



# Youth Insearch Pre-Budget Submission 22/23

YOUTH INSEARCH SUBMISSION TO  
COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

**YOUTH** REBUILDING  
YOUNG  
LIVES  
**INSEARCH**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth Insearch Pre Budget Submission (Submission) covers the following key points:

- Youth trauma underpins poor mental health and lifelong challenges for Australia and our youth.
- Approximately 20% of Australian youth accessing mental health services have had three or more adverse events which results in complex trauma<sup>1</sup>.
- Since establishing in 1985, Youth Insearch has supported 32,000 at-risk youth to overcome their trauma.
- Key suicide prevention work should be delivered by lived experience peer workforce as detailed in Priority Area 8 of the Australian Government’s Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.
- Assertive outreach models of suicide prevention (used by the Peer Support Workers detailed in this Submission) can save \$347 million a year<sup>2</sup>.
- This three-year proposal seeks to develop a supported lived-experience workforce to support 7,560 at-risk youth to overcome their trauma, mental health challenges and related anti-social behaviours.
- Over five years, Youth Insearch will expand this workforce to over half of all Australian Local Government Areas with the support of this proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> Oyrge, Trauma and Young People, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Mental Health Australia & KPMG, Investing to Save: The Economic Benefits for Australia of Investment in Mental Health Reform, 2018

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## ABOUT YOUTH INSEARCH

Youth Insearch is Australia's most effective peer-led youth trauma recovery organisation. Since establishing in 1985, we have supported 32,000 at-risk youth to overcome their trauma.

## OUR FOCUS

Our purpose is to empower young people to take control of their lives and play a positive role in society.

To achieve this, our proven program addresses disadvantaged youths' underlying mental and social challenges to overcome their trauma and reconnect with services and society.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE WE SUPPORT

Youth Insearch supports at-risk youth in Australia, aged 14 to 20 that otherwise fall between the cracks. The profile of our 32,000 participants includes:

- 56% female
- 20% Indigenous
- 14.5% Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
- 20% non-binary gender

Among our participants, 90% experience trauma as a child. This includes:

- 1 in 3 young people experience sexual abuse
- 2 in 3 young people experience physical abuse
- 40% young people experience domestic violence

The mental health impact of their childhood trauma includes:

- 1 in 2 stated they self-harmed in the preceding 12 months
- 2 out of 3 planned to kill themselves in the past and half of those had attempted suicide
- 1 in 5 stated on intake they felt it was likely they would commit suicide in the future

These challenges are connected to a range of other challenges including school disengagement, alcohol misuse, homelessness, juvenile crime, and welfare dependency.

## THE MODEL

The Youth Insearch program is designed and delivered with youth, supported by expert adults. Through our Place Based Model staff work in youth's communities with local partners so they recover and reconnect with their community. Our life-changing program involves:

- Case-management: individual support for at-risk youth referred by local partners
- Weekend Workshops: two-day program to confront trauma and build drive to recover
- Support Programs: weekly local sessions empower youth to seek help in community
- Leadership Training: 12-month bespoke training to develop lived-experience workforce

In 39 communities across Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria, our 21 staff and 120 volunteers support over 500 at-risk youth to create their own better future.

## YOUTH INSEARCH SUCCESS

Independent evaluations of the program's impact finds:

- Communities and youth recommended our support for their trauma-recovery<sup>3</sup>
- 80% of participants improve their wellbeing and sustain this long-term<sup>4</sup>
- Youth-led components underpin Youth Insearch success and efficiencies<sup>5</sup>

Centrally collated internal data shows that within 90 days each young person will reduce:

- Psychological distress from the severe range, indicating the presence of severe mental illness, to well range as measured by the Kessler 10 (K10)
- Suicide risk from high-risk to low- risk as measured by the Suicide Behaviour Questionnaire Revised (SBQR)
- Criminal behaviour and offending by 38% as measured by the Australian Self-Reported Delinquency Scale Revised

Data collected for Department of Social Services over three-year delivery of Try Test Learn Funding finds that amongst participants:

- 78% reduced delinquent behaviour
- 46% improved pro social skills
- 66% improved self-esteem
- 51% improved employment despite COVID 19 barriers
- 90% improved education and skills training



<sup>3</sup> ACYP, Young People's Experience of Disaster, 2020

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies, Promising Practices Profile, 2009

<sup>5</sup> Rintoul et al., Evaluation of the Youth Insearch Program, 2008

## ABOUT THE PROBLEM

Youth trauma underpins poor mental health and lifelong challenges for Australia and our youth.

### YOUTH TRAUMA IS WIDESPREAD

It is estimated that approximately 20% of youth accessing mental health services have had three or more adverse events which results in complex trauma<sup>6</sup>.

This is a conservative estimate with youth challenges often going unreported or under-reported. For example, data for sexual abuse and assault is under-reported and not consistently captured between states<sup>7,8</sup>.

At-risk youth are more likely to experience trauma than other groups<sup>9</sup>.

### YOUTH TRAUMA AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

The Australian Government's 2017 – 2022 Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan identified trauma is widespread among mental health service users. 20% of all Australian teens will experience a mental health challenge<sup>10</sup>. Trauma increases youth's mental health challenges<sup>11</sup> contributing to suicide remaining the leading cause of Australian youth deaths<sup>12</sup>.

State and Commonwealth Government policy has identified through research that trauma underpins poor mental health, delinquency, and abuse<sup>13, 14, 15, 16</sup>.

Unaddressed trauma leads to a lifetime of worse physical<sup>17</sup>, mental<sup>18</sup>, and financial health<sup>19</sup>.

### FINANCIAL COST OF MENTAL HEALTH

Recent studies have modelled the economic cost of this challenge:

- Mental health disorders and suicide cost Australia over \$33.6 billion annually including \$5.9 billion attributed to suicide<sup>20</sup>
- Assertive outreach models of suicide prevention (used by the Peer Support Workers detailed in this Submission) can save \$347 million a year<sup>21</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Orygen, Trauma and Young People, 2018

<sup>7</sup> Tarczon and Quadara, The nature and extent of sexual assault and abuse in Australia, 2012

<sup>8</sup> AIHW, Sexual Assault in Australia, 2020

<sup>9</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Mental Health: Australia's Youth, 2021

<sup>10</sup> Blackdog Institute, 2020, Facts and Figures about Mental Health

<sup>11</sup> Orygen, Trauma and Young People, 2018

<sup>12</sup> ABS, 2021, Causes of Death, Australia

<sup>13</sup> Australian Government's 2017 – 2022 Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan

<sup>14</sup> Victoria Government, 2015, Victoria's 10-year Mental Health Plan

<sup>15</sup> NSW Government, 2014, Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014-2024

<sup>16</sup> QLD Government, 2018, The Shifting Minds: Queensland Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan

<sup>17</sup> Orygen, Physical Challenge Summary, 2018

<sup>18</sup> Victorian Auditor General, Child and Youth Mental Health, 2019

<sup>19</sup> Australian Government Productivity Commission, The Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health, 2019

<sup>20</sup> Mindgardens Neuroscience Network. White Paper: Review of the Burden of Disease for Neurological, Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders in Australia. 2019

<sup>21</sup> Mental Health Australia & KPMG, Investing to Save: The Economic Benefits for Australia of Investment in Mental Health Reform, 2018

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

### CREATE LIVED EXPERIENCE PEER WORKFORCE

The Australian Government's 2017 – 2022 Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan identified developing a lived-experience workforce and greater integration between services will improve youth mental health. In support of this:

- Developing this lived-experience workforce is a key priority of the mental health sector<sup>22</sup>
- Services need to better integrate beyond the mental health sector for youth to overcome their trauma and mental health challenges<sup>23</sup>
- Research has identified trauma-informed responses are best tailored to each young person's level of trauma<sup>24</sup> and peer led<sup>25</sup>

### YOUTH INSEARCH LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKFORCE

Since establishing in 1985, Youth Insearch has been designed and delivered with at-risk youth receiving support from our adult team. Since 1994, Youth Insearch has trained a volunteer peer workforce of lived experience youth.

### LIVED-EXPERIENCE PROGRAM TRACK RECORD

In 2019 with Federal Government Try Test Learn Tranche 1 Funding, Youth Insearch developed clinical and organisation structures to implement a lived experience workforce across Australia.

In 2021, Youth Insearch undertook a qualitative cooperative inquiry research study in partnership with Sydney University to understand the effectiveness of the Youth Insearch peer-to-peer intervention. As part of this research, Dr Maja Moensted found that:

- Peer-support facilitates connection, provides opportunities to explore complex situations, and ability to create support systems for their own self-care
- Peer role modelling provides a scaffold for youth to reposition as survivors and experts
- Our programs increase social integration and new relationships, which promotes the introduction of new knowledge, opportunities and resources
- Young people report an increase in resilience and help-seeking

For over 35 years, Youth Insearch has developed the skills and evidence to truly change the lives of the most vulnerable young Australians.

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<sup>22</sup> Suicide Prevention Australia, Pre-Budget Submission 2020/21, 2020

<sup>23</sup> Oyrge, Trauma and Young People, 2018

<sup>24</sup> Fondren et al., Buffering the effects of childhood trauma within the school setting: A systematic review of trauma-informed and trauma-responsive interventions among trauma-affected youth, 2020

<sup>25</sup> ACYP, Young People's Experience of Disaster, 2020

**PROPOSAL DETAIL**

**BUILDING A LIVED EXPERIENCE PEER WORKFORCE**

Over the next three years Youth Insearch will build a lived experience peer workforce to support 7,560 at-risk youth in 108 communities across regional and rural Australia. Building on the success of this, in five years we will be positioned to continue growing our workforce to support 288 communities and 17,280 young people every year across Australia.

**EXPANSION ROAD MAP**

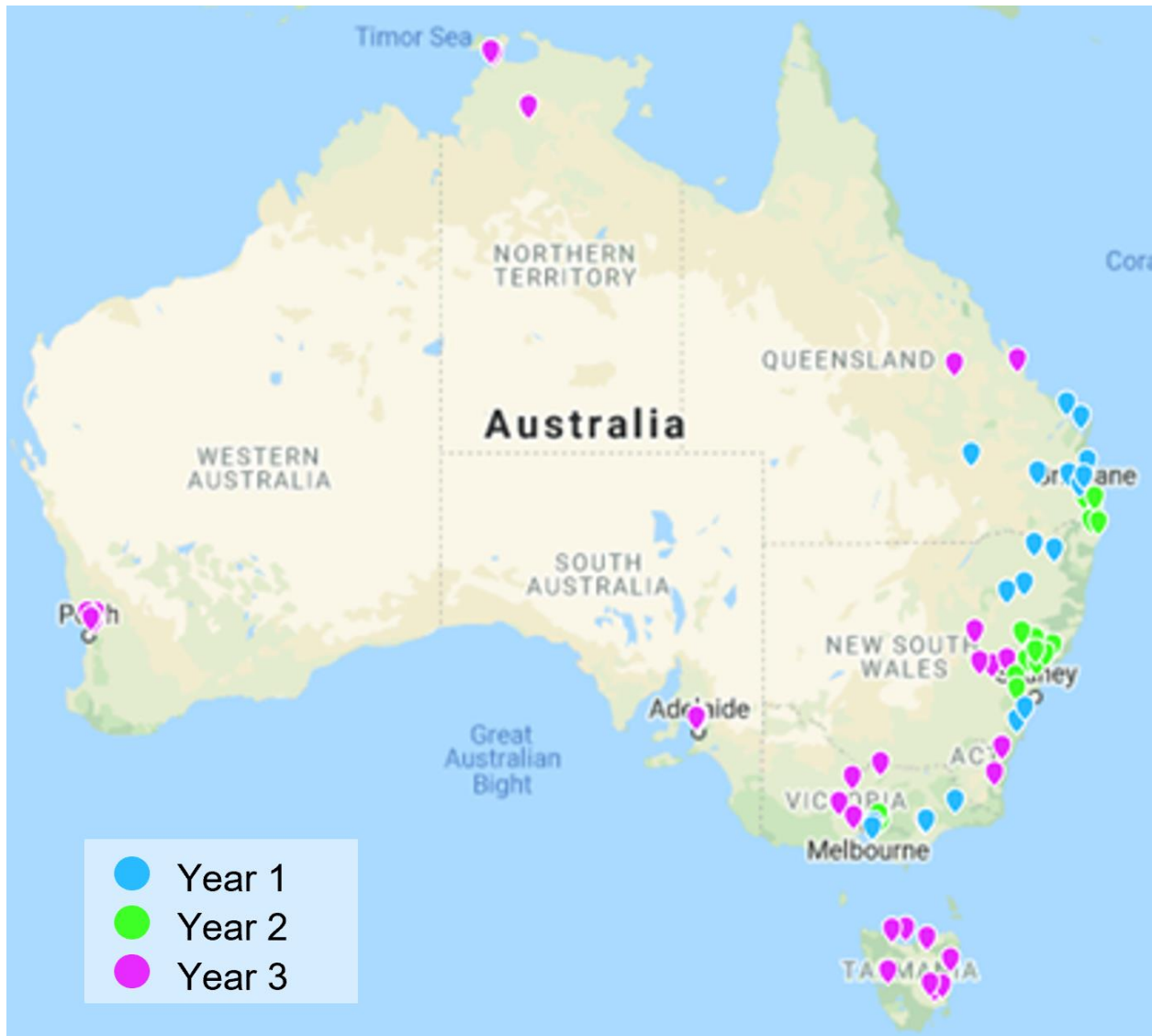
Youth Insearch will grow our support for at-risk youth across Australia as detailed below. These communities are selected based on research, established relationships and community demand for our program.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Youth Supported	1,080	2,160	4,320
Social Workers	9	18	36
Peer Support Workers	18	36	72
Locations	<b>New South Wales</b>	<b>Expanding to</b>	<b>Expanding to</b>
	Tamworth Regional Council Gunnedah Shire Council Inverell Shire Council Glen Innes Severn Shire Council City of Shoalhaven Municipality of Kiama	Wollondilly Shire Council Blue Mountains City Council Port Stephens Council City of Maitland Muswellbrook Shire Council Singleton Council Cessnock City Council City of Lake Macquarie Central Coast Council Hawkesbury City Council Lismore City Council Ballina Shire Council Tweed Shire Council	Bega Valley Shire Council Eurobodalla Shire Council Dubbo Regional Council Orange City Council Bathurst Regional Council Lithgow City Council
	<b>Queensland</b>	<b>Expanding to</b>	<b>Expanding to</b>
	Sunshine Coast Regional Council Somerset Regional Council Maranoa Regional Council Fraser Coast Regional Council Bundaberg Regional Council	Scenic Rim Regional Council City of Gold Coast	Central Highlands Regional Council Rockhampton Regional Council



Western Downs Regional Council Ipswich City Council Moreton Bay Regional Council		
<b>Victoria</b>	<b>Expanding to</b>	<b>Expanding to</b>
Wellington Shire East Gippsland Shire Shire of Mornington Peninsula Frankston City Council	Yarra Ranges Shire Council City of Casey Cardinia Shire Council	Greater Geelong City Greater Shepparton City Council Ballarat Greater Bendigo City
<b>Northern Territory</b>		
		Katherine Town Council City of Palmerston Darwin
<b>Western Australia</b>		
		Mundaring Shire Council Kalamunda City of Swan City of Wanneroo City of Joondalup City of Bayswater Bassendean Town Council
<b>South Australia</b>		
		City of Unley City of Mitcham City of Marion City of Holdfast Bay
<b>Tasmania</b>		
		City of Canning West Coast Council City of Devonport City of Burnie City of Launceston City of Clarence Sorell Council Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council Brighton Council

Below is an image of the planned expansion across Australia over three years.



## KEY ACTIONS

Over three years, Youth Insearch will:

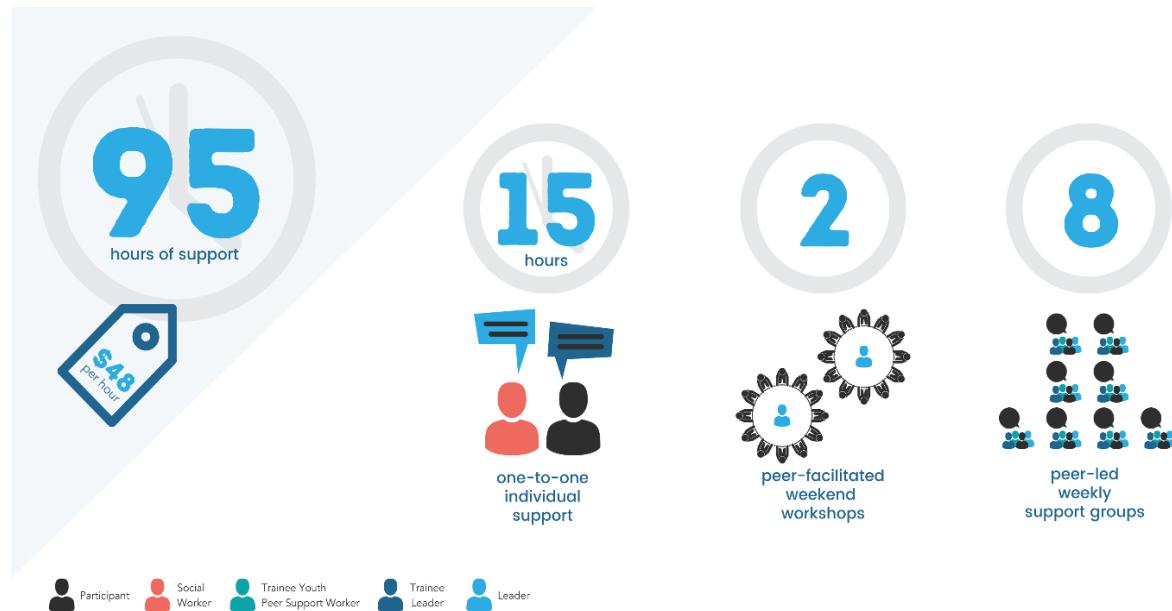
- Recruit and train 72 Youth Peer Support Workers: youth with lived experience providing non-clinical support
- Recruit 36 Social Workers: suitably qualified staff providing clinical support
- Receive referrals from local partners: existing regional coordinators develop relationships
- Conduct regular local-specific health promotion activities: ensure youth can access services
- Support 7,560 at-risk youth: through our established Place Based Model
- Monitor and evaluate program and participant outcomes: as detailed below
- Provide regular reports and updates as required

## SUPPORT PROVIDED

Over the three years, the Youth Insearch Place Based Model will provide at-risk participants up to 718,200 hours of individual support at \$48/hour. Specifically, this includes:

- 113,400 hours of professional support: leveraging peer group work to tailor professional support
- 30,240 intake and regular psychosocial assessments: to understand progress and tailor support
- 15,120 Weekend Workshops attendances: two-day peer and clinical support to address childhood trauma and challenges in a peer environment
- 302,400 weekly Support Group attendances: weekly peer-led sessions supporting youth to set and work towards goals of independence

For each young person they will receive the support detailed in the image below.



## PARTICIPANT JOURNEY

The image below details an example journey of one young person through our proven program. For each participant, this path will be tailored to their unique challenges.



## SUSTAINED LEGACY

On average, 10% of participants will enrol in Leaders training to deliver key program elements. Typically, they continue for seven years, and some become staff like our CEO. From Leaders we will recruit Peer Support Workers to grow a sustained peer workforce.

## OVERSIGHT

Established support and management practices ensure appropriate oversight and clinical governance of the program. Specifically, this involves:

- Peer Support Worker trained and supported by Social Worker
- Peer Support Worker provides non-clinical support through assertive outreach
- Social Worker is trained and supported by Regional Coordinator and Clinical Lead
- Social Worker provides referral-based clinical support for most complex youth trauma
- Regional staff are supported by the National Executive

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This program will be strongly embedded within Youth Insearch's research and evaluation framework, which ensures the program is safe and effective and backed by robust evaluations.

Established processes collect qualitative and quantitative data about our participants and programs.

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## PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENTS

At intake and repeated every three months, our Social Worker completes validated assessments to assess impact on participants psychosocial wellbeing. This complements feedback collected before and after programs from participants, staff and volunteers reported in participant case-notes.

Case notes are centrally managed in our dedicated digital system. This enables data collection at point of contact from diverse sources – increasing data richness while minimising input errors. Monthly, these case notes are discussed and assessed in clinical advisory sessions with our clinical lead Leanne Hall and support from our partner Relationships Australia.

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## PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Ongoing program quality is monitored through:

- Participant feedback forms
- Observation from trained volunteers and clinical staff
- Centrally collected program output data
- Input of dedicated advisories reporting direct to executive

Details available on our youth-led Program Councils [here](#), and expert-led Clinical Advisory [here](#).

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## EVALUATION PROCESSES

The vast data we collect is handled with respect to individual's privacy and regularly analysed.

Participant and program outcomes are regularly evaluated to ensure:

- Program meets organisation goals
- Delivers a safe and effective program of change

Periodically, Youth Insearch's university partners conduct in-depth evaluations and identify improvements. These are published widely to influence the mental health sector to improve youth-focused and trauma-informed practice.

**FINANCIAL DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

Youth Insearch is seeking \$34,484,993 to cover the fixed costs of delivering this proposal. We are not expecting the Federal Government to cover our operational costs which we already source from established philanthropic efforts. If we do not receive funds through this Submission, we will be required to provide support at a reduced level to this proposal to match reduced funding available.

<b>Budget item</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>Embed</b>	<b>Consolidate</b>	<b>Scale</b>	
<b>Salary</b>				
Social Worker SCHADS L4P4 (Yr 1 x 9, Yr 2 x 18, Yr 3 x 36)	\$854,053	\$1,779,937	\$3,713,302	\$6,347,292
Peer Support Worker SCHADS L3P5 (Yr 1 x 18, Yr 2 x 36, Yr 3 x 72)	\$1,475,933	\$3,075,999	\$6,417,144	\$10,969,076
Regional Coordinator SCHADS L4P4 (Yr 1 x 1.8, Yr 2 x 3.6, Yr 3 x 7.2)	\$170,812	\$355,991	\$742,668	\$1,269,471
<b>Direct Program Costs</b>				
Weekend Workshops	\$970,726	\$1,980,979	\$4,040,928	\$6,992,633
Outreach and Project Logistics	\$391,956	\$799,468	\$1,615,735	\$2,807,159
ICT	\$72,500	\$72,500	\$145,000	\$290,000

<b>Evaluation and Training</b>				
Evaluation, RCT and Cost benefit Analysis	\$150,000	\$100,00	\$250,00	\$500,000
Education and training	\$50,750	\$94,250	\$188,500	\$333,500
<b>Overheads</b>				
Admin	\$139,905	\$278,527	\$559,387	\$977,819
Management fee	\$618,995	\$1,265,648	\$2,613,400	\$4,498,043
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,895,630</b>	<b>\$9,803,299</b>	<b>\$20,286,064</b>	<b>\$34,984,993</b>

A detailed budget is attached to this proposal for further consideration.

## IMPACT

Since 1985, Youth Insearch has delivered consistent outcomes for at-risk youth with our partners in services, community, and government.

## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Based on 35 years of success, over the three years of this proposal we expect the 7,560 participants to:

- Improve mental health
  - 70% reduce psychological distress
  - 80% reduce suicidal behaviour and ideation
- Improve employability
  - 60% improve employment status
  - 60% improve pro-social skills
  - 70% improve self-esteem
  - 80% engage in sustained and meaningful work
- Improve engagement with education or training
  - 80% improve feelings towards their education
  - 80% engage in sustained education or training

## COST EFFECTIVENESS

The Youth Insearch program provides significant Return on Investment in many facets. For every \$1 invested in our program provides a conservatively estimated return of:

- \$1.84 by addressing youth depression<sup>26</sup> which prevents suicide
- \$1.30 by conducting assertive outreach<sup>27</sup>
- \$4.01 by conducting targeted health promotion activities<sup>28</sup>

Assertive outreach models of suicide prevention (used by the Peer Support Workers detailed in this Submission) can save \$347 million a year<sup>29</sup>.

## ACHIEVE NATIONAL GOALS

This responds to key policy initiatives of the Federal Government including:

- 2017 – 2022 Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan
- Report of the National Suicide Prevention Officer
- National Mental Health Workforce Strategy
- National Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response plan

Investing in the proven Youth Insearch program supports at-risk youth across Australia to create their own better future.

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<sup>26</sup> National Mental Health Commission, Return on Investment: Prevention in mental health, 2020

<sup>27</sup> Mental Health Australia & KPMG, Investing to Save: The Economic Benefits for Australia of Investment in Mental Health Reform, 2018

<sup>28</sup> NSW Government, Mentally Healthy Workplaces: In NSW A Return-On-Investment Study, 2017

<sup>29</sup> Orygen, Trauma and Young People, 2018