SMART Recovery

IMPACT

REPORT 2025-26



RECOVERY MADE SMARTER— TOGETHER.



SMART Recovery

Acknowledgement of Country

SMART Recovery Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Country throughout Australia. We acknowledge the unceded and continuous connection to country, water and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge community-controlled Aboriginal organisations that we work with around the country. We value self-determination, we learn by looking back and as we look to the future we centre deep listening and collaboration in our work.

Disclaimer

This report is issued by SMART Recovery Australia Ltd. and individual contributors are not responsible for the results of any action taken on the basis of information in this report, nor any errors or omissions. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, SMART Recovery Australia Ltd. does not make any claim, express or implied, regarding it.

Copyright ©

SMART Recovery Australia Ltd., 2026
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

This document is copyrighted. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without the express written permission of SMART Recovery Australia Ltd.

RECOVERY MADE SMARTER— TOGETHER.

RECOVERY MADE SMARTER— TOGETHER. 1

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR 5

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO 6

OUR BOARD 7

DEFINING ADDICTION 8

IMPACT IN NUMBERS 11

HUMANS OF SMART RECOVERY AUSTRALIA 13

THE JOURNEY BOTTLE 15
YARN SMART 17
LGBTIQA+ INCLUSIVE RECOVERY SUPPORT 19
INSIDE OUT 21
SMART FAMILY AND FRIENDS 22
EMPOWERING YOUTH 23
GIVING BACK, MOVING FORWARD 24

NEW PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY 25
LEARNSMART LAUNCH 26
SMART FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS 27
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND EXPANSION 28

JASON'S STORY 29

THANK YOU 30

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 31

RECOVERY MADE SMARTER— TOGETHER.

In 2004, SMART Recovery Australia only existed as a short alternative recovery treatment pilot program led by three visionary clinical nursing staff in the supervised injection room at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney seeking an alternative to abstinence-only 12-step addiction recovery methods.

22 years later, our programs now provide culturally safe, secular, shame-free harm minimisation support to over 4,000 people across the country each week in community, justice, and private health spaces.

Our simple 4-Point method provides practical tools and support at all stages of addiction, enabling participants to take control of their behaviours of concern through evidence-based practice, work towards sustainable recovery, and change the narratives.

Through our Innovation programs, we help shape culturally safe, community-informed recovery spaces led by those with lived experience for their communities.

Our programs are always free to attend and focus on self-management and empowerment. Whether face-to-face or online, SMART Recovery resources are now available 24/7 thanks to our commitment to digital transformation and accessibility.

Together, with our member organisations and trained facilitators, we help uplift people who are experiencing addictive or problematic behaviours and equip them with the tools to create positive change in their lives.



OUR 4-POINT PROGRAM
POINT OF DIFFERENCE

RECOVERY MADE SMARTER— TOGETHER.

Recovery is personal. It looks different for every person, family and community. But no one should have to navigate it without access to practical tools, meaningful connection and support that respects their right to choose their own path.

That belief sits at the heart of SMART Recovery Australia.

In 2025-26, we introduced our new strategic direction: Recovery Made SMARTer—Together. More than a statement of ambition, it reflects how we see the future of recovery support: practical, evidence-informed, inclusive and built alongside the people and communities we serve.

Our strategy focuses on four priorities: changing the narrative around addiction and recovery; partnering for greater impact; growing our community of skilled facilitators; and investing in the people and capability that make our work possible.

This year, those priorities came to life across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Our network grew to 408 active meetings, creating more opportunities for people to connect through accessible online and face-to-face support. We continued to expand specialist programs, including Yarn SMART, Youth SMART, Inside Out, Family and Friends and inclusive meetings for diverse communities.

We also strengthened the foundations behind every meeting. Through training, scholarships, communities of practice, digital learning and partnerships, we invested in the people who make recovery support possible.

Importantly, growth is not simply about reaching larger numbers. Impact happens in the moments between people: when someone attends their first meeting; when a facilitator creates a welcoming space; when a family member realises they are not alone; or when a community adapts recovery support in ways that reflect its culture, strengths and lived experience.

SMART Recovery is a movement built on connection and shared purpose. Our volunteers, facilitators, member organisations, partners, supporters and staff each bring something important.

Together, we are changing the way recovery is understood.

Together, we are creating more pathways to support.

Together, we are making recovery SMARTer.

VISION 2028: WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

SMART as a Relatable, Visible, Peer-Led Movement

SMART is the #1 Peer Community in Australia/Aotearoa

Recognised and respected by healthcare, community and justice services for evidence-based, peer-led recovery.

Narrative Shifted

Addiction is viewed as a human experience open to change, not a fixed condition or source of stigma. Peer support is part of the everyday conversation and recovery support is a social expectation.

Facilitators at the Forefront

A confident, diverse facilitator network leading SMART sessions across age groups, cultures, and platforms.

Scaling Impact Through Tools and Partnerships

SMART tools are used by our Member organisations and Strategic Partners to support people to live their best lives.


Lucy Norton - Yarn SMART
Pearce - Yarn SMART (He/Him)


SMART
Recovery










SMART
Recovery


SMART
Recovery
Choose
your own
path for
a healthier
future.


SMART Recovery
Yarn SMART


AddictionZ
Connection / NOT / Convention


SMART
Recovery
Choose
your own
path for
a health
future.




SANDAS
South Australian
Network of Drug & Alcohol Services
South Australia's peak body for NGOs in the alcohol, other drugs and co-morbidity sector
www.sandas.org.au
SMART Recovery Australia
Who is SMART Recovery?
















Heal Your Way:
Lucy Norton

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



Brett Savill
Chairperson, SMART Recovery Australia

It is a privilege to reflect on a year of significant growth and impact for SMART Recovery Australia. As a Board, our role is to ensure that the organisation is well positioned to meet the growing need for free, evidence-based recovery support while remaining true to the people and communities at the heart of our work.

As Chair, I have seen first-hand the dedication of our staff, volunteers, facilitators, members and partners who make SMART Recovery what it is. Their commitment is reflected in the growth of our national community, but more importantly, in the thousands of people who are finding accessible, evidence-informed support to make positive changes in their lives.

This year, SMART Recovery reached an important milestone with 408 active meetings across Australia, alongside continued growth in online and face-to-face support, specialist programs and our facilitator community. From Yarn SMART and Youth SMART to our work in justice settings and support for families and friends, we are increasingly reaching people and communities who have historically faced barriers to accessing recovery support.

Our role as a Board is to ensure that this growth is sustainable, responsible and aligned with the purpose of the organisation. This year we adopted our new strategy, Recovery Made SMARTer— Together, providing a clear direction for the years ahead.

It reflects our ambition to grow our reach while maintaining the quality, integrity and inclusiveness of the SMART Recovery model.

The Board is confident that SMART is entering its next phase of growth. Our responsibility is to ensure that growth is sustainable, appropriately resourced and underpinned by strong governance and evidence of impact.

We are also proud of the growing role SMART Recovery is playing in building capability within communities, including through Yarn SMART and our partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Health Organisations.

On behalf of the Board, I thank everyone who has contributed to SMART Recovery this year. Your commitment is changing the way recovery is understood and supported in Australia.

Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive recovery movement and there is much more to come.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



April Long
Chief Executive Officer, SMART Recovery Australia

This year has been one of growth, connection and renewed ambition for SMART Recovery Australia.

Across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, our community has continued to show what is possible when people are given the tools, support and belief to make meaningful change in their lives. With 408 active meetings, more than 860 people participating in training, and hundreds of facilitators, volunteers and partner organisations contributing to our work, SMART Recovery is reaching more people and more communities than ever before.

But our impact is not measured only in numbers. It is in the person who finds the courage to attend their first meeting. The facilitator who creates a safe space for someone to talk openly about change. The Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation that builds its own recovery capability through Yarn SMART. The young person, family member or person leaving the justice system who finds support that feels relevant to their life. These are the moments that give meaning to everything we do.

This year we launched our new strategy, **Recovery Made SMARTer— Together**, setting an ambitious direction for the years ahead. We will continue to change the narrative around addiction, partner for greater impact, grow our community of skilled facilitators and invest in the people and capability that make SMART possible.

Our ambition is significant. We want to grow from more than 400 meetings today to 500 in the year ahead, and ultimately 1,000 meetings over the next three years. We want to expand Yarn SMART, strengthen our partnerships, grow our facilitator community and make recovery support available to more people, in more places, in ways that reflect their lives and communities.

We know we cannot achieve this alone. Our volunteers, facilitators, members, partners, supporters and staff are the heart of SMART Recovery. Together, we are building a movement where recovery is accessible, inclusive and possible for everyone.

Recovery Made SMARTer— TOGETHER.

OUR BOARD



BRETT SAVILL
CHAIRPERSON



VICTORIA MANNING
DIRECTOR



TANIA SKIPPEN
DIRECTOR



SHAYAN GUNAWARDENA
DIRECTOR



SHAUN FISHER
DIRECTOR



GARY GROVES
DIRECTOR



LERON ZINATULLIN
DIRECTOR

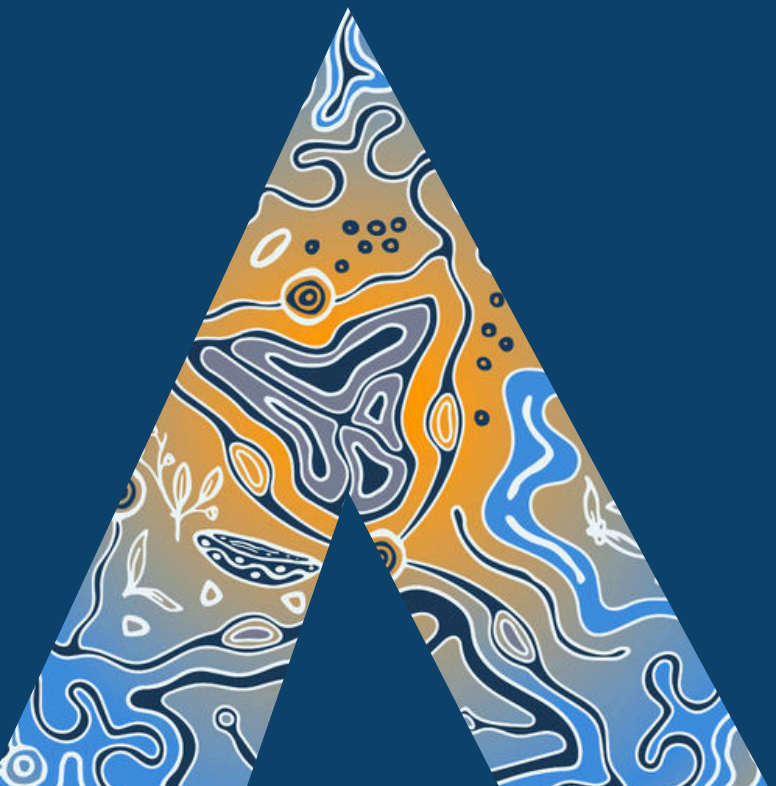


SALI GORGI
DIRECTOR



APRIL LONG
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

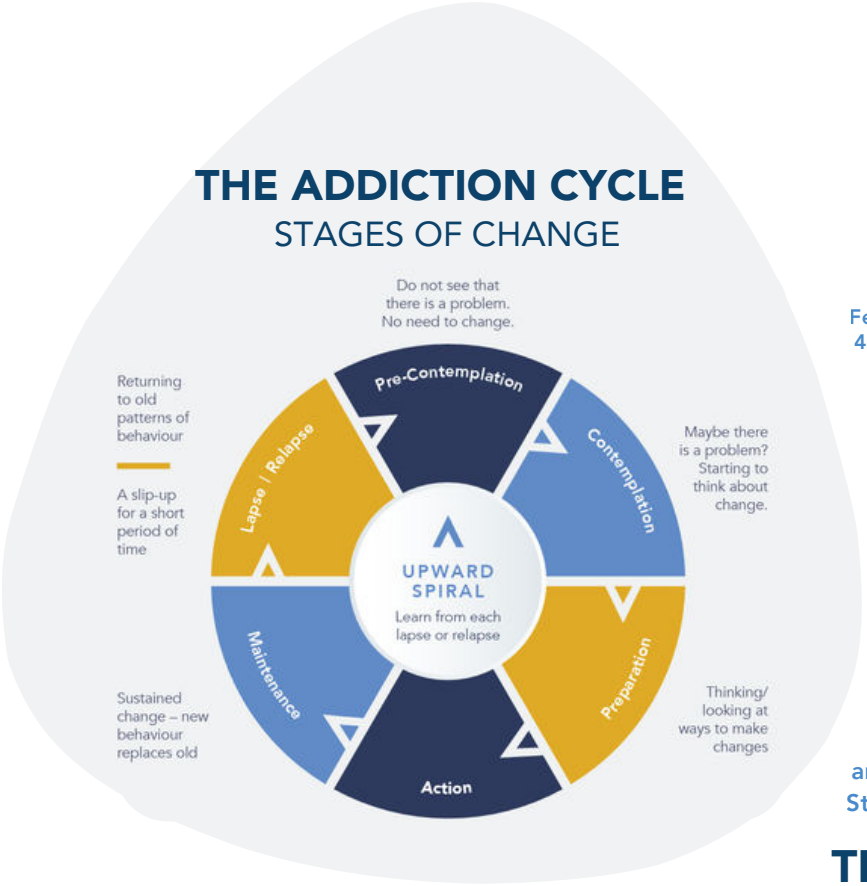
DEFINING ADDICTION

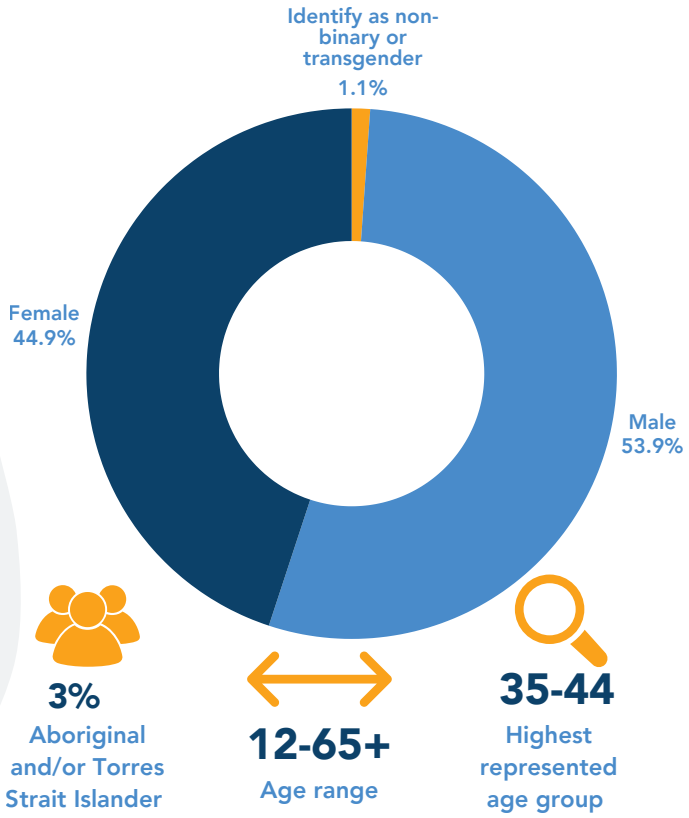


DEFINING ADDICTION

SMART Recovery views addiction as a human experience that can change and is developed in response to challenging thoughts, emotions, or life circumstances. This perspective shifts the focus from moral judgement or disease classification to understanding addiction as a pattern that can be unlearned and replaced with healthier strategies.

Addictive behaviours can encompass a range of activities, including substance use (alcohol, drugs), gambling, sexual behaviours, eating, shopping, and gaming. These behaviours often serve as temporary relief mechanisms but can lead to long-term negative consequences.

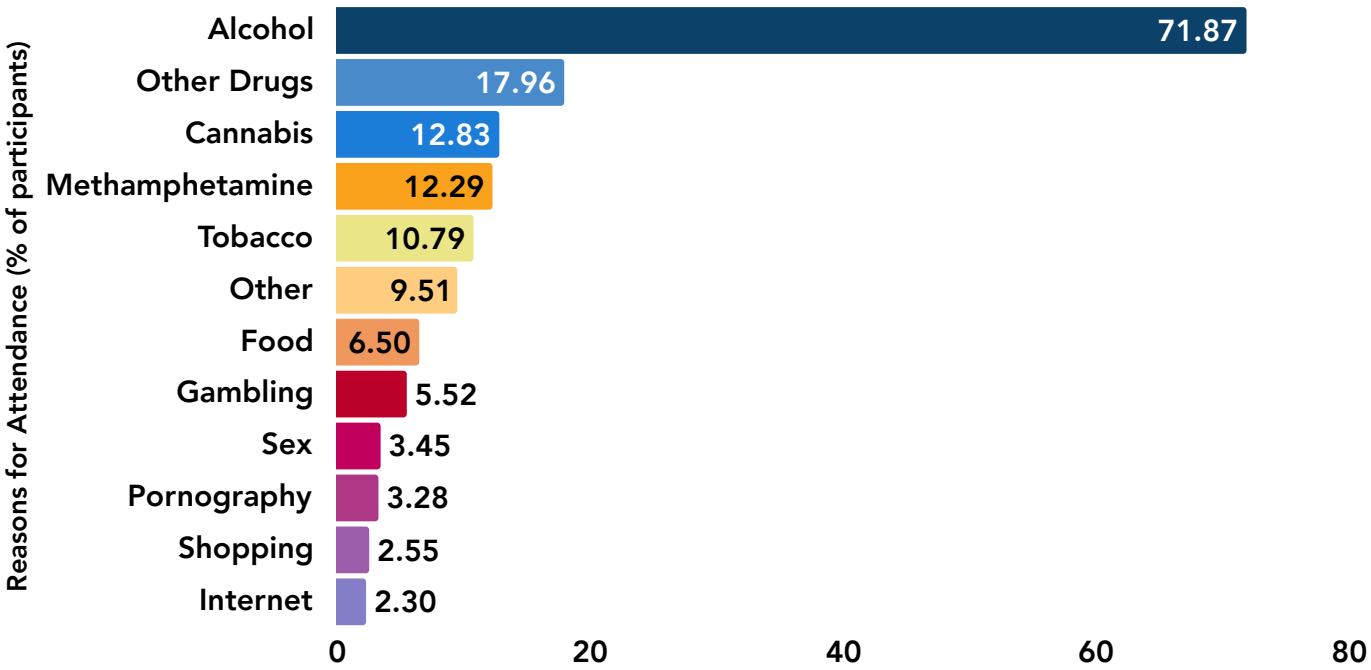




THE PEOPLE WE WORK WITH

I have been a SMART participant for a long time, the harm minimisation spared my life and health until I could make the decision for abstinence. The taking achievable steps caused me to grow in self-mastery.

- Christine



Note: People could give more than one reason

THE CURRENT CHALLENGE

Every week, our trained SMART Recovery facilitators provide mutual aid and recovery support for over 4,000 people through free recovery meetings run online and in communities, correctional facilities and healthcare services across the country. However, over 500,000 Australians are in need of recovery support.

1 IN 4

Australians will struggle with alcohol, drugs, or gambling in their lifetime

1 IN 20

Australians has an addiction or substance use disorder

1 IN 4

living with addiction will lose their lives to suicide

12 YEARS

is the average time delay for seeking help for addiction due to stigma

1 AUSTRALIAN DIES

every 60 minutes from alcohol-, drug- or gambling-related harm

OVER 500,000

Australians are unable to access help for their addictions

49%

of both prison entrants and dischargees aged 18+ reported ever having used illicit drugs

$80 BILLION

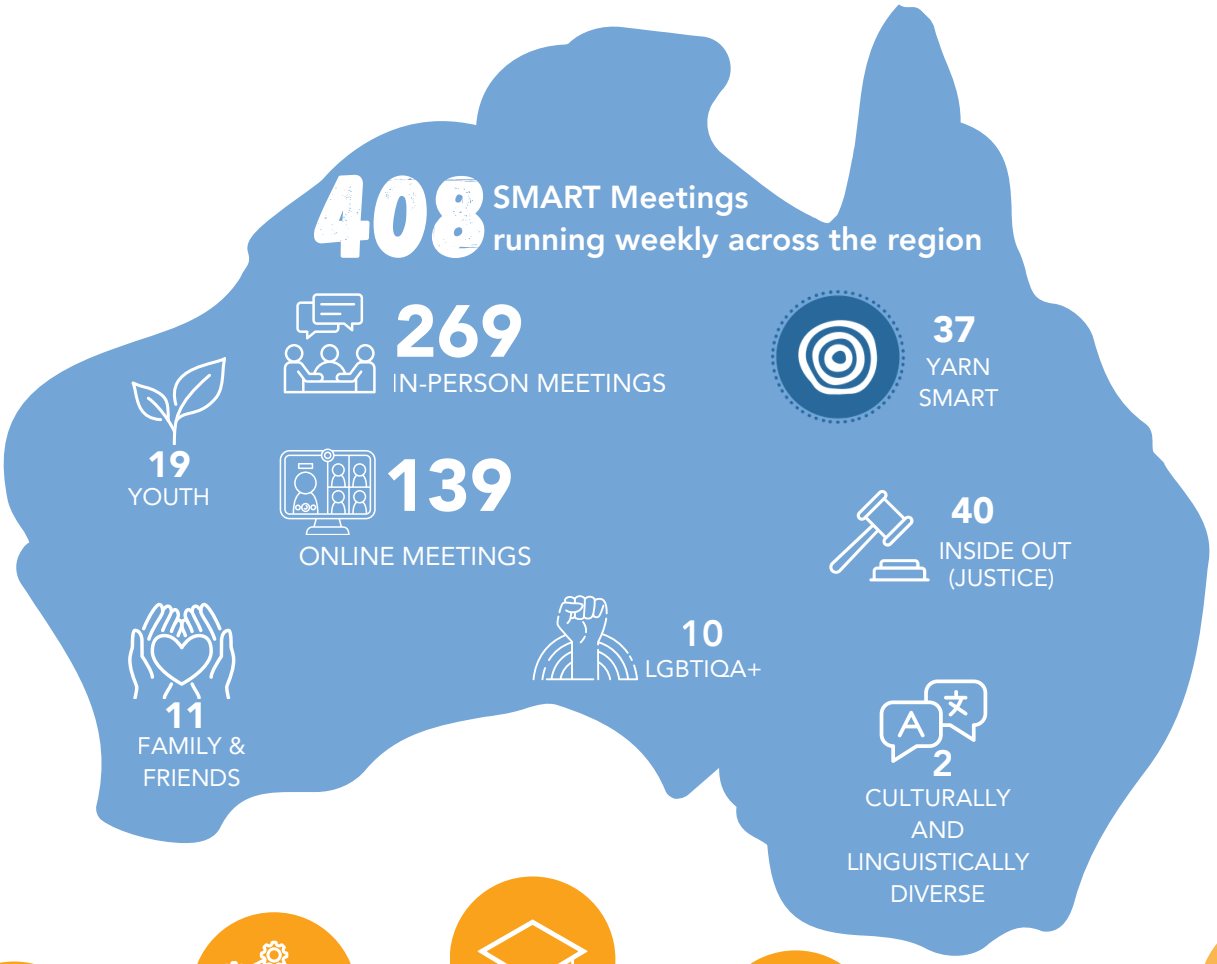
is the annual cost of lost productivity for mental illness and substance use impacts combined in Australia

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2026) Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia, AIHW, Australian Government, https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/about.
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2026) The health of people in Australia's prisons 2025, AIHW, Australian Government, doi:10.25816/j025-0377.
KPMG and Rethink Addiction (2022) Understanding the cost of addiction in Australia, Rethink Addiction, available at: https://www.rethinkaddiction.org.au/understanding-the-cost-of-addiction-in-australia

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

During 2025-26, SMART Recovery Australia continued to grow its national reach, connecting people and communities with practical, evidence-informed recovery support.

408 active meetings were delivered each week across Australia through a mix of 269 in-person meetings and 139 online meetings. Based on an estimated average of 10 participants per meeting, this represents over 4,000 participant attendances each week and more than 212,000 participant attendances annually.



861 Facilitators trained

95 Member organisations

261 Training scholarships awarded

89 Volunteer-led meetings

28 Facilitators trained in Aotearoa New Zealand

20 Membership scholarships

61,083 Recovery tools downloaded

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

24/7 DIGITAL RECOVERY SUPPORT

289,400
searches for meetings

132,000
active website users

3,800+
app downloads

4,200+
active app users

4,887
views on SMART for Healthcare Professionals online resources

MOST POPULAR TOOLS

3,249 uses
Coping With Urges

3,004 uses
Stages of Change Worksheet

1,901 uses
Behavioural Analysis

25,900 views
4 Poin Toolkit

3,300 uses
Yarn SMART Toolkit

SMART RECOVERY INNOVATIONS

SMART Connect Launch

LearnSMART Launch

Aotearoa New Zealand scholarship launch

Morialta Trust scholarship for Youth in South Australia launch

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

95%
felt welcome at their SMART Recovery meeting

95%
felt supported and understood at their meeting

84%
took away practical strategies/ideas/tools to help manage their behaviour

HUMANS OF SMART RECOVERY AUSTRALIA

MEET
Sophie Morgan
Executive Officer



For Sophie Morgan, Executive Officer at SMART Recovery Australia, the work is grounded in a simple principle: people should have dignity, agency and a voice in decisions about their own lives.

With a background and longstanding interest in human rights and social justice, Sophie was drawn to SMART Recovery's emphasis on self-management and personal choice.

"That's what drew me to SMART - supporting people's right to self-manage their recovery and decide what that looks like for them."

Since joining SMART Recovery Australia just over 12 months ago, Sophie has worked across government relations, policy and a broad range of organisational priorities. It is a role that requires her to move between strategic work and the practical demands of a growing organisation, often with several priorities moving at once.

A key focus this financial year has been strengthening SMART Recovery Australia's relationships with state and federal stakeholders and contributing to the organisation's policy and government relations work. "It's been a year of juggling a lot of different projects at once, and helping keep things moving as the organisation grows."

Recovery for Everyone
For Sophie, the organisation's purpose is reflected in its commitment to **Recovery for Everyone**.

> "Listening to peers going through similar challenges can help people to stop being their own worst critic, feel less alone, and be genuinely inspired.

She sees particular value in creating spaces where people can talk openly, without judgement, about the behaviours they are seeking to change. SMART Recovery meetings bring together people with different experiences and backgrounds, while providing an opportunity to learn from peers who understand some of the challenges involved in change and recovery.

Recently, Sophie joined an online ADHD-focused SMART Recovery meeting to support a friend attending for the first time.

Hearing participants share their experiences was a reminder of the importance of connection and peer support.

For Sophie, that sense of connection is an important part of what SMART Recovery offers: the opportunity for people to learn from others while finding an approach to recovery that works for them.

Taking the first step
For anyone considering attending a SMART Recovery meeting, Sophie's advice is straightforward: **"Just do it."**

She also encourages people considering SMART Recovery training to take the opportunity, even if they are not yet sure whether they want to become a facilitator. The skills, tools and insights developed through the training can be useful in many contexts.

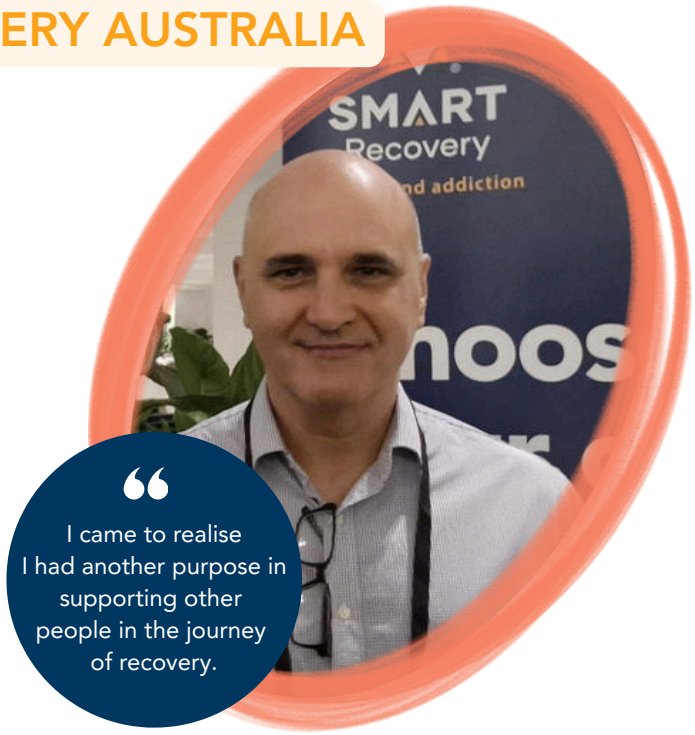
Outside work, Sophie lives in Sydney with her son, manages his soccer team, visits family on the Central Coast, follows geopolitical podcasts, and enjoys discovering new cafés and restaurants.

What she values most about her work, however, comes back to the people.

"It's the people, and knowing our work genuinely changes lives, that I love most."

For Sophie, SMART Recovery's focus on autonomy, connection and practical support is what makes its work distinctive — and what makes contributing to its growth so rewarding.

MEET
Denis Smith
National Training & Volunteer Development Manager



> “I came to realise I had another purpose in supporting other people in the journey of recovery.

For Denis Smith, National Training & Volunteer Development Manager at SMART Recovery Australia, recovery is both professional purpose and personal experience.

An AOD Counsellor and Program Manager, Denis spent 20 years working in the corporate sector in organisational development, including roles in New York and Hong Kong. Over time, however, he realised he wanted to use his experience in a different way: supporting people on their own recovery journeys.

That purpose was shaped by his own experience with alcohol use disorder in his twenties. At a difficult point in his life, Denis experienced unemployment and housing insecurity. His experience gave him a deep understanding of how recovery can unfold and what it can mean to have someone alongside you as you make meaningful change.

Denis retrained as a counsellor, beginning a new career supporting people in rehabilitation settings and working with neurodivergent clients.

His connection with SMART Recovery began in 2020, when he became a Volunteer Facilitator, supporting meetings in Australia and Indonesia. In early 2024, he joined the Australian practice as National Trainer and Volunteer Coordinator, bringing together his professional expertise, lived experience and commitment to practical, person-centred recovery.

Growing with our volunteers
This year, Denis has been particularly proud of the growth in SMART Recovery groups and what that growth means for people seeking support.

He has also seen the introduction of more specialised meetings, including groups for men, women, neurodivergent people and people seeking support to change their relationship with pornography.

For Denis, this growth is not simply about numbers. It reflects SMART Recovery’s commitment to listening to communities and creating spaces where people can find relevant support and connection.

A key focus has also been strengthening support for the volunteers who make so much of this work possible. Tailored training, stronger communities of practice and specialised supervision have helped build the skills, confidence and connection of SMART Recovery Australia’s volunteer community.

Inspired by service
When asked about the best part of his role, Denis does not hesitate.

“Undoubtedly, the volunteer facilitators.”

He describes them as people who want to share their journeys, support others and give back.

“I’m constantly inspired and humbled by their commitment and service.”

For Denis, their dedication reflects the heart of SMART Recovery: people supporting people, informed by evidence, practical tools and lived experience.

His journey from personal experience of addiction to helping develop the people who support others is a powerful example of how recovery can create new possibilities, not only for individuals, but for the communities around them.

Pillar 1: We change the narrative

THE JOURNEY BOTTLE

The Journey Bottle: Celebrating Every Step

Recovery is a journey. Every step counts.

The Journey Bottle was created to make progress visible: something people can carry with them, celebrate and be reminded of every day.

Recovery doesn't happen all at once. It can look like attending your first meeting, trying a new SMART tool, building a healthier habit, reaching a personal goal or getting through a difficult day. These moments can feel small, but together they represent meaningful change.

The Journey Bottle turns those moments into milestones. Each sticker marks a step forward, a tangible reminder of how far someone has come and the progress they are making.

At the heart of the initiative is a simple SMART message: R**ecovery isn't about perfection. It's about progress.**

> “
> It came wonderfully packaged with a kind and appreciative card. I got to show it off at home and it was very meaningful. I take it to work (out of AOD/SUD field) as a prompt for discussion as to this aspect of my current life and as a signpost to colleagues and peers about SMART and recovery if they are contemplating making this change.
> **-Henry**

> “
> The design is beautiful, and the quality is excellent. The stickers and progress-tracking design is a thoughtful touch.
> **-Celeste**

> “
> The Journey Bottle made me feel genuinely valued as a facilitator, and I feel proud of my association with SMART Recovery every time I use it. The design is modern and practical, and the stickers are a great visual reminder of progress which matters, because people often focus on where they’ve gone wrong rather than the positive steps they’ve taken. I even hope that carrying it around might start a conversation and help connect someone with support.
> **-Jessica**



RECOVERY MADE SMARTER— TOGETHER.

Pillar 2: We partner for impact

SMART Recovery Australia programs are specifically co-designed with community stakeholders to support priority populations, including Youth, First Nations, Family & Friends, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, neurodivergent Australians, justice-involved people and LGBTIQA+ Australians.

By seeking to understand and support the various cultural, identity, social, behavioural and environmental intersections with addiction and behaviours they experience, we adapt our programs and empower community members to deliver SMART programs in a manner which is most likely to create a safe space and resonate with them.



YARN SMART

Culture. Community. Connection. Country.







Message from Yarn SMART

Yarn SMART continues to strengthen culturally safe recovery pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities. The cornerstone of Yarn SMART is embedded in our ways of knowing, being and doing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples believe and live closely aligned universally to the values of Country, Culture, Community and Connection. These values strengthen our people for recovery, providing spiritual and cultural life balance. Diversity is important, with each family group and community approaching recovery from their own cultural practices and lived experiences.

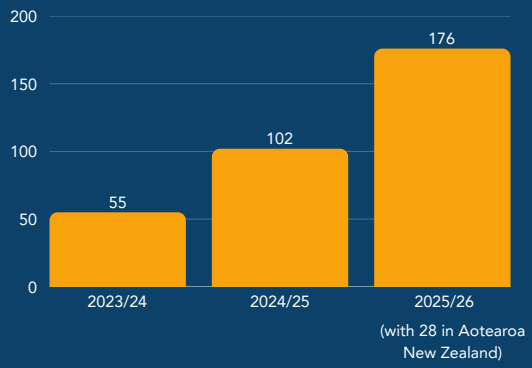
There are many challenges that contribute to addiction and behaviours of concern including intergenerational trauma as a result of disconnection from culture, language, Country and family.

When our identity and culture lead, we get better outcomes. Culture is the powerful healing factor for recovery.

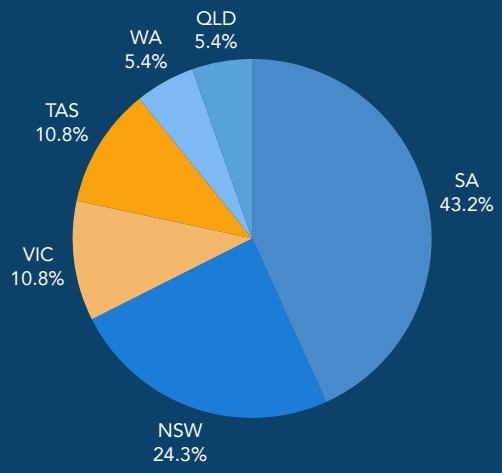
Trevor Pearce
National Yarn SMART Manager
Gamilaroi, Wiradjuri/Walian

Yarn SMART Training and Delivery

The number of people trained as Yarn SMART facilitators has grown over the last 3 years to a total of 333 people.



As of 30 June 2026, there were 37 active Yarn SMART meetings.





Western Australia
12 facilitators trained

South Australia
11 new facilitators trained

New South Wales
21 SEWB Team Members



Aotearoa New Zealand
28 facilitators

YARN SMART PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT PACKAGES

Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service (TAMS)



Yarn SMART trained all of TAMS's Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Team in September 2025, a total of 21 staff. TAMS's SEWB Team also received additional support with a Professional Support Package funded through a Commonwealth membership scholarship.

The support included co-facilitation, coaching, meeting setup, assistance with strategic planning, co-design, and integration across a broad range of SEWB Programs. TAMS Men's Yarn SMART Group (focus on AOD) commenced with 6 community members in April 2025. This group grew to 10 over the end of 2025 and early 2026. With colder months, the numbers have dropped back to 2-3 community members attending.

YAMS Men's Yarn SMART Group is integrated within other SEWB programs such as Men's Art Therapy, Men's Family Violence, Men on Country and other social and cultural wellbeing initiatives.

They are now working on establishing a Yarn SMART Women's Group (AOD) as well as a Family and Friends Group for carers of children in out-of-home care. SMART Recovery also provided 12 Journey Bottles and 5 GP Kits to TAMS from Commonwealth funding.

Partner organisations

Some of our key community partners, both new and current, include:

Orange Aboriginal Medical Service · BDAC Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative · Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service · The Glen · Ngoonbi · The Salvation Army · Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited · Aboriginal Drug & Alcohol Council (SA) · Lives Lived Well · KBHAC · St Vincent's Hospital · Palmerston Improving your wellbeing · AH&MRC Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW · Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Inc. · Wungening Aboriginal Corporation · Uniting · Craicchs · Katungul · St Vincent de Paul Society · Wayside Chapel · awabakal · Palm Island

LGBTIQA+ INCLUSIVE RECOVERY SUPPORT

Creating spaces where people can be themselves

SMART Recovery Australia's LGBTIQA+ meetings are dedicated to providing inclusive, affirming, and evidence-based support tailored to the unique experiences of LGBTIQA+ individuals navigating addictive behaviours.

Recognising the diverse challenges faced by this community, our LGBTIQA+ meetings offer safe and confidential spaces where participants can explore their relationship with substances and other challenging behaviours in a manner that aligns with their personal goals and values, and led by members of the community. Recovery support is meaningful when people can participate without needing to hide who they are.

SMART Recovery Australia's commitment to Recovery for Everyone includes creating welcoming and inclusive spaces for LGBTIQA+ people and communities. During 2025-26, SMART Recovery continued to provide **10 LGBTIQA+-inclusive meetings in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand**, recognising that experiences of addiction and recovery are shaped by many aspects of a person's life, identity, relationships and community.

Inclusive meetings offer more than a program. They create opportunities for connection with people who may understand aspects of each other's experiences and for conversations that can take place without judgement. A welcoming recovery space respects individual experiences and focuses on what matters to each person, rather than expecting people to fit a single definition of recovery.

This matters.

As we continue to grow, inclusion remains an active commitment. It means listening to communities, responding to their needs and working alongside partners and facilitators to create spaces where people feel respected.

The power of inclusive recovery support can be found in a simple experience: being able to walk into a room and know that you can be yourself.

97%

of survey respondents identified they had made changes to their alcohol and/or drug use as a result of attending SMART LGBTIQA+ programs, including:



More control over their alcohol/drug use



Reduction of risks to health and safety when drinking and/or using drugs



Reduction in the amount of alcohol and/or drugs consumed



Stopping drinking/using drugs completely

LGBTIQA+ INCLUSIVE RECOVERY SUPPORT

Creating spaces where people can be themselves



> One of the things that's stuck with me most in Rainbow SMART is what happens after someone has a setback. We had someone go through a relapse recently, but they kept coming back to meetings anyway. That's the bit that gets me. It's not about nobody ever struggling, it's about having a group that's still there for you when you do.
> - Alexis

> Having been gay-aware for over 40 of my 55 years, I understand quite clearly the value of having spaces just for our people. So when the opportunity arose to offer support to members of the Rainbow community who are struggling with addiction issues, I was proud to sign up.
>
> We create a space where Rainbow people are safe and supported. It's a space where they can be their authentic selves, and the generosity of love and support has been constant and inspiring.
>
> For myself personally, I work to infuse queer humour and laughter into the environment to help lighten the topics we cover and it has so far been well-received. I look forward to each meeting I help run, ready to embrace everyone's authenticity and support them around the added challenges being Rainbow can bring into their recovery journeys.
> - Ingris

INSIDE OUT

Recovery Support for Justice-Involved People

SMART Recovery Australia's work in justice settings continued to grow throughout 2025-26, creating more opportunities for people to access practical recovery tools and peer connection in correctional and justice settings, on remand, sentenced, and pre-release. Our approach recognises their capacity to make meaningful changes and develop skills that can support their lives during and beyond their time in the justice system.

Now offered in 4, 12 and 24 session modules to support participants at any stage of their justice involvement, the program aims to reduce reoffending, manage their urges and behaviours, and motivate people to participate in ongoing maintenance meetings in the community post-release.

Evaluations of the Inside Out program have identified a reduction in recidivism for participants in custody, with an 8% reduction in risk of reconviction and a 13% longer time to violent reconviction for SMART participants. After 10-11 SMART sessions were completed, the rate of reconviction was reduced by 25% compared to controls.

The program delivered 40 Inside Out meetings, supported by 14 facilitators, with 40 people trained during the financial year 2025-26.

Growth has been strengthened through engagement with correctional services, policy leaders and community partners. We met with South Australian MPs to share our leadership in justice-focused recovery support. We also continued conversations with policy leaders and partners about how evidence-informed, person-centred approaches can create broader pathways to recovery.

Partnership is essential in this work.

SMART Recovery's approach complements existing services by providing practical tools that can help people explore motivation, manage urges, understand patterns of behaviour and develop plans for change.

The value of Inside Out is also found in the conversations it creates. A SMART meeting can provide a structured space for reflection, where people can consider what matters to them and identify realistic next steps.

The program's continued development reflects a broader commitment to ensuring recovery support is available to people in different settings and at different stages of life.

The strongest measure of impact will always be found in people's experiences: the moment someone recognises they have choices, identifies a goal or begins to imagine a different future.

Inside Out continues to build those opportunities with one conversation, one meeting and one practical step at a time.

NEW SOUTH WALES PRISON - LONGITUDINAL STUDY

8-13% reduction
in reoffending and conviction for 2,343 people over 4 years

13% reduction
in violent reconviction rates

21-42% reduction
in general and violent crime for participants attending both Inside Out and SMART Recovery Programs

19% reduction
in reconviction rates for attendees of Inside Out and SMART Recovery Programs combined

10 SMART
program sessions attributed to a significant therapeutic effect

Chris Blatch, Kevin O'Sullivan, Jordan J Delaney, Daniel Rathbone, (2016),"Getting SMART, SMART Recovery© programs and reoffending", Journal of Forensic Practice, Vol. 18 Iss 1 pp. 3 - 16. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JFP-02-2015-0018



SMART FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Family members, friends and supporters play an important role in someone's life while also navigating their own experiences, relationships and wellbeing.

SMART Recovery's Family and Friends program provides a dedicated space for people supporting someone experiencing addictive behaviours. It offers practical tools, peer connection and opportunities to focus on what is within their own control.

During 2025-26, SMART Recovery Australia delivered 11 Family and Friends meetings, supported by 15 facilitators, while 40 people completed Family and Friends training during the year.

The program recognises an important truth: supporters need support too.

Family and Friends meetings provide a place where participants can share experiences with others, explore practical strategies and develop greater confidence in responding to situations in their lives. The focus is not on telling someone else how to change. Instead, participants are supported to reflect on their own boundaries, communication, choices and wellbeing.

This practical approach can help shift the focus from feeling responsible for another person's journey to recognising what each person can do to support themselves.

Connection is a powerful part of the program. Meeting others who understand can reduce isolation and create space for honest conversations. Participants can learn from one another while recognising that every relationship and situation is different. Family and Friends continues to demonstrate that recovery support can extend beyond the individual.

By supporting those who care, listen and walk alongside others, we strengthen the broader networks around recovery. Because looking after yourself is not stepping away from someone you care about. Sometimes, it is an important part of staying connected.

> “I was in a smaller group and everyone had time to really share thoughts and ask questions which felt very interactive.

EMPOWERING YOUTH

Young people deserve recovery support that recognises their strengths, respects their experiences and gives them practical opportunities to build skills for the future.

Through Youth SMART, SMART Recovery Australia continues to provide evidence-informed tools designed to support young people while building the capability of the professionals and organisations who work alongside them. During 2025-26, Youth SMART remained an important part of SMART Recovery Australia's growing specialist program network, with 16 Youth facilitators supporting young people and their communities.

The program focuses on empowerment. Rather than defining young people by their behaviours or circumstances, Youth SMART creates opportunities to explore motivation, identify personal goals and develop practical strategies for change.

The approach recognises that young people are experts in their own lives. Support works best when it is collaborative, relevant and grounded in what matters to them. This year also provided opportunities to expand Youth SMART capability through scholarships and partnerships, including initiatives in South Australia.

Training plays an important role in extending the program's reach. By equipping youth workers and other professionals with practical SMART Recovery tools, organisations can integrate evidence-informed approaches into the support they already provide.

The impact of Youth SMART is therefore felt beyond individual meetings. It contributes to stronger services, more confident facilitators and additional pathways for young people seeking support. As the program continues to grow, listening will remain essential. Young people should have a voice in the services designed to support them.



In 2025-26, our Youth meetings grew from **14 to 19 weekly meetings** supporting around **200 young people every 7 days.**



GIVING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

HONOURING OUR VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS

Behind many SMART Recovery meetings are volunteers who generously give their time, skills and lived experience to create welcoming spaces for connection and change. This year, 71 volunteer facilitators supported our growing recovery community, contributing to 89 volunteer-led meetings across Australia. Their impact reaches far beyond the meeting room. Through listening, sharing and walking alongside others, our volunteers demonstrate the power of people supporting people. We thank every volunteer for helping make Recovery for Everyone possible.

Learning alongside the community with Lachlan

Lachlan's journey with SMART Recovery began as a counselling placement student. After co-facilitating several meetings, he went on to facilitate a group supporting people seeking to change their relationship with pornography and associated behaviours.

For Lachlan, facilitation is an opportunity to learn alongside participants and witness the power of peer connection. Conversations often extend beyond the behaviour that brings someone to a meeting, exploring relationships, emotional regulation, identity, values and meaningful activity.



> “There is something particularly meaningful in watching people begin to discover who they are beyond the substance or behaviour that has occupied such a significant place in their lives.
> - Lachlan

Listening to participants has also shaped Lachlan personally and professionally, reinforcing that learning goes both ways.

His advice to future volunteers is to remain curious and never stop learning.

Lachlan's story demonstrates the mutual nature of volunteering. By creating space for others to speak openly and learn from one another, facilitators are often learning too, growing alongside the communities they support.

Sam turning lived experience into connection

For Sam, becoming a SMART Recovery volunteer is closely connected to his own lived experience. For years, he used drugs and gambling as ways of coping with difficult emotions and life circumstances. Finding recovery changed the direction of his life and showed him that meaningful change is possible.

Today, that experience motivates Sam to give back and walk alongside others on their own journeys. As a lived experience facilitator, he is inspired by seeing people begin to recognise their strengths, make different choices and work towards a life that reflects what matters to them.

Volunteering has also shaped Sam's own future, building his confidence and strengthening his desire to work in counselling and support others.

His message to future volunteers is simple: you do not need to have all the answers. Your lived experience, willingness to listen and genuine care can create meaningful connection.

Sam's story reflects the power of people supporting people: sharing experience, creating understanding and reminding others that change is possible.



> “Sometimes the most valuable thing I can offer is simply listening without judgement and creating a safe space for people to be honest.
> - Sam

Thank you to our volunteers!

From sharing lived experience to creating spaces for honest conversation, our volunteer facilitators continue to strengthen the SMART Recovery community. Their generosity reminds us that meaningful support can begin with a conversation, a willingness to listen and the decision to show up for others.

NEW PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY



LearnSMART launch

In May 2026, SMART Recovery Australia replaced its existing learning platform with LearnSMART, turning a standalone e-learning tool into a full facilitator portal that brings training, resources and peer connection (SMART Connect) together in one place. The project was delivered almost entirely in-house, built in collaboration with SMART Recovery's global affiliate network, and shaped throughout by feedback from our facilitator community.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT: SMART RECOVERY AUSTRALIA 2025-2028 STRATEGY



WE PARTNER FOR IMPACT

BUILT WITH OUR AFFILIATES

Developed in collaboration with SMART Recovery's global affiliate network, sharing content and effort across the movement.



GROW OUR COMMUNITY OF FACILITATORS

SHAPED BY FACILITATORS

A more accessible, self-paced experience refined using direct facilitator feedback, with no navigation-related support queries in the weeks after launch.



INVEST IN GROWTH AND WELLBEING, EMPOWERING OUR TEAM TO THRIVE

BUILT IN-HOUSE

Delivered almost entirely by the SMART Recovery Australia team, reducing reliance on external vendors and building lasting platform capability internally.

> "Clear, structured and reinforces the skills you've learnt."

> "I feel empowered and knowledgeable since the training. I was able to complete it all in my own time and around family commitments."

> "Ease of training modules to use, access and understand. Great explanations and helpful for me to learn as a new facilitator. Really liked the videos."

> "I found it easy to engage with and the tasks and information was well delivered."

> "Easy to navigate and understand. Clear and informative videos. Right mix of learning and questions."

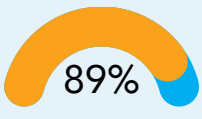
TRAINING MILESTONES

75 facilitators enrolled in the redesigned training pathway

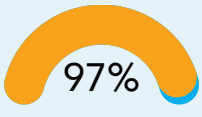
35 completed the full training pathway by 1 July (a 47% completion rate)

579 hours of total study time logged by that cohort

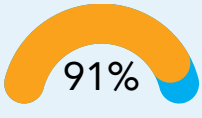
USER FEEDBACK



rated user-friendly or better interface



rated user-friendly or better content



Would recommend: gave a score of 4 or 5 out of 5



SMART for Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals are often an important point of connection for people seeking information, support or a pathway forward. During 2025-26, SMART Recovery Australia continued to strengthen awareness of practical recovery tools among GPs and healthcare professionals across Australia.

Our Healthcare Professionals page received 4,887 views, while SMART Recovery resources recorded 122 tool downloads. Beyond website engagement, our outreach connected with more than 4,000 healthcare contacts, helping introduce SMART Recovery's evidence-informed approach to professionals who may support people experiencing addictive behaviours in their daily practice.

A successful webinar in June also generated more than 1,000 expressions of interest and interactions across platforms, including registrations, email engagement and video views.

The purpose of this work is straightforward: make practical information easier to access and create more opportunities for healthcare professionals to have informed conversations about recovery.

SMART Recovery offers tools that can complement clinical care and support people to explore their own goals, motivation and strategies for change.

Resources such as behavioural analysis, coping with urges and stages of change can provide useful starting points for conversations about what someone wants to achieve and how they might take their next step.

By increasing awareness among healthcare professionals, we can help create stronger referral pathways between clinical settings and community-based recovery support. This work also contributes to changing the narrative around addiction.

Recovery conversations do not need to begin with assumptions. They can begin with curiosity, respect and a simple question: What would you like to change?

As SMART Recovery continues to expand its engagement with healthcare professionals, our focus will remain on practical education, accessible tools and stronger connections between people and the support available in their communities.

Aotearoa New Zealand Expansion



In 2025-26, SMART Recovery continued to strengthen its presence in Aotearoa New Zealand, creating new opportunities for communities to access practical, evidence-informed recovery support.

Expansion has been built through partnership, local knowledge and a commitment to ensuring SMART Recovery reflects the communities it serves. During the year, the network continued to grow, with new meetings and increasing interest in culturally responsive approaches to recovery.

A significant focus has been the adaptation of Yarn SMART for Māori and Pasifika communities. This work recognises the importance of culture, identity, connection and community in shaping meaningful pathways to wellbeing and recovery.

During 2025-26, **28 people** in Aotearoa New Zealand completed Yarn SMART facilitator training, contributing to the broader growth of a skilled and culturally responsive facilitator community.

This expansion reflects SMART Recovery's broader commitment to partnership. Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, the work in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to focus on listening, collaboration and adapting support to reflect local communities.

The opportunity ahead is significant. By strengthening partnerships and investing in local facilitator capability, SMART Recovery can continue to create sustainable pathways for communities to deliver support in ways that are meaningful to them.

As the network grows, the focus remains on more than numbers. It is about building connections, supporting local leadership and ensuring more people can access recovery support that respects their experiences, culture and aspirations.

The expansion into Aotearoa New Zealand is an important step forward for SMART Recovery and a powerful example of what can happen when we work together. New communities. Stronger partnerships. More pathways to recovery.

JASON'S STORY

From breaking the cycle to building a pathway forward

For Jason, making a change began with taking that first step. Reflecting on where he was before finding SMART Recovery, Jason describes a time when he felt disconnected from motivation and unsure about what came next: "I was in a really bad place. I had no motivation, nothing at the time."

His experience is a reminder that people can move forward from difficult periods, particularly when they have the right support, practical tools and space to work through change in a way that feels meaningful to them.

Through the Men's SMART Recovery Group at the Muran Djan Centre, Jason found an opportunity to take that step.

The group is one of the programs led by Richard Philp, AOD Counsellor from the Cherbourg Regional Aboriginal & Islander Community Controlled Health Service (CRAICCHS), who has been trained in both SMART Recovery and Yarn SMART programs. It provides a supportive setting where men can explore their experiences with addiction, develop practical strategies and work towards changes that are important to them in culturally safe and empowering ways.

For Jason, SMART Recovery became more than attending a group. It helped him think about where he wanted to go in life and develop a pathway towards the future he wanted.

"It's all about you and how you overcome your problems. I had a choice to stay back and stay the way I was and that wasn't really healthy... I just wasn't in the right mindset."

> "I mean it, this stuff actually works. You just got to take that initial step into breaking out…in group we talk about some problems, that some people are afraid to talk about.

He also reflects on the practical value of the SMART Recovery approach:

"Don't be afraid to take those steps." That first step can look different for everyone. For some people, it may be attending a meeting for the first time. For others, it may be recognising that they want something different or beginning to think about what matters most to them.

SMART Recovery supports people to take an active role in their own change. Through practical, cultural and evidence-based tools and mutual support, participants can build skills to understand their behaviours, strengthen motivation and develop strategies that align with their goals.



For Jason, one of the most valuable outcomes was developing a pathway he could follow. "By the end of it... I end up making a pathway that I can follow that I want to achieve." That pathway connected with something deeper: his hopes for the future and even the dreams he had as a child.

His story demonstrates the importance of creating opportunities for people to identify their own goals and take meaningful steps towards them. Recovery is not one-size-fits-all, and every person's experience is different. What matters is having access to support that respects where someone is now and helps them consider where they want to go next.

Jason's message to others is straightforward: "Do SMART Recovery because it'll get you out of that circle. It'll break you out of your habits in your life."

Congratulations, Jason, on the progress you have made and on beginning your next chapter. Your story shows what can happen when someone takes that initial step, finds support and starts building a pathway towards the future they want.



Thank you

Dear Member Organisations,
It's been our honour to support our member organisations delivering the SMART Recovery program in their communities. We want to thank everyone at our member organisations - the administrators, peer workers, facilitators, program and operations managers - for your trust and belief in the SMART Recovery program.

This year, your membership helped power a growing, peer-led movement across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Every facilitator trained, meeting held and resource shared has helped make recovery more accessible, and less stigmatised and isolating for the people who need it most.

Our member organisations include drug and alcohol services, hospitals, youth services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and specialist homelessness services. Your teams delivered SMART Recovery meetings up to ten times a week, in communities across the country, in person and online. You delivered meetings to people from a variety of backgrounds and who are managing a range of addictive behaviours.

At SMART Recovery Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, we will continue to walk alongside your organisation by providing the training, resources and guidance needed to run meetings and deliver recovery support. Our membership and tailored support packages, Communities of Practice and participant resources are there to empower your teams to provide SMART Recovery support confidently and effectively.

We have loved working with our partner organisations to empower the people who need recovery support in your communities, and we couldn't have done it without you! We look forward to continuing our important work together to help more Australians and New Zealanders manage problematic behaviours and live healthier, happier lives.

Laura Coleman
Member Support Lead

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

NSW Government Health

OUR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

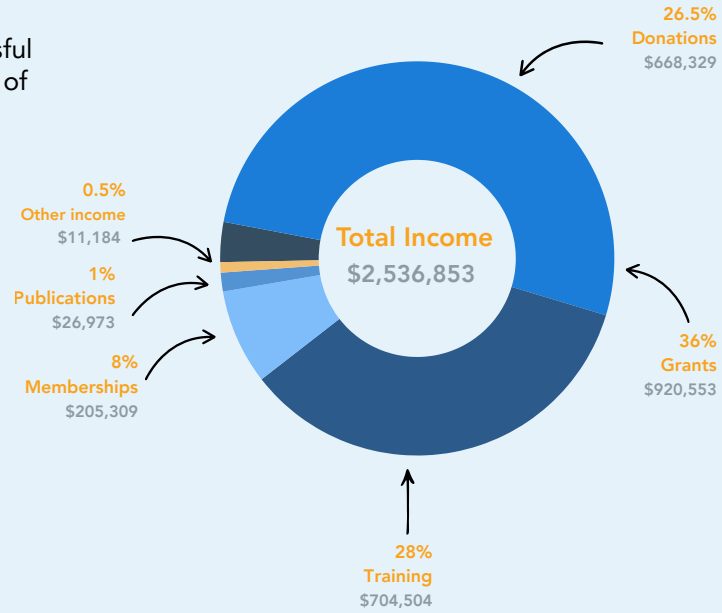
Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited
one80tc
CatholicCare NT
Odyssey House
journey of wellbeing
First Step Legal
Directions
Pathways to Recovery
Father Chris Riley's youth off the streets
you-group
WHOS
drug.ARM
St John of God Health Care
The Link
Palmerston
Sonder
Better Care Better Health
Mission Australia
Lifeline
Eastern Health
Clean Slate
Waverley Drug and Alcohol Centre
Court Services Victoria
cohealth
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
WEAVE
Youth & Community Services
AnglicareTAS
Choice, support and hope
Government of Western Australia
WA Country Health Service
Haymarket Foundation
Social Futures
St Vincent's Hospital Sydney
Relationships Australia
South Australia
PCYC
Police & Community Youth Centres
Uniting
VIC.TAS
UNITING COMMUNITIES
Mental Health Commission
LeVa
Guthrie House
The Salvation Army
Lives Lived Well
Western Sydney Nepean Blue Mountains
Greater Western Aboriginal Health Service
acon
HERE FOR HEALTH
NSW Government
Mid North Coast Local Health District
Odyssey House
New South Wales
NSW Government
Western Sydney Local Health District
NSW Government
Health
South Eastern Sydney Local Health District
St Vincent de Paul Society
good works
Back On Track
St Vincent de Paul Society
Queensland
good works
CumbiCumbi
NSW Government
Health
Northern Sydney Local Health District
The Buttery
Enriching Lives
Capacity Partners
Odyssey
Lamp
Excellence in mental health
HCA
Healthcare Australia
Te Tāpui Atawhai
Auckland City Mission
centacare FNQ
Odyssey Victoria
CatholicCare Social Services
Hunter - Manning
Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
CAASSA
Community Access & Services SA
Craicchs
Community Controlled Health Services
swop
Sex Workers Outreach Project
Kwila
Community Based Rehab
mind
Help, hope and purpose
Calvary
Riverina Drug and Alcohol Centre
Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service
Wayside Chapel
NCNS
Nepean Community & Neighbourhood Services
Windana
Life. Changing.
NSW Government
Sydney Local Health District
NSW Government
Western NSW Local Health District
ACT Government
Justice and Community Safety
OARS Community Transitions
LUMA
For her health and wellbeing
BCH
Bass Coast Health
Waminda
Western Health
Life Without Barriers
City mission
Katungul
Jewish House
People helping people
Hope
Community Services
Country & Outback Health
Royal Flying Doctor Service
cyrenian House
Centacare
Catholic Family Services
ACCESS
Health & Community
Central Gippsland Health

WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM

Over the past four years, SMART Recovery Australia has experienced significant and strategic growth, moving from **$1.6M** in revenue in the 2022-23 to **$2.5M** in 2025-26.

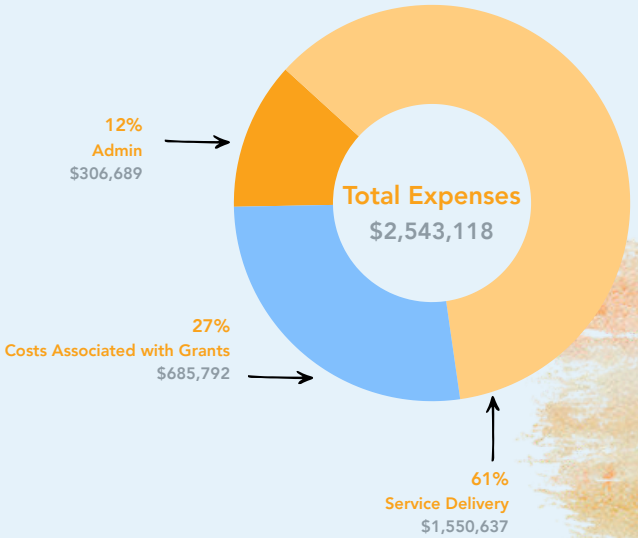
This has been achieved through successful initiatives supporting the diversification of income, one of the highest priorities of our recently concluded 2023-25 Strategic Plan.

Significant increases in **Grants (36%)** and **Training (54%)** Income during the 2025-26, combined with Government Grants exceeding **$920k** this year, have allowed us to expand our services, amplify our voice, and scale our impact significantly both here in Australia and in Aotearoa New Zealand.



WHERE THE MONEY WAS SPENT

Over the past few years, SMART Recovery Australia has made intentional, budgeted investments to strengthen our capacity, systems, and programs. While this has resulted in planned operating deficits, these decisions were made strategically to support growth and innovation that will enable greater long-term impact and sustainability.



A significant focus over the last three years has been the development and deployment of our Innovation programs. These recovery programs are specifically co-designed with community stakeholders to support priority populations including Youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Yarn SMART), Family & Friends, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, justice-involved people (Inside Out) and LGBTIQA+ Australians.

Over 260 scholarships have been awarded to partner organisation staff and lived and living experience peers and volunteers to help build capacity within communities and organisations supporting priority populations. Through our commitment to digital transformation, we have made 24/7 access to recovery support tools possible for people in need across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes the LearnSMART, launched in June 2026, a key component of our enhanced digital recovery support ecosystem.

Income & Expenditure

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
REVENUE	**$**	**$**	**$**	**$**
Donations	698,890	651,099	700,161	668,329
Grants	554,251	806,931	678,077	920,553
Memberships	25,092	77,770	102,531	205,309
Publications	22,828	22,974	20,215	26,973
Training	259,888	401,234	456,993	704,504
Other Revenue	2,042	3,441	8,084	11,184
Total Income for Year	**1,562,992**	**1,963,450**	**1,966,061**	**2,536,853**
EXPENSES				
Admin	417,139	405,299	437,159	306,689
Service Delivery	1,168,355	946,697	1,138,917	1,550,637
Costs Associated with Grants	-	661,960	484,379	685,792
Total Expenses	**1,585,494**	**2,013,956**	**2,060,455**	**2,543,118**
Total Comprehensive Income for Year	**(22,502)**	**(50,506)**	**(94,394)**	**(6,266)**

Statement of Financial Position

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
	$	**$**	**$**	**$**
Total Assets	**844,459**	**715,745**	**511,677**	**550,361**
Total Liabilities	406,955	328,747	219,073	264,024
Net Equity	437,504	386,998	292,604	286,338



SMART Recovery®

SMARTRECOVERYAUSTRALIA.COM.AU