primary healthcare and community services.





In the 2023-24 financial year, Sonder hosted 24 professional development sessions for GPs, health professionals and staff at Sonder.

These sessions covered a diverse range of topics, including urology, pain management, weight management, psychological injuries, lower limb problems, mentally healthy workplaces, orthopaedics, fertility, alcohol and other drugs, and payroll tax.

A key initiative was our collaboration with Genea Fertility SA to deliver fertility-focused education sessions for GPs, providing valuable insights into this emerging clinical area. Another highlight was our partnership with Wakefield Orthopaedic to deliver a full-day orthopaedics conference, 'Limbering Up'. Attended by 38 GPs, the conference featured presentations and interactive sessions on the treatment and management of orthopaedic injuries and conditions.

We extend our gratitude to our valued sponsors for their support throughout the year, including Genea Fertility, Return to Work SA, Wakefield Orthopaedic Clinic, SportsMed, CanView, Cannatrek, Urological Solutions, Boston Scientific, Teleflex, Brentnalls, Avant, SA Pathology, AbbVie, AstraZeneca and Bensons Radiology.

24



professional development events hosted

7

workshops delivered for RTOs – aimed at building skills to support diverse learner groups

38

GPs attended a full-day orthopaedics conference partnered with Wakefield Orthopaedic

Partnered with Genea Fertility SA to deliver a series of fertility-focused events.



Our board

Our Board of Directors set the strategic vision for the organisation and oversee the strategic directions. They also play a vital role in monitoring the practice, financial and clinical performance of the organisation.



Dr Rizwan Latif
Board Chair
General Practitioner in
Craigmore



Danny Haydon
**Board Vice Chair & Chair
of Governance &
Nominations Committee**
Principal, Health Division,
Brentnalls Health



Dr Richard Heah
Board Director
General Practitioner
in Elizabeth



Mr John Manning
**Chair of Risk
& Finance Committee**
Managing Director at
Dewings Accounting



Dr Kali Hayward
Board Director
General Practitioner
in Noarlunga



Dr Sian Goodson
Board Director
General Practitioner
in Elizabeth



Professor Tracey Wade
Board Director
Distinguished Professor
of Psychology at
Flinders University

Financial performance

In 2023-24 financial year, Sonder has had a period of consolidation and some rationalisation of its corporate services structure and infrastructure.

This follows the prior year that saw large investments in systems reforms including ICT upgrades, new HR, payroll and finance systems, data dashboards and migration to cloud computing.

Sonder grew by 11% in revenue over the 2023-24 financial year to reach \$35.4 million. The growth was derived from successful tendering for grants such as Northern Adelaide Medicare Mental Health Centre (Head to Health). Some significant capital works grants were also completed to upgrade current sites and establish a new site at Lipson Street, Port Adelaide.

Expenses have reduced overall by 2.5% despite inflationary pressures including staff salaries growth to improve retention outcomes. Savings were made in reduction of corporate expenses including some unfortunate staff redundancies. Moving ICT to an outsourced model, facilities and vehicle utilisation have also contributed to effective cost saving measures.

The financial result for 2023-24 was a \$333k deficit.

Nexia Edwards Marshall audited the Sonder Financial Statements 2023-24 and concluded that they give a true and fair view of the organisation’s financial position and performance and comply with Australian Accounting Standards.

\$35.4M

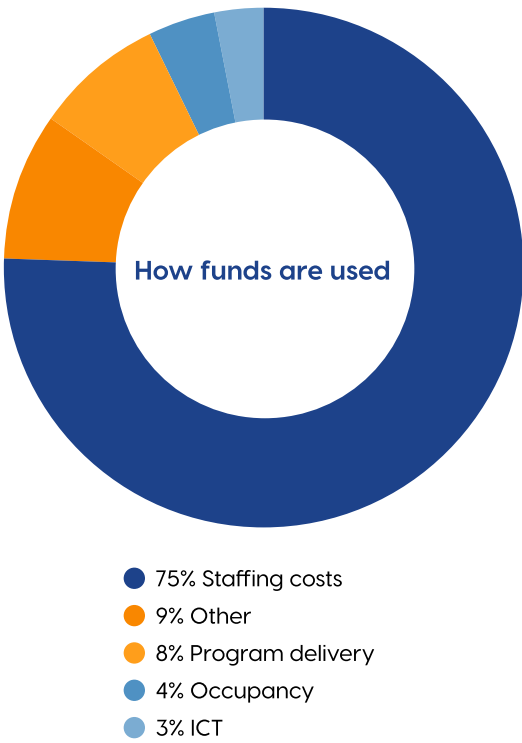
Total revenue

\$1.9M

Total Net Assets



Download the full financial report





● Statement of financial position

	2023/2024	2022/2023
Current assets	\$4,906,781	\$7,509,062
Non-current assets	\$9,697,800	\$8,216,992
Total assets	\$14,604,581	\$15,726,054
Current liabilities	\$8,261,920	\$8,704,239
Non-current liabilities	\$4,396,052	\$4,742,097
Total liabilities	\$12,657,972	\$13,446,336
Net assets	\$1,946,609	\$2,279,718

