

MISSING SCHOOL

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Missing School Incorporated

**Social Innovation & Impact**

## 2023 Annual Report of Missing School Incorporated

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### Contact us

If you have any queries about this report, please contact MissingSchool

Mail: PO Box 155, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614 Email: [info@missingschool.org.au](mailto:info@missingschool.org.au) Website: [missingschool.org.au](https://missingschool.org.au)

Phone: 1300 237 234

ABN 77 164 124 450

**MISSING SCHOOL**

MISSING SCHOOL

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# INTRODUCTION

## STUDENT SNAPSHOT: AVIANNA

One question we were asked was “how does your child feel returning to school?” Avianna was sitting beside me so I asked her. She said “I feel great. Because of the puppet show [camp quality show that she attended from hospital using the robot] and my robot, I feel accepted and protected. All of the kids know how brave I’ve been and how hard I’ve worked taking my medicine and that’s why I don’t have hair. Nobody even talks about my hair they just say how brave I am and ask if I’m ok”.

~Parent



AVIANNA, YEAR 1, CONNECTING TO CLASS

# INTRODUCTION

Across Australia, every day, into the hundreds of thousands of students with complex health conditions are at home or in hospital, missing school.

MissingSchool is dedicated to bridging the educational and social gaps experienced by these students and, often, their siblings by advocating for continuing connections to their own school.

We are the first and only organisation in Australia with a primary focus on keeping students with complex health conditions connected to their schools.

MissingSchool:

- Supports families with research, resources, strategies and helpful connections
- Raises awareness on the issue to inform the efforts of governments, educators, and health professionals
- Researches on embedding systems using best practice models and enabling technology
- Raises funds to achieve these objectives

**Our mission is to solve school isolation.**

MissingSchool takes the view that school is a student's community.

**Connection to their community** can alleviate the stress and anxiety of a medical or mental health condition, promote resilience and optimism, and support students facing health challenges to remain positively engaged in learning and life.

This *important connection* reminds **students** with complex health challenges that **there is more to who they are than their condition.**

# PRINCIPLES

## **Student Centred**

Placing students at the forefront of a partnering approach

## **Lived Experience**

Recognising the lived experience as participatory evidence

## **Sound Evidence**

Employing research and evaluation for responsive practice

## **System Solutions**

Leveraging capacity in systems for strategic transformation

## **Ethically Applied**

Ensuring activities and processes safeguard people

We remain dedicated to adhering to these principles when striving to connect students with complex health conditions to the most valuable educational and social experiences.

Protecting the privacy of our interactions with children and families is of utmost importance. We often hear sensitive stories that we cannot share publicly.

We share stories with complete consent and ethical approval, including the right to withdraw consent at any time.

Incorporated in the ACT, MissingSchool is a volunteer-led registered charity, with national registration.

**We are endorsed by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission as a Deductible Gift Recipient.**

**MissingSchool  
recognises chronic  
school absence for  
students with  
complex health  
challenges  
for example >>>**

- Anxiety
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Blood Disorders
- Brain Injury
- Injuries & Burns
- Cancer
- Crohn's Disease
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Diabetes
- Eating Disorders
- Epilepsy
- Heart/Liver/Kidney Disease
- Mental Disorders
- Rare Diseases
- School Refusal/School Can't
- Transplants, and more...

COVID-19 highlighted the profound impact that education gaps and lack of access to peers has had on the current generation of Australian students.

However, there is a growing cohort of children who miss school due to complex medical/mental health conditions that continue to be overlooked.

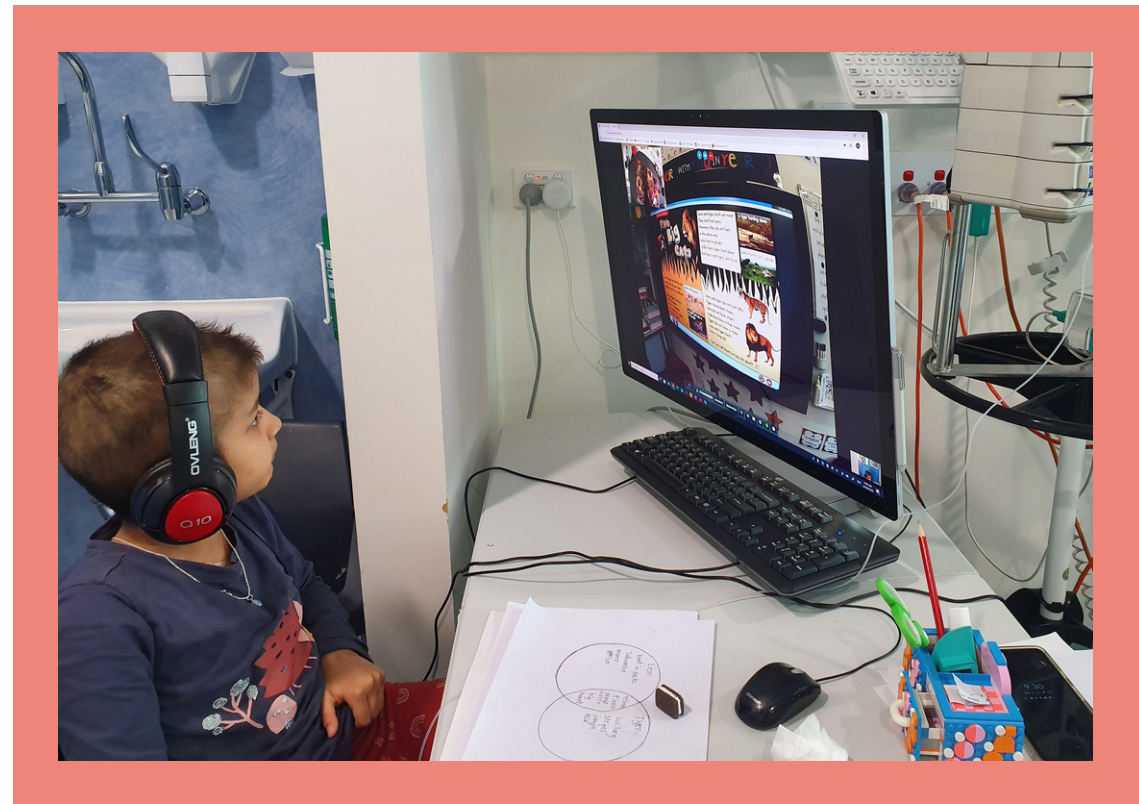
Despite the UN rights, and efforts from educators and parents, the gap between positive intentions and school support for students with serious health conditions remains. Waiting isn't an option. There is "no safe threshold for absence", and the global rise in chronic illness and trend of school refusal underline the urgency.

# THE SOCIAL COSTS

Significant school absence for students with complex health conditions affects all genders, all socio-economic groups, all cultural and religious groups, all school ages, all locations and all abilities. It cuts across public, independent and faith-based schools.

Without introducing the costs of medical intervention and any ongoing medical care, the estimated lifetime cost to lost productivity from incomplete schooling per individual is close to \$1million. Human, systems and social costs are high, making outcome measurement critical.

This is a challenge that affects students globally and Australia has the opportunity to be the global leader in best practice governance and solutions and make a valuable global contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 4 (Health and Education).



A STUDENT JOINS THEIR CLASS FROM HOSPITAL



## PROBLEM SNAPSHOT

"The school does the very best it can to be supportive but unfortunately until now this sort of technology, which would make such a difference, has been unavailable. Completing catch up work is solely [Student]'s responsibility and this can add significant pressure in an already stressful situation. The school has introduced an online platform that has the content for most subjects available for the term. It is however completely different trying to catch up significant amounts of work in a self directed manner compared to being able to attend classes and hear discussions and theories etc. Reading over a subject matter does not provide you with everything you need or give you the opportunities to enhance your understanding."

– PARENT

# POLICY AGENDA

MissingSchool continues to advocate on behalf of students with serious illness and their families to the Australian Government to match existing legislation and technology with clear policy as outlined in CEO, Megan Gilmour's, policy paper

1. Make 'students with a health condition' a priority equity cohort in National School Reforms
2. Enhance the national evidence base through improved data (e.g., NCCD, ABS, schools)
3. Mandate and publish school responsibility to offer telepresence during absence
4. Set, train and monitor practice standards for schools, hospitals, and support at home
5. Adopt a 'health condition' absence code; set absence thresholds to trigger support

As outlined above, in 2022 MissingSchool triggered national action toward a dedicated absence code for students with health conditions. Further advocacy and activation will continue in 2023.

# TARGET OUTCOMES

**MissingSchool is targeting system outcomes across three domains of cultural and systemic change >>>**

## 1. Amplifying Awareness

Students with complex health conditions increase school attendance through telepresence, reengage with teachers and peers, learn to manage anxiety about school absence.

Parents/carers facilitate increased school attendance through options and advocacy.

Siblings and peers cultivate concepts of diversity and inclusion, supporting sick students.

Health organisations contribute to development of illness-specific resources.

Educators use telepresence technology in their classrooms to support teaching and learning for students with complex health conditions.

Health professionals use telepresence for school connection during student's admission.

# TARGET OUTCOMES

**MissingSchool is targeting system outcomes across three domains of cultural and systemic change**  
>>>

## 2. Cultivating Competency

Students with complex health conditions engage in their learning, receive face-to-face teaching, socialise with peers, increase their support network and opportunities for success and attainment.

Parents/carers support their kid's learning and social connection with reduced burden.

Siblings and peers have increased empathy about medical situations and absences, relationships with unwell peers continue.

Health organisations share information and provide peer-to-peer support to families.

Educators normalise the young person's presence in the classroom through technology-inclusive practice, support increases for sick students' education.

Health professionals incorporate school learning and social connection in medical plans.

# TARGET OUTCOMES

**MissingSchool is targeting system outcomes across three domains of cultural and systemic change**  
**>>>**

## 3. Mobilising Management

Students with complex health conditions continue education in their own learning community, maintain a sense of belonging, find greater resilience through peer and school connection.

Parents/carers exercise confidence for their kid's learning and future..

Siblings and peers have greater ease and normalised relationships with unwell peers at school and during transitions.

Health organisations proactively support families with timely information resources.

Schools and hospitals implement practice guidelines for school telepresence technology for sick students in a sustainable approach.

# CHAMPIONING STUDENTS

## POLICY GOAL

Mandate and publish school responsibility to offer classroom telepresence during absence

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE TOWARD POLICY GOAL

Our innovative technology service, including telepresence robots, provides a critical link to connect students with medical and mental health challenges with their classmates and gives them a physical presence in school.

Our technology is cleared for use in every state and territory education system, with all school sectors engaging.

In FY 2023 we began piloting support for students, schools and families to use school-owned technology for connection. Lessons from the pilot are emerging and will inform MissingSchool's approach to scaling and embedding telepresence connection as standard practice within school systems over the coming year.



# CHAMPIONING STUDENTS

ALL-TIME  
STUDENTS  
ENGAGED:  
456

Since 2018, MissingSchool has engaged to support an estimated 5,970 classmates to be reconnected through telepresence including robots.

One of our proudest achievements in the 2023 financial year has been our engagement to support 150 students with school connection, connecting 76 students through assistive technology in line with the Disability Standards for Education.

The number of beneficiaries exceeds ~9,000 through modelling innovative inclusion practices to siblings, peers, and parents in school communities where technology supports student presence.

We have laid a solid foundation for the future through a strategy for targeted outreach to more than 9,500 schools (including hospital schools) across Australia and over 500 community organisations working on child and health matters.

From mid 2021-mid 2023, MissingSchool has donated on loan more than \$183,000 in technology services to schools across Australia to support students with serious illness.

## ALL TIME SCHOOL CLASSIFICATION

- ✓ **Primary: 52%**
- ✓ **Secondary: 23%**
- ✓ **Combined: 23%**
- ✓ **Special: 2%**

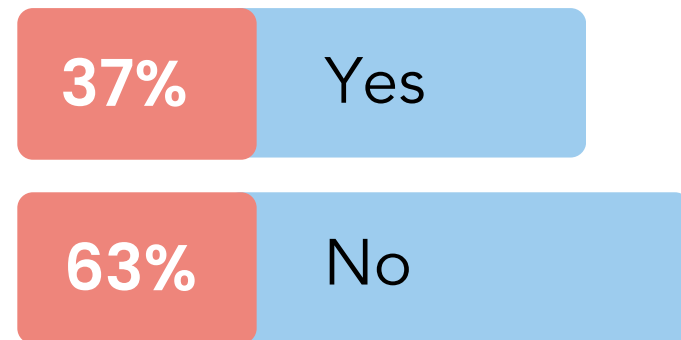
## JUL 22 - JUN 23 SCHOOL CLASSIFICATION

- ✓ **Primary: 61%**
- ✓ **Secondary: 6%**
- ✓ **Combined: 27%**
- ✓ **Special: 6%**

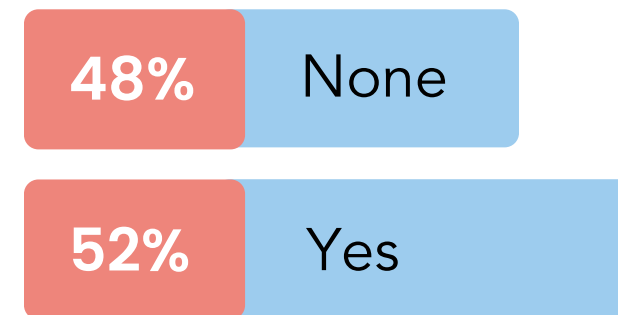


# ALL TIME STUDENTS ENGAGED: DEMOGRAPHICS

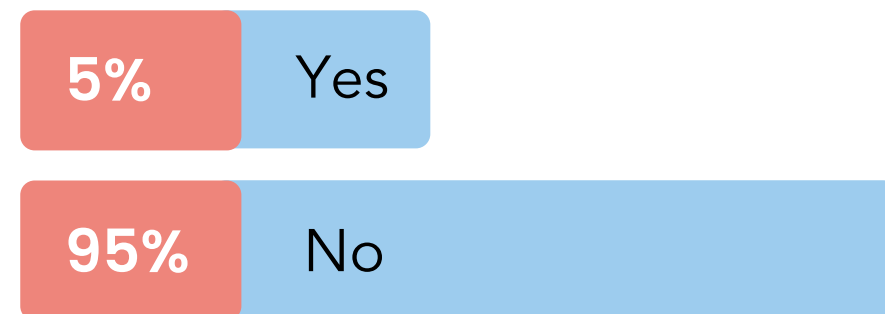
## IS THERE AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN IN PLACE?



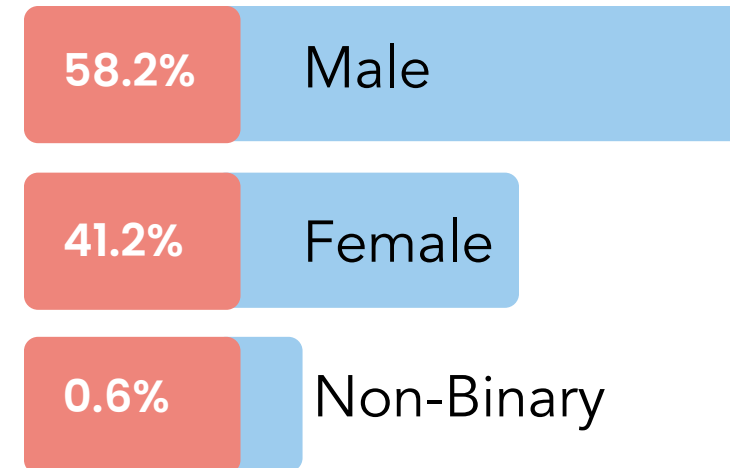
## CONNECTION TO CHARITIES OTHER THAN MISSINGSCHOOL



## ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DESCENT



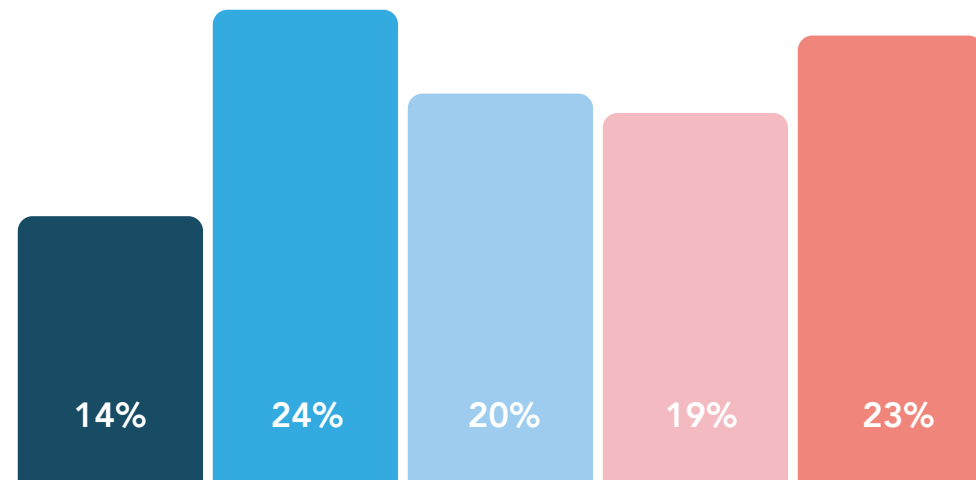
## GENDER



# ALL TIME: SCHOOL ABSENCE

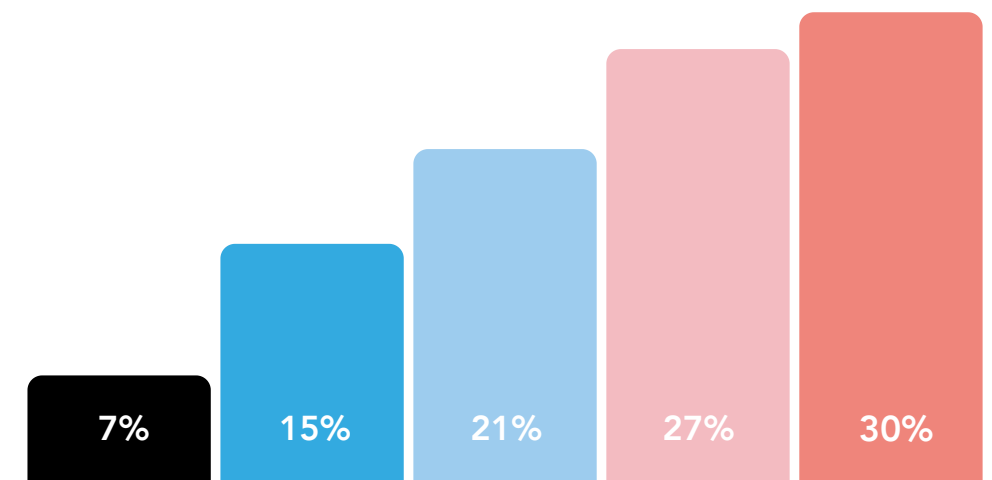
## AMOUNT OF SCHOOL MISSED TO DATE

■ Less than 1 month: 
 ■ 1-3 months: 
 ■ 4-6 months  
■ 7-12 months: 
 ■ 12+ months



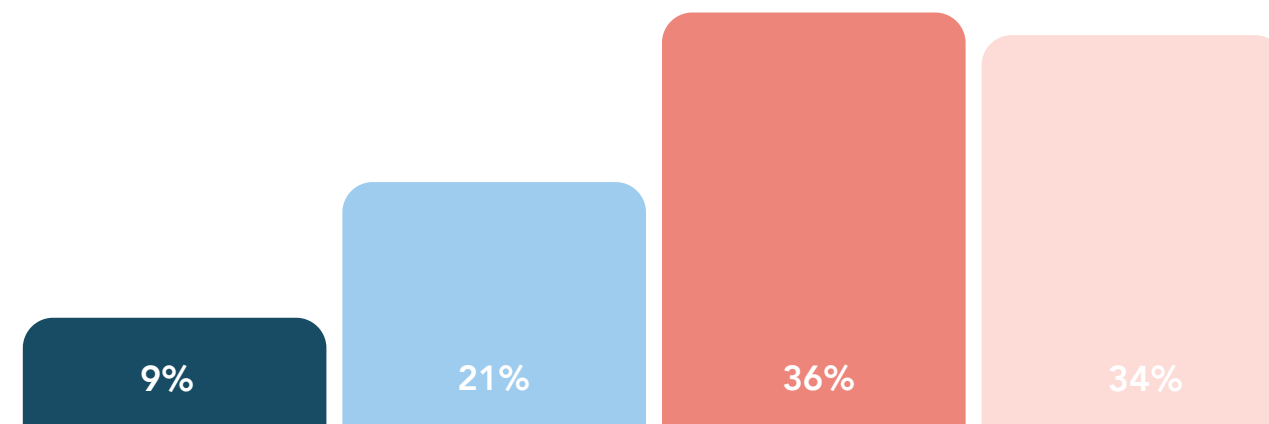
## EXPECTED LENGTH OF ABSENCE

■ Less than 1 month: 
 ■ 1-3 months: 
 ■ 4-6 months  
■ 7-12 months: 
 ■ 12+ months

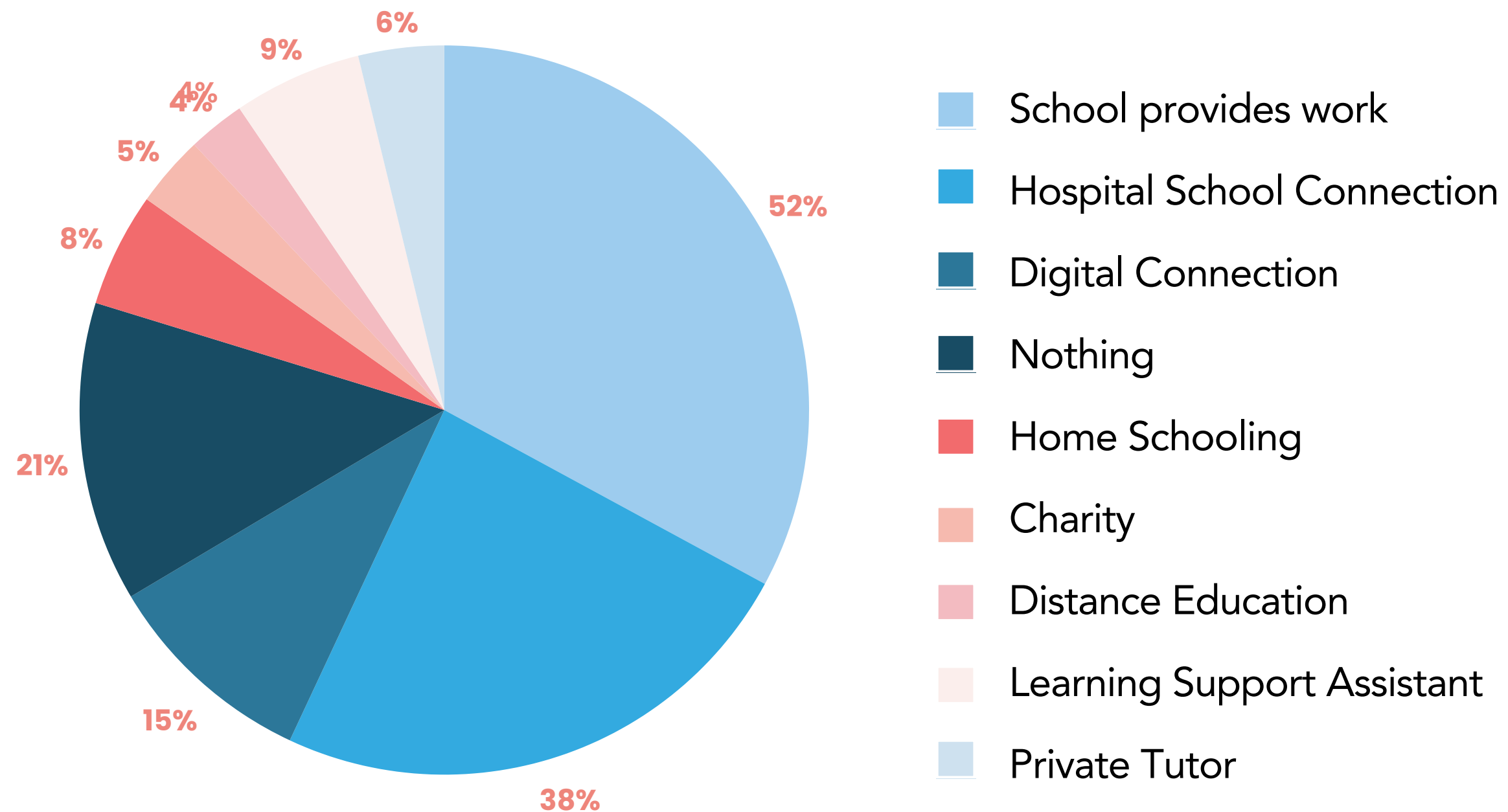


## PATTERN OF ABSENCE

■ Intermittent-specified period: 
 ■ Full time-specified period  
■ Intermittent-indefinite 
 ■ Full time-indefinite



# WHAT HAPPENS TO SUPPORT THE STUDENT'S EDUCATION? (PRE-ROBOT)\*



**\*Note:**  
percentages total  
>100% as multiple  
selections applied  
to some students

# SIDE EFFECTS OF MISSING SCHOOL

\*Data is from pre-technology placement student baseline survey. % total is >100% as some students experienced multiple side effects of school absence (i.e., 72% means that 72% of parents asked, responded that their child experiences that side effect).

Side Effects	%*
Disruption of friendships	72%
Academic underachievement	53%
Increased anxiety	51%
Reduced opportunities for social support	45%
School refusal and reintegration difficulties	42%
Delays in developmental skills	37%
Difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships	37%
Attention and concentration problems	35%
Increased vulnerability to other stressors	32%
Low self esteem	28%
Peer rejection	20%
Specific learning needs	26%
Behavioural problems	16%

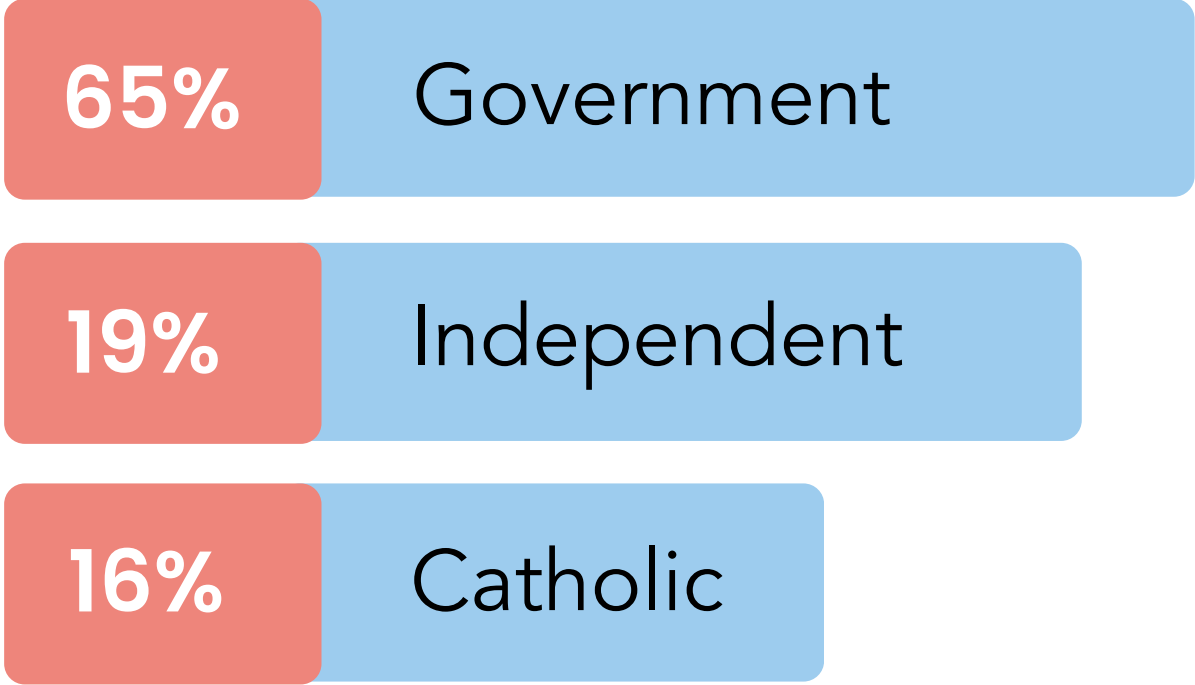
# TOP 5 BENEFITS OF TELEPRESENCE TECHNOLOGY

1. Classroom connection maintained
2. Friendships and relationships supported
3. Support from school accessed
4. Teacher capacity unlocked
5. Student wellbeing increased

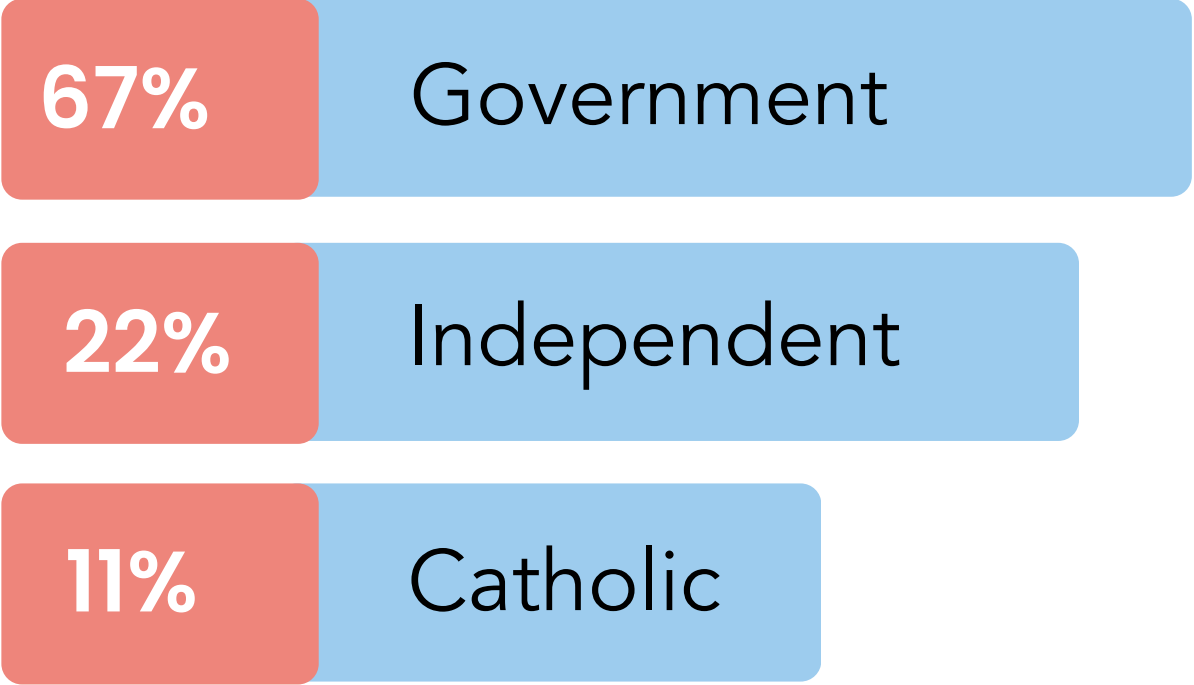


# SCHOOL SECTOR

ALL TIME



FY 2023



# STUDENT CASE STUDY



## ROBO-PRESENCE SHINES LIGHT ON ETHAN'S CRISIS

Brisbane teen Ethan Waller had virtually disappeared from his own life, until a digital solution created a new reality where he can “be seen” despite his devastating illness.

### THE ILLNESS

Ethan Waller was a motivated student with dreams of becoming a concert pianist or goalie for Tottenham Hotspurs when glandular fever laid him flat in his first year of high school.

After years of utter exhaustion, neurological decline, hundreds of medical tests/appointments, he received a diagnosis of ME/CFS and orthostatic intolerance.

Having robbed Ethan of everything he held true to his identity (band, reading, piano, going out, friendships, moving, thinking, eating and sleeping properly), the illness took him to the brink of losing his last link to his “normal” life – his school.

That was until his mum, MissingSchool and Ethan's empathetic school hatched a plot to reinstate “Robo-Ethan” virtually into his classroom. It has been a turning point – not just for Ethan's education, but for empowering him to step out of the shadows.

# STUDENT CASE STUDY

## THE ROBOT

So, launch day finally arrived. Ethan could barely summon the courage to log into his telepresence classroom robot for the first time.

Finally, he hits the link, and up pops a whole screen-full of beaming faces. Momentarily, he's a rock star.

A couple of girls even squeal as his face 'goes live'. All his friends are gathered close, wide smiles pressing into the screen, giving him electronic high-fives. He's embarrassed, surprised and secretly - just lovin' it.

It has been a long hard year since he last stepped into a classroom in real time.

A whole year's haze of specialist appointments, medical tests, isolation and bone-crushing exhaustion. His daily company is furry sidekick Truffles, the four walls and that inscrutable ceiling – witness to countless lost battles with sleep.

But the "go live", signalled a new start. All his friends are now walking alongside virtual-Ethan as he remotely motors into class. With air tarmac-style paddle hands, his mates direct him into position at their circular desk. Class begins and, suddenly, everything's normal again.

His four walls dissolve away. He's no longer the first ever robotic telepresence student at his school.

He's just a young student sitting right there beside his friends, brainstorming on a research PowerPoint to present to class.

His mates can't stop grinning at him. They remember the Ethan before - the goofy one, the one with the safest hands 'in goal' and who played piano fast and furious. I can tell they "get" how big this is for Ethan and they just feel great being a part of it. It's probably the best thing they learned at school that day - maybe all year.

They learnt how empathy and inclusivity is like the tide, lifting all ships.



# STUDENT CASE STUDY

Kudos to Ethan's school for caring enough to make this crazy idea reality, those three determined mums who established the MissingSchool initiative for chronically ill kids like mine.

Most kids are not so lucky. Ethan is just one of tens of thousands of kids missing school every day in Australia, mostly due to chronic illness and mostly left behind.

It's tragic when they're so ill and isolated. When a crippling illness has robbed them of everything that felt like their identity (their hopes, dreams, their physical and mental capabilities), why are they expected to also leave their friends and familiarity behind as well.

We cannot quantify how much it means

to have some school days each week where these kids can just see and be seen by their peers.

It's a great start. And hopefully, for Ethan, when this devastating illness loosens its grip, he'll be able to pursue his childhood dreams once again - undoubtedly as goalie for Tottenham in the off-season from his concert piano tours.

~Shelley-Lee Waller~

Mum of two, carer and staunch advocate for her teenaged son Ethan – who developed a debilitating neuro-immune condition, including ME/CFS at 12 years of age.

## THE GRADUATION

Fast forward to the end of the 2021 school year, and Ethan graduates from school.

"Your compassion has let me complete my education and have the same chance as everyone else and I will never forget this"  
~ Ethan, Student



# ACTIVATING PEERS & SIBLINGS

## POLICY GOAL

Train and monitor practice standards for schools, hospitals, support at home

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE TOWARD POLICY GOAL

When a student with a complex health condition is absent from school, they can experience feelings of isolation and disconnection from their peers.

MissingSchool data shows that peer connection has benefits for the absent student's social and emotional wellbeing, and learning.

Connection also has wellbeing benefits for peers and can help them grow in empathy, understanding and compassion.

"And I think it did help them [class] to be much more compassionate towards her when she did turn up, they're like, 'Wow, she's being so brave. Let's be supportive here'."

– PARENT

TEACHER –

"And so it affected our kids for the better, in so many ways, because they've missed this boy. He vanished out of their life, and now we had him back [through the robot]."

# ACTIVATING PEERS & SIBLINGS

We're especially proud of reconnecting

2280+

classmates this year through support to students with complex health challenges who are absent.

MISSING SCHOOL

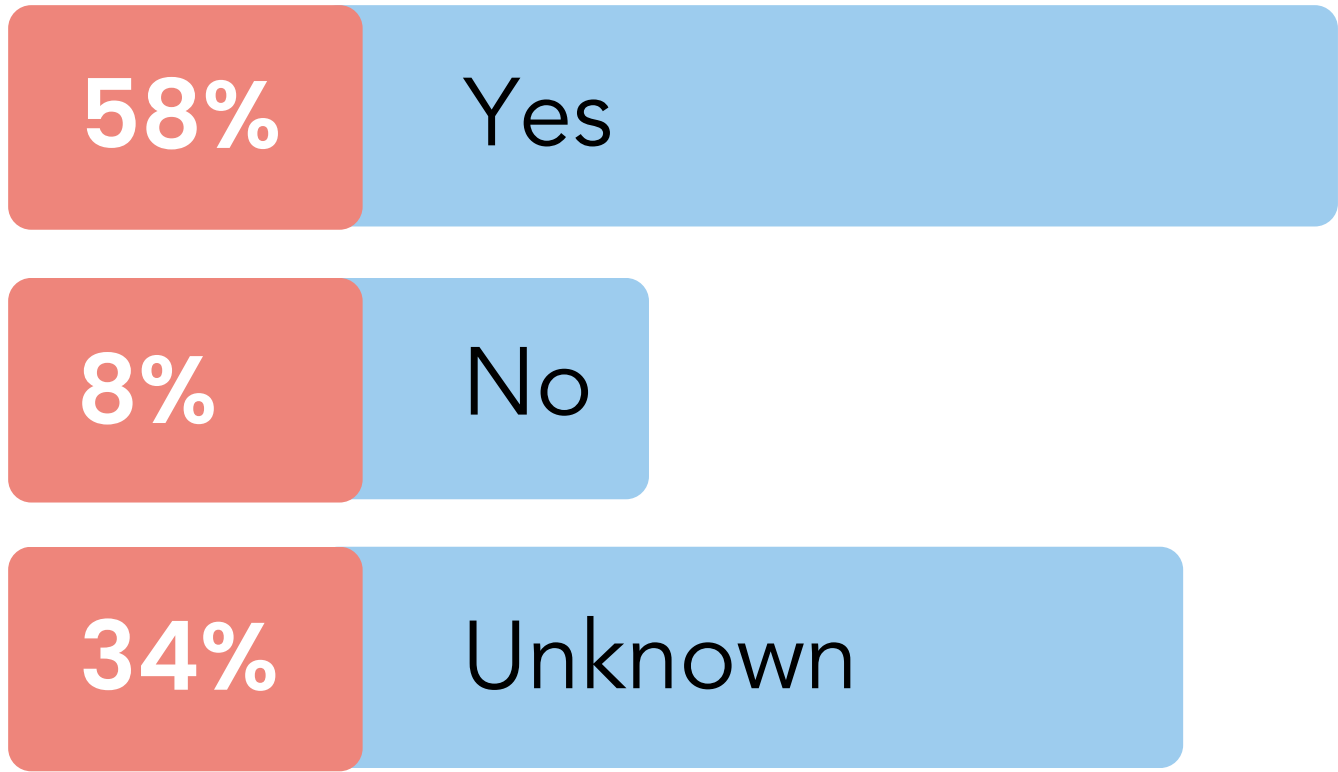
And we've been working on production of empathetic peer animations.

These will be rolled out in primary and secondary schools across Australia in Q1 2024 to support siblings and peers of students impacted by complex health challenges to minimise stigma and guide their role in maintaining positive connections. The animations will be complemented by a digital educational toolkit that will be introduced in schools to amplify the importance of peer connections.

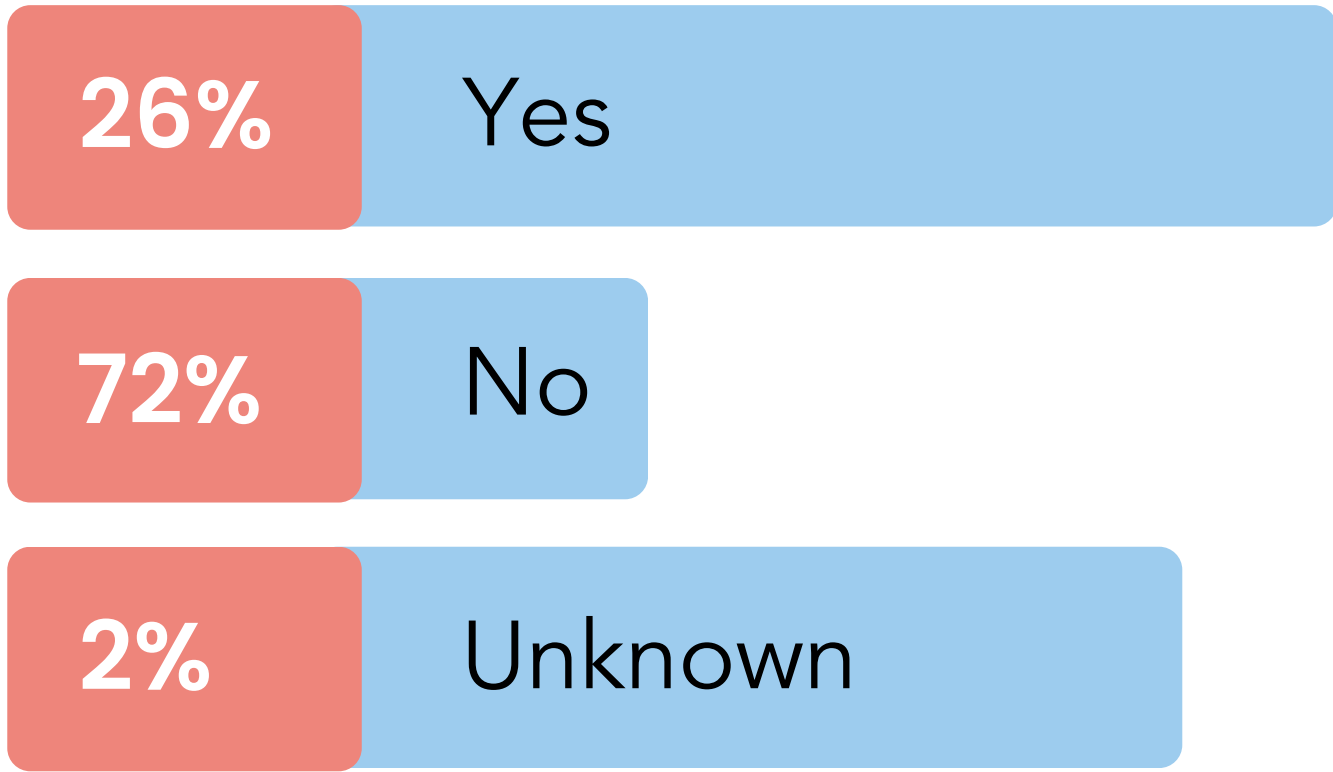


# ALL TIME: SIBLINGS

DOES THE STUDENT HAVE SIBLINGS?



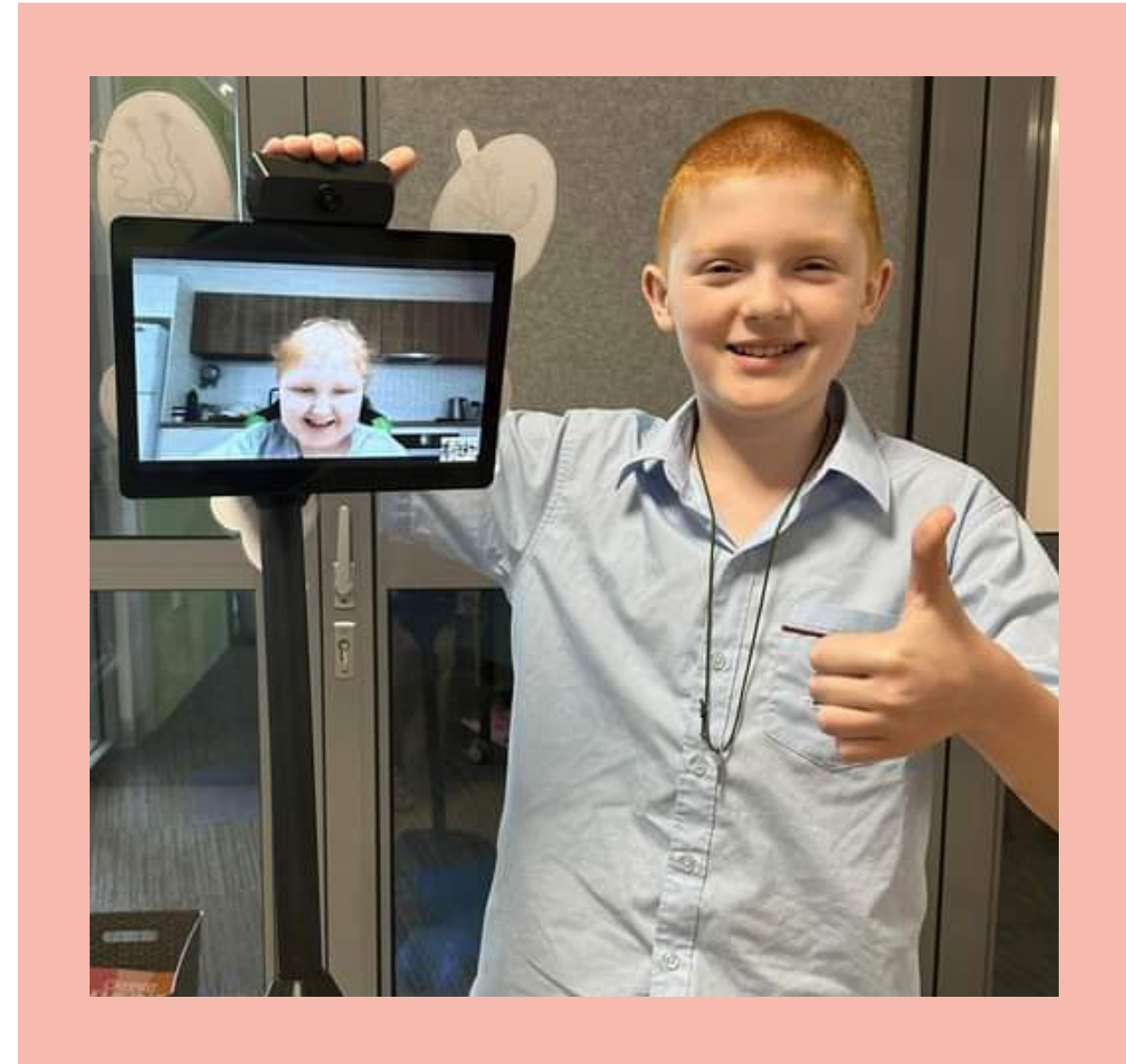
DO THE SIBLINGS MISS SCHOOL BECAUSE OF THE STUDENT'S ABSENCE?



# STUDENT SNAPSHOT: EZRA

"I believe the robot as a stand-alone resource would allow any child to feel connected and included by being present in class. While being in class has academic benefits of a child not falling as far behind, the social and emotional benefits are just as important in minimising the impact of loneliness and isolation. As a whole I believe the quality of connection and inclusion goes beyond the robot as a resource to physically engage with the school. It also becomes a tool for the school to ensure that peers are mindful of the impact of childhood illness such as cancer and open a dialogue that is both curious and empathic, rather than one of stigma and taboo."

~ Parent



EZRA (YEAR 4) AND HIS BROTHER CATCH UP THROUGH THE ROBOT

# SUPPORTING PARENTS & CARERS

## POLICY GOAL

Train and monitor practice standards for schools, hospitals, support at home

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE TOWARD POLICY GOAL

MissingSchool piloted our digital Helpline, Parent Facebook Group, and weekly 'Ask Us Anything' webinars, providing ongoing information and support for parents and carers on school connection options, health-specific education considerations, stakeholder partnering strategies for improved student outcomes, and troubleshooting. These activities help free up parents and carers to stay focused on their critical job of looking after their kids and not trying to be a teacher as well.

"[Student] trusts me as a mother, but he doesn't trust me as a teacher, so it's been really, really, really hard. This way, having the telepresence robot, means that he can actually directly engage with his teachers, and peers, without me having to be the link."

- PARENT

# SUPPORTING PARENTS & CARERS

In FY 2023 we received

**88 ENQUIRIES**

and piloted the expansion of our daily family and school helpline, staffed by specialist personnel.

We supported

**123 SCHOOLS**

and **185 FAMILIES**

through more than

**6,000 HELPLINE INTERACTIONS**

(calls, SMS, emails, enquiry forms, meetings).



Our helpline has been complemented by our pilot online parent support forum, through which we've delivered

**20 WEEKLY**

parent information webinars (starting Feb 2023), and regular information posts. Targeted digital outreach to illness organisations is expected to reach a large parent audience and contribute to forum growth in FY 2024.

# BUILDING TEACHER CAPACITY

## POLICY GOAL

Train and monitor practice standards for schools, hospitals, support at home

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE TOWARD POLICY GOAL

Since 2017, MissingSchool has engaged with schools totalling ~20,900 teachers. We work daily with school staff in every state and territory, and school system, including classroom teachers, school leadership, IT support and administrative staff through thousands of interactions each year.

We value our engagement with hospital schools around Australia who are at the frontline of education provision for students with complex health conditions.

MissingSchool has completed 265 surveys and 184 longform interviews with schools, and this data informs our approach to teacher training and advocacy for systems change. Our policy engagement and outreach to MPs, including Ministers, at federal and state levels, highlights our commitment to ensuring teachers are supported to fulfil their responsibility.

Thank you for the care and generosity from MissingSchool. The robot has given so much hope and joy to [Student], myself and the students. I am forever grateful for the wonderful opportunity.

TEACHER –



# BUILDING TEACHER CAPACITY

In FY 2023, MissingSchool undertook foundational work for our on-demand educator forum and digital training. We finalised our teacher training strategy, engaged specialists, and developed content and competency frameworks. The launch of the teacher professional development forum is planned for early 2024, and will enable access to teaching resources, collegial conversations, webinars with multidisciplinary experts, wellbeing supports and more.

Critically, it will bridge the gap in available training specifically related to health condition contexts and

supports to address chronic absence, including “teach once, learn from anywhere” telepresence assistive devices. The long-term goal is to unlock capacity for teachers across Australia to consistently apply the Disability Standards for Education, ultimately improving wellbeing, learning and social outcomes for students with complex medical conditions.

We are excited about the possibilities through this new way of engaging with amazing teachers at the frontline of education for students with complex conditions.

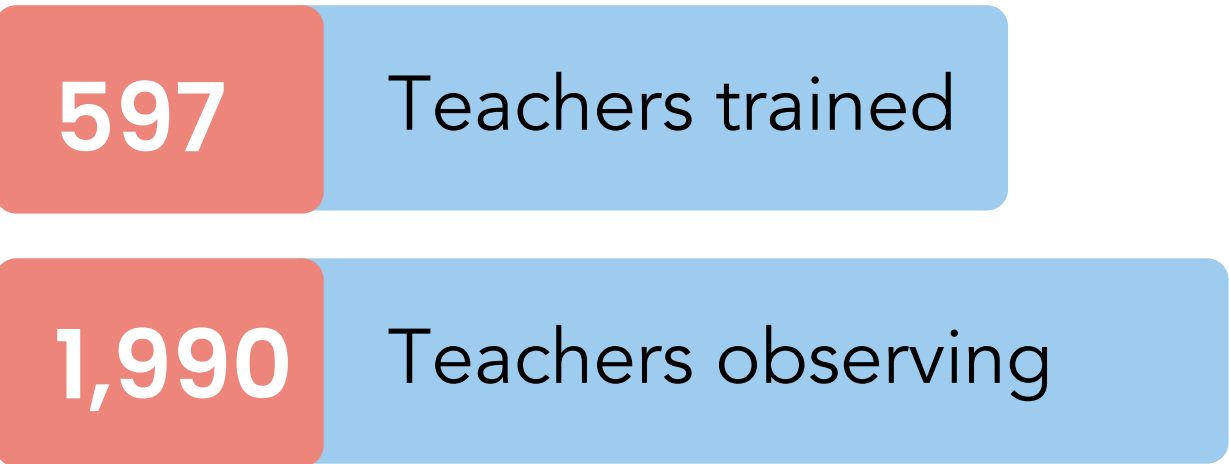
In the reporting period, MissingSchool has trained

**228  
TEACHERS.**

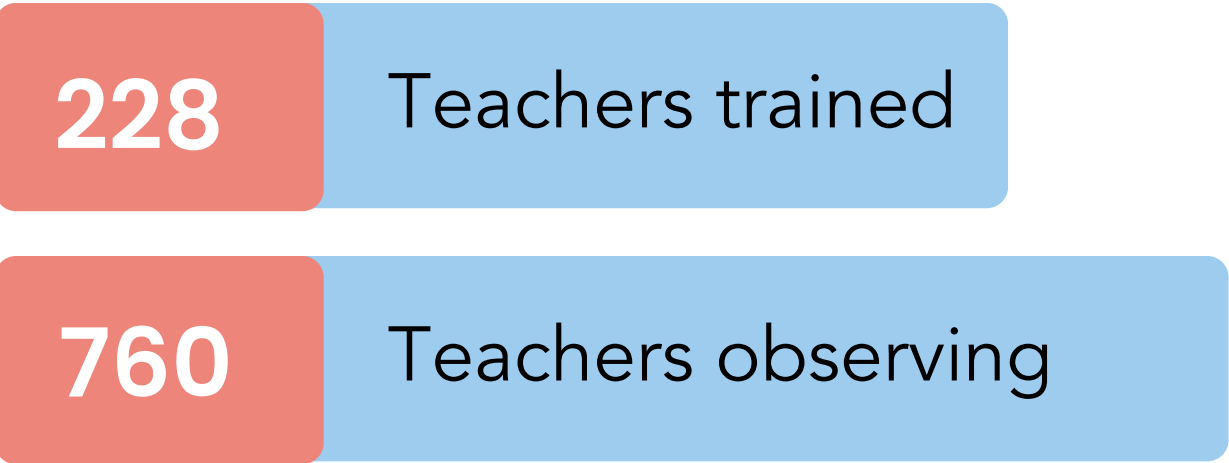


# TEACHER SNAPSHOT

## ALL TIME TEACHERS SUPPORTED

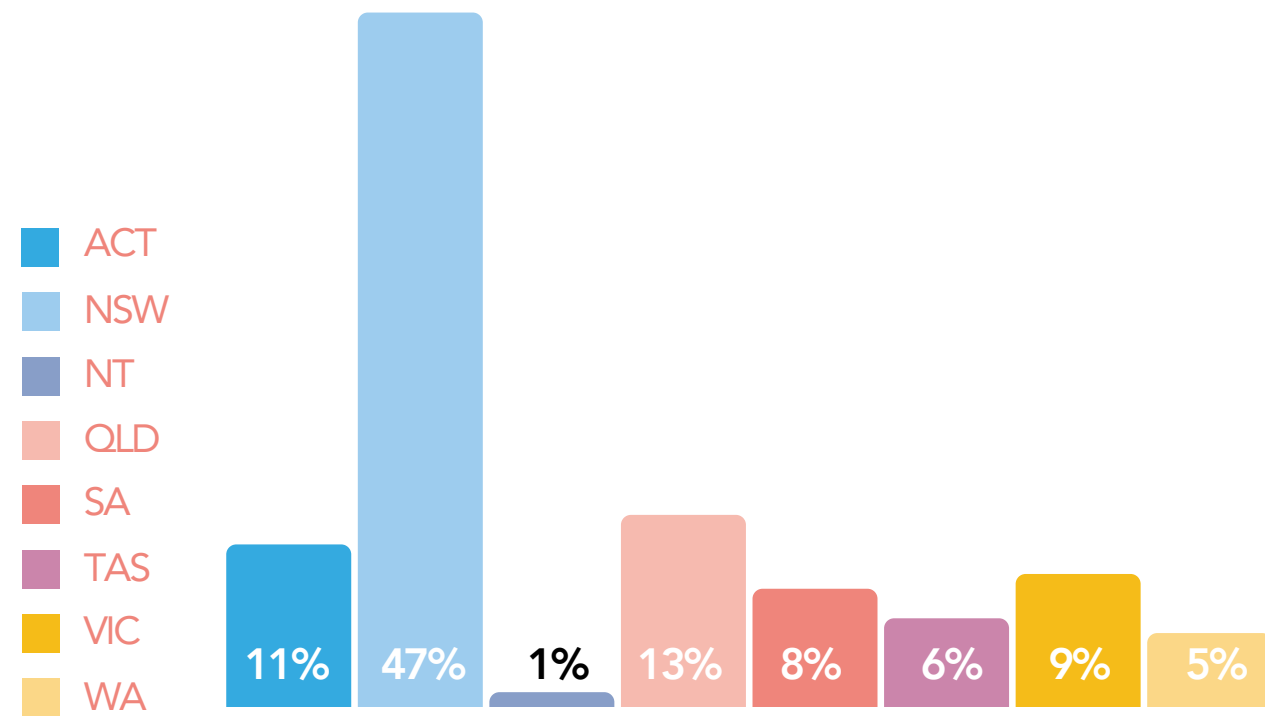


## FY 2023 TEACHERS SUPPORTED

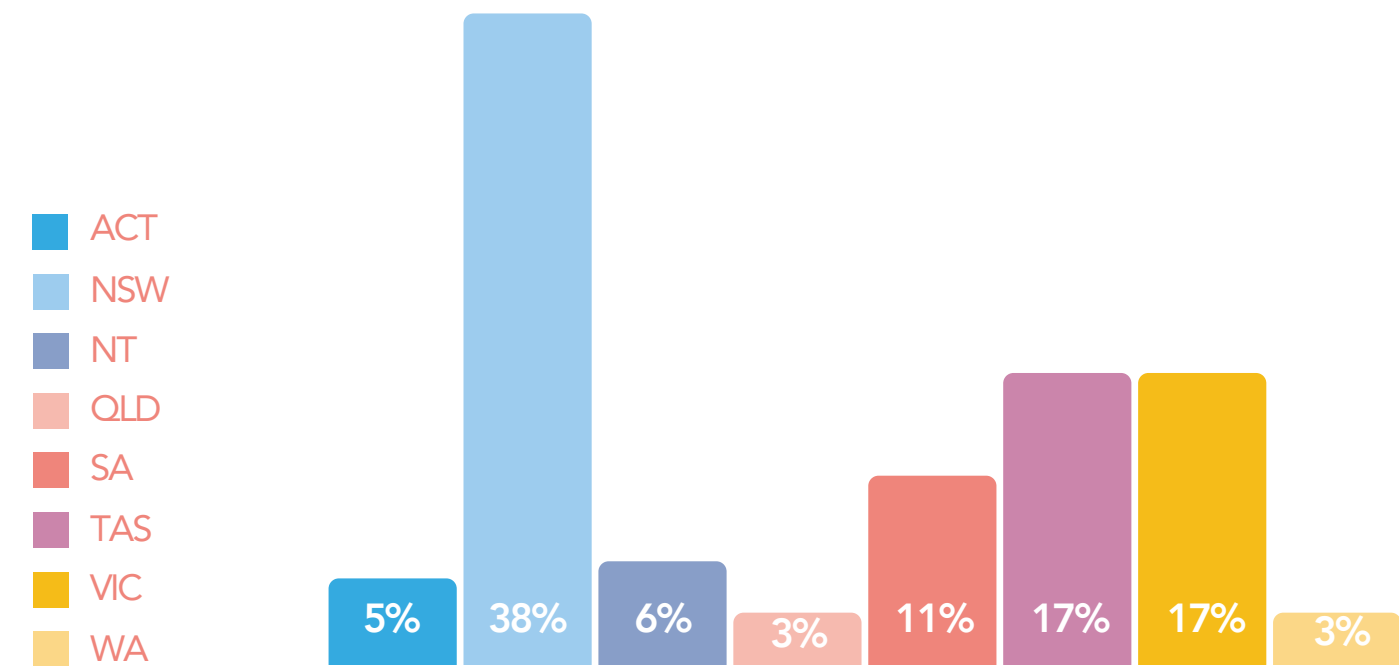


# SCHOOLS SNAPSHOT

ALL TIME SCHOOLS ENGAGED BY STATE

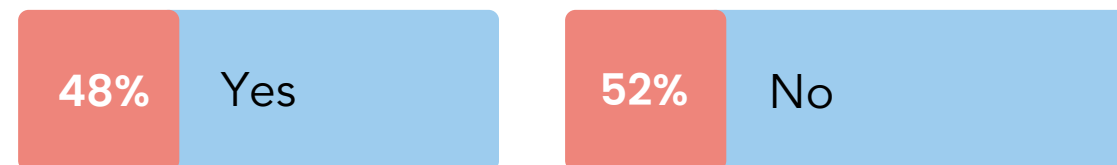


FY 2023 SCHOOLS ENGAGED BY STATE



## ALL TIME: HOSPITAL SCHOOL CONNECTION

Is the student connected with a hospital school?



# ACTIONING PARTNERSHIPS

## POLICY GOAL

Make 'students with a health condition' a priority equity cohort in National School Reforms

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE TOWARD POLICY GOAL

National Insights for Education Directories (NIEDs) has been built this year to be a gamechanger at the intersection of health and education, putting reliable and actionable information in the hands of the widest support team for students facing complex health challenges. The goal is to prioritise the learning and wellbeing journeys of students alongside their peers by supporting their families and teachers at the point of pressing need.

NIEDs will unlock unique data, covering everything from teacher and parent insights to education system information contained in easily searchable digital directories of 500+ medical, health, mental health, and support service organisations, Australia's public, independent, and faith-based schools; and thousands of qualitative quotes and insights from parents and teachers.

*At scale, NIEDs will inform policy efforts towards learn from anywhere systems for students who are chronically absent.*

HeartKids is excited to join MissingSchool in launching NIEDs in Q4 2023 and driving the message home that continuous connection to school, teachers and classmates is vital to ensuring children don't fall behind and reach their full potential in life.

**LESLEY JORDAN,  
HEARTKIDS CEO –**

# ACTIONING PARTNERSHIPS

In February 2023 we launched the Don't You Forget About Me film (~2,200 YouTube views to date) and national social education campaign which, through donated advertising, put our mission in front of more than 13 million Australians. We achieved earned media across reputable, positive media outlets and showcased wellbeing for students, families, teachers and school leaders including a magazine cover story, national breakfast television and other print, digital, television, radio and out of home advertising with audience reach more than 8 million. Examples include ABC News Breakfast, Channel 10 News and QWeekend Magazine (Courier Mail). Further high profile media opportunities are in progress.

Our social media activity reached audiences of 418,366 to end June 2023 and, with dedicated SEO services, we're making it easier for families and schools to find us.

The doubling of our website traffic dovetails with the development of our new website, expected to launch in Q4 2023.

This year we began delivering weekly newsletters sharing insights, stories and resources and have published ~22 this financial year (thanks for reading!).

In preparation for launching NIEDs, we curated a health organisations list to 328 groups with organisation area of expertise, services, and contact details confirmed (ongoing), with outreach to 50+ illness groups completed. This will become a directory of health organisations and data for critical illness information to support schools and families with the student's learning journey and social-emotional wellbeing. Through this, we also undertook foundational work for our upcoming webcast.

Updated parent and school discovery kits, parent information brochure, school fundraising brochure and developed other digital collateral.

# ORGANISATIONAL LINKAGES

MissingSchool connects sick students to their learning and classmates by supporting families, mobilising the capacity of governments, educators, and health professionals, evaluating and researching for best practice, and using telepresence technology. MissingSchool works in a national alliance with a long-term outlook across sectors and disciplines.

MissingSchool's alliance has a track record of collaborating for research, in practice, and on innovation projects. The work takes place in front-line "consumer" settings such as schools, hospitals, services, and homes, and for students at various ages and stages of serious illness.

A key feature of MissingSchool's relationships is the means to access diverse perspectives from students, parents/carers, researchers, educators, health

professionals, policy-makers, and industry innovators. From design to delivery, MissingSchool is confident in translating evidence from the lived experience into sustainable policy and practice for scalable, affordable systems of care.



# ORGANISATIONAL LINKAGES

## Public Education System Partners:

- Commonwealth Education Department (consultation, policy, and pilot program management)
- ACT Education (consultation, operational and policy partner)
- NSW Education (consultation, operational and policy partner)
- Northern Territory Education (consultation, operational and policy partner)
- Queensland Education (consultation, operational and policy partner)
- South Australia Education (consultation, operational and policy partner)
- Tasmania Education (consultation, operational and policy partner)
- Victoria Education (consultation, operational and policy partner)
- Western Australia Education (consultation, operational and policy partner)
- State hospital and community services (referrer)

## Hospital School Partners

- Bankstown Hospital School (referrer)
- Canberra Hospital School (referrer)
- Gold Coast University Hospital Class (referrer)
- Hospital School South Australia (referrer)
- Illawarra Hospital School (referrer)
- John Hunter Hospital School (referrer)
- Perth Children's Hospital School (referrer)
- Queensland Children's Hospital School (referrer)
- Royal Darwin Hospital School (referrer)
- Royal North Shore Hospital School (referrer)
- Sydney Children's Hospital School (referrer)
- The Hospital School at Westmead (referrer)
- The Royal Children's Hospital School (referrer)

## Not for Profit Partners

- Parents and carers (consultation, operational and referral partners)
- Back on Track (referrer)
- Ronald McDonald House Charities (referrer)

# ORGANISATIONAL LINKAGES

- UnLtd (creative and media industry partnership pro bono)
- 500+ community children's health organisations (outreach will start under this program to scale the National Insights for Education Directories, an alliance at the intersection of education and health)

## Private Sector Partners

- Australia Post (shipping pro bono)
- Bourke Street Advisory and Fifty Acres (government engagement and lobbying advisers)
- Coffee Cocoa Gunpowder (creative advertising agency pro bono)
- G-Squared (web developer services pro bono)
- OhmniLabs (robot manufacturer partnership)
- Pure Public Relations (strategic communications and PR)
- Robots4Good (service centre and technical support)
- Zenith Media (media agency pro bono)
- Various grant providers

## Research Partners

- Deakin University (CEO is an Honorary Fellow and researcher - School of Education)
- University of Southern Queensland (partnership for research and data publication)
- University of NSW (data analysis)

## School Partners

- Public, Independent, Faith-based Schools, Systems and Teachers (Over the past five years, we have actively engaged with 425 schools, accounting for 4.5% of all schools in Australia, to facilitate student referrals. The introduction to scaling the new Seen&Heard initiative, will expand our outreach efforts to encompass communication or engagement with 9,600 schools, and their teachers, nationwide).



# PARTNERS

We are grateful for the support of our pro bono creative, *marketing* and *media* industry partners!

g squared.

Zenith  
The ROI agency

halfdome

cocogun\*

mude

scoundrel

UnLtd:

# PARTNERS

We are grateful for the support of our *funding partners* across the year!



# SHARING IMPACT & RESEARCH

## POLICY GOAL

Adopt a national 'health condition' absence code and set absence thresholds to trigger support

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE TOWARD POLICY GOAL

## AWARENESS

### Representations, consultations and submissions

Internationally, MissingSchool shared its approach and advocacy work and telepresence robot service lessons with interested parties across Australia and a range of overseas countries.

In Australia, MissingSchool's technology services are cleared for use in every state and territory and the organisation engages in operational arrangements with a range of hospital schools across Australia.

Leading up to the 2022 federal election, MissingSchool contacted all national Members of Parliament (307) with a policy backgrounder and then presented a policy perspective to senior members of the Commonwealth coalition government, the opposition, and other parties.

In response to MissingSchool's advocacy, the then government triggered a process involving state and territory education systems to implement MissingSchool's primary policy recommendation: setting a national "health condition" absence code for use in schools across Australia.

A specific code will enable early detection and monitoring of chronic school absences in students with physical and mental illness, trigger options for school support, and enhance the national evidence base through improved data.

# SHARING IMPACT & RESEARCH

## SUBMISSIONS

- Dec 2022 - Commonwealth Senate Inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters
- Jan 2023 - Pre-Budget Submission to the Australian Treasury
- May 2023 - Review of the Impact of COVID-19 on school students with disability

## REPRESENTATIONS

MissingSchool continued meetings with a small number of MPs while we focused on pilot developments.

We held six meetings with the Commonwealth Department of Education related to pilot activities and cohort-related matters.

## PRESENTATIONS

MissingSchool appreciates the opportunity to participate in conferences and presentations as valuable opportunities and connections to enhance advocacy work.

- Feb 2023 - Expert Witness: Commonwealth Senate Inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters
- Mar 2023 - Deloitte Canberra's Human Capital Team - Leadership, Connection, Collaboration
- Apr 2023 - UNSW Child Unlimited Youth Leaders Mentorship Program Presentation

- May 2023 - Independent Schools Queensland Technology Leadership Conference
- Jun 2023 - Deakin University Delivery of Occasional Address to Graduating Students
- Jul 2023 - ANU Australia-China Emerging Leaders' Summit (Emerging Technology Panel) related matters
- Jan 2023 - Pre-Budget Submission to the Australian Treasury
- May 2023 - Review of the Impact of COVID-19 on school students with disability

# SHARING IMPACT & RESEARCH

## POLICY GOAL

Enhance the education system evidence base through improved data

### 2023 SEEN&HEARD SOCIAL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN...

#### FILM CAMPAIGN

Reached more than 13 million Australians thanks to \$594,000 of donated media value.

#### EARNED MEDIA

63 media clips - ABC, Guardian, Channel 10, A Current Affair, QWkn cover - audience 8 million+.

#### TRADE PRESS

Drove campaign credibility through media and advertising industry trade press.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

Reached 2 million people via a targeted creative social campaign.

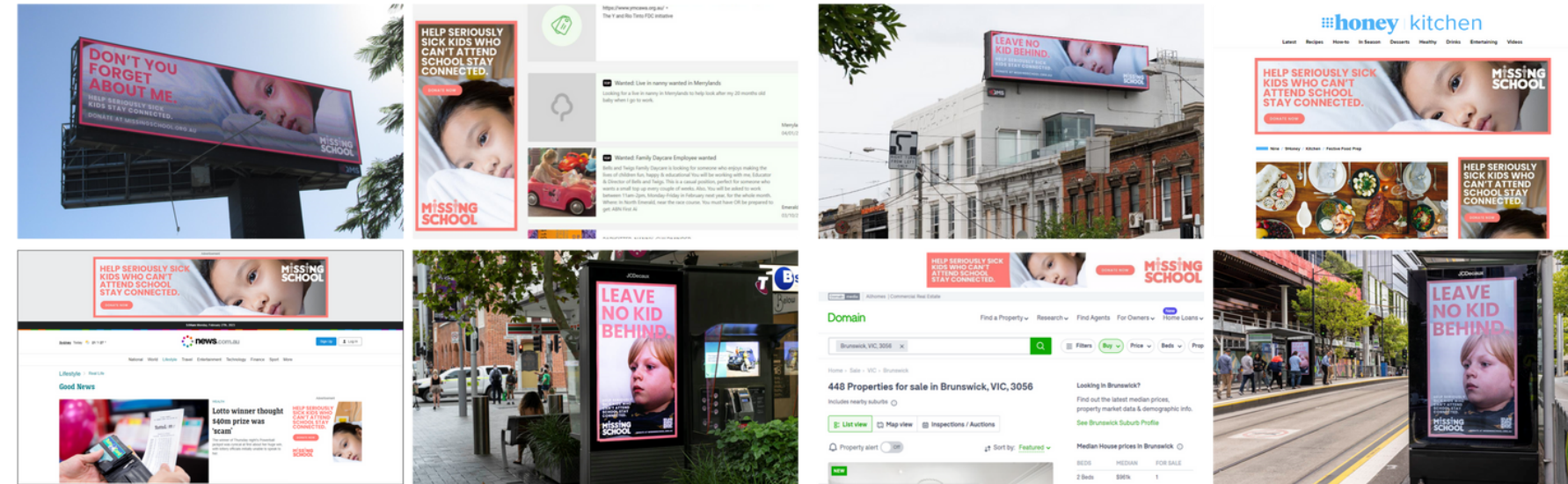
#### WEBSITE ACTION

Website traffic +137% on last year, boosted enquiries and donations.

#### DONATIONS

Increased donations by 28% on last year.

# CAMPAIGN SNAPSHOT

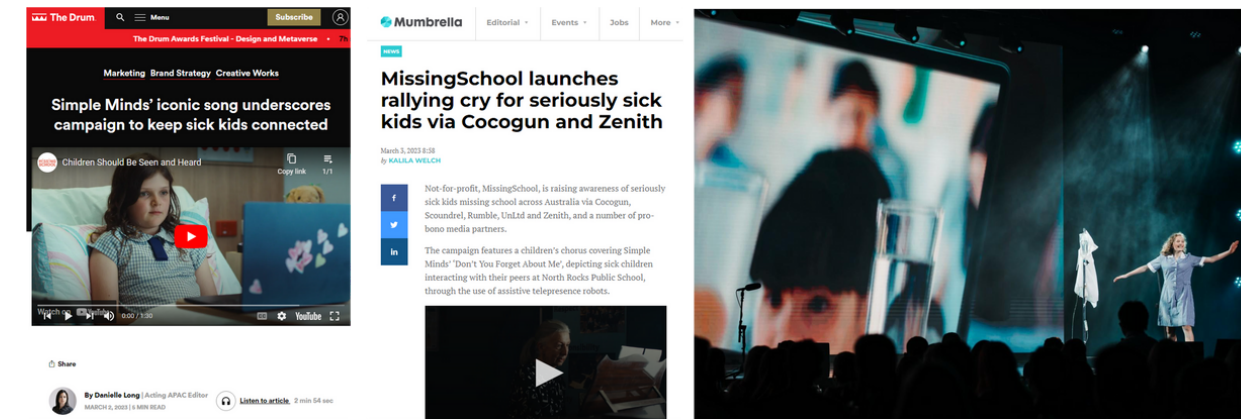


RESULTING IN DIRECT DONATIONS FOR MISSINGSCHOOL ...

... AND TRADE PRESS COVERAGE

**Donation**

Date & Time: 12/07/2023 10:56 AM AEST  
 Name: Tom  
 Amount: \$200  
 Message/Call Context: "I saw your ad on Channel 7's Million Dollar Minute, and I would like to make a donation"



The campaign was generously supported with pro bono media from Nine, Seven, Paramount, SBS, Domain, ARN, ATN, Tonic Media Network, Gumtree, Broadsheet, News, ACM, QMS and JCD.



# MEDIA

25/02/2023	The Guardian: 'No one really knows': Senate inquiry into school refusal told first step is to track 'invisible' students
26/02/2023	2GB: 06:00 News (Weekend) at 06:02 a.m.
26/02/2023	4BC: Weekend Breakfast at 07:33 a.m.
28/02/2023	Campaign Brief: Seriously Sick Children Lead MissingSchool's Poignant New Ad Campaign Via CocoGun, Scoundrel, Rumble, UnLtd And Zenith
28/02/2023	The Stable: MissingSchool, Cocogun, Scoundrel, Rumble, UnLtd & Zenith Unite To Keep Sick Kids' Presence At School
28/02/2023	ABC Radio Perth: Insentia
01/03/2023	ABC Radio Perth: Telepresence robots to help sick kids across Australia 'attend' school in new pilot project
01/03/2023	Ad News: Children Should Be Seen and Heard' in a poignant ad industry-backed campaign
01/03/2023	Little Black Book: Children's Choir Serves Poignant Reminder of Connection in MissingSchool Spot
01/03/2023	ABC News: Telepresence robots to help sick kids across Australia 'attend' school in new pilot project
02/03/2023	The Drum: Simple Minds' iconic song underscores campaign to keep sick kids connected
02/03/2023	SBS Arabic: "The worst thing about being sick is taking me out of school": a robot that helped Elisar communicate with her class from her hospital bed
03/03/2023	Mumbrella: MissingSchool launches rallying cry for seriously sick kids via Cocogun and Zenith
03/03/2023	10 News First: Transition from COVID Learning
10/03/2023	10 News First: Channel 10

# MEDIA

16/03/2023	Third Sector: Telepresence technology helps 1.2M Aussie Kids stay in school
20/03/2023	Powerpoint Slides: Media Proofs and Screenshots
22/03/2023	Mums At The Table: My son missed school for two years due to illness: Here are 5 lessons I learned
23/03/2023	Her Canberra: Inside Megan Gilmour's fight to reconnect sick children with school
29/03/2023	News DNA: Odinn and his Robot
30/03/2023	Hot FM 91.1 : News bulletin
03/04/2023	Kids News: Telepresence robots are helping sick kids like Odinn Meehan beam into school
04/04/2023	The Courier Mail: Mild symptoms behind young boy's terrifying diagnosis
10/04/2023	ABC News TV Breakfast Show: April 10 2023
14/04/2023	The Courier Mail: 'The Boy in the Machine': How Odinn 2.0 saved lonely schoolboy
15/04/2023	QWeekend Magazine (The Courier Mail): The BOY IN THE MACHINE
16/04/2023	Northern Beaches Mums: How to help your child navigate school when they can't be in the classroom
16/04/2023	Education Today: School Can - Breaking the Barriers to School Attendance
14/06/2023	Balance The Grind: Women in Tech: Megan Gilmour, CEO & Co-Founder of MissingSchool
19/06/2023	World Socialist Web Site: Australian Senate inquiry highlights worsening problem of children "refusing" to attend school



# SHARING IMPACT & RESEARCH

## Our Social Return

The successful implementation of Seen&Heard, ongoing data collection and evaluation, readiness for research, and calculation of our Social Return on Investment (SROI) demonstrate our commitment to the cause.

MissingSchool's SROI analysis, undertaken this year, is based on a 40 year impact model. This SROI examines the social, economic and cultural outcomes created and the investment of stakeholders in the creation of these outcomes. We achieve \$3.40 worth of Social Impact per dollar invested.

OUR SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT:

**\$3.40** in Social Impact is returned for every dollar we invest.

This year, we gave  
**\$1.3 million dollars**  
in social returns to  
our community.

# SHARING IMPACT & RESEARCH

## MONITORING & EVALUATION

### **Seen&Heard initiative monitoring and evaluation**

MissingSchool has fully activated our monitoring and evaluation plan, including deployment of all survey instruments, and data collection policies and procedures.

Activation included ongoing collection and coding of quantitative and qualitative data collection. The service wrote or updated team job inventories, 70 work packages and related policies and procedures, and over 130 Frequency Asked Questions.

This material sits within our tailored management information system.

MissingSchool's monitoring and evaluation instruments (for data collection) map and codify data to the program logic domains of cultural change. ~4700 service data points have been coded to date. These are reported to funders and through MissingSchool's network.

In the reporting period MissingSchool collected 53 student information forms (pre-data) from parents, and 129 surveys and 40 long form interviews with parents and schools.

We built out a pilot framework for results-based management for 84 KPIs and refined our systems and database architecture to manage the activity and capture data.

To assist with the capture of monitoring data against all activity areas for results-based management we worked with an automations and data specialist.

# RESEARCH

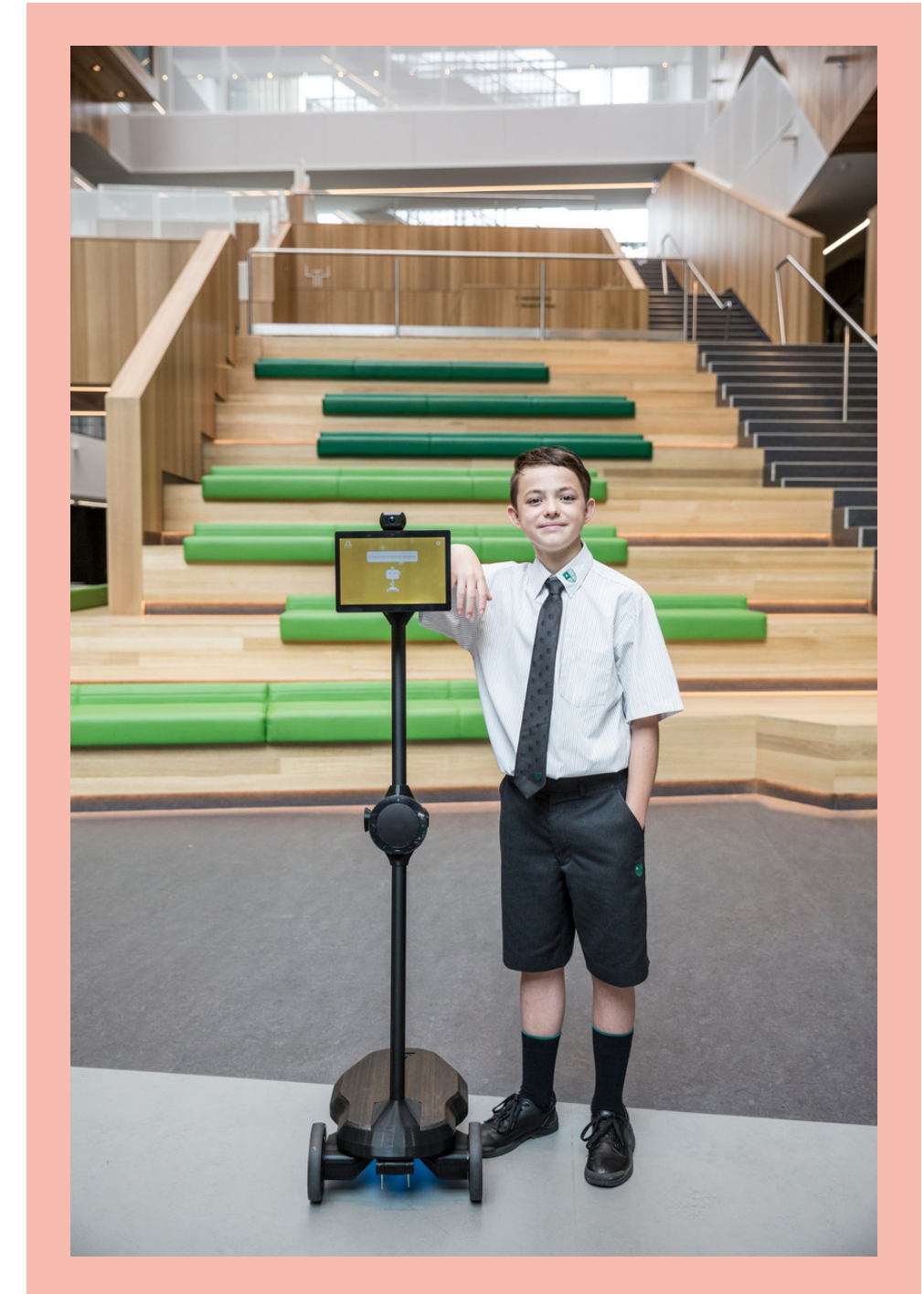
## Research collaboration

Through formal partnership with Deakin University, University of NSW and University of Southern Queensland, MissingSchool's data will be analysed and developed into formal research products for public dissemination.

MissingSchool's research collaboration is studying how effective robot technology - and associated services - is for connecting students with complex health conditions with their classrooms and overcoming the barriers to school continuity.

The study includes students with a range of illnesses and injuries from K-12 at government, independent and faith-based schools in Australia. There will be a peer-reviewed platform paper, and subsequent papers on parent and teacher perspectives and teacher self-efficacy.

In FY 2023, data coding for academic paper and impact report was completed by USQ researchers (442 surveys, 172 interviews from parents and schools). Data summary exports are in finalisation and review of digital platforms publications suitable for mass distribution is underway.



# RAISING FUNDS

## RAISES FUNDS TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES

MissingSchool is a nationally registered organisation, approved for fundraising in every Australian state and territory. Our revenue for the FYE 2023 was \$376,680\*.

### **Grants and donations**

MissingSchool was successful in grant applications through: Commonwealth Department of Education \$390,600 (1-year) and the Auda Foundation \$40,000 (1-year).

We gratefully continued our impact with grant funds from Tasmanian Community Fund, Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation and TPG Foundation.

MissingSchool acknowledges the donations it receives from a range of generous organisations and individuals. In the 2023 financial year, our donations totalled \$26,972.

### **School co-contributions**

MissingSchool received voluntary financial co-contributions from schools to the value of \$20,709 and donated \$86,500 in-kind to school technology services to support sick and absent students.

\*In line with Australian accounting standards, our CPA audited accounts classified \$538,180 in held grant funds as "income in advance," excluding it from the stated revenue figure.

# RAISING FUNDS

## PRO BONO CONTRIBUTIONS

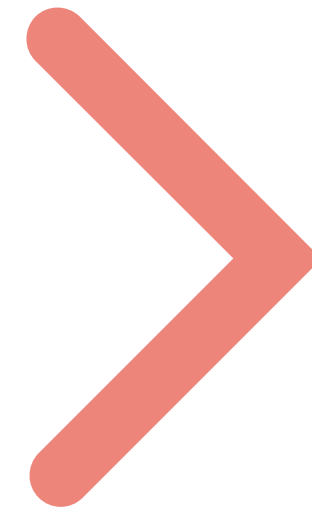
MissingSchool acknowledges that a lot has been achieved with very little. The organisation's approach is to unlock existing capacity, attract high value pro bono contributions, and access in-kind contributions:

- Australia Post partnership for domestic shipping of robots.
- MissingSchool's CEO continues to make extensive pro bono time contributions in running and representing the organisation, overseeing its programs, and fundraising.
- MissingSchool's volunteer Management Committee provides valuable pro bono contributions to MissingSchool's governance and strategy.
- PwC provided pro-bono contract development for partnerships and financial arrangements on the robot service technology.
- Schools and school systems provide daily contributions through their regular work that enable MissingSchool to meet its mission to support students with serious illness.
- Cocogun, GSquared, Scoundrel Productions, UnLtd and Zenith Media for creative, website, advertising and media campaigns, and pro bono media from Nine, Seven, Paramount, SBS, Domain, ARN, ATN, Tonic Media Network, Gumtree, Broadsheet, News, ACM, QMS and JCD.

# OUR PEOPLE

## THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MissingSchool's management committee is staffed by people working on a fully volunteer basis. Volunteer staffing for the 2023 year approximated two full-time equivalent staff. The management committee remained stable in the reporting period.



# THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MissingSchool has achieved so much through a skilled and committed team.



**MARCUS DAWE**  
Chair



**MEGAN GILMOUR**  
CEO & Innovator



**SCOTT ELLIS**  
Treasurer



**LARA FLYNN**  
Secretary



**HUGH DIXON**  
Public Officer



**GINA MEYERS**  
Co-founder

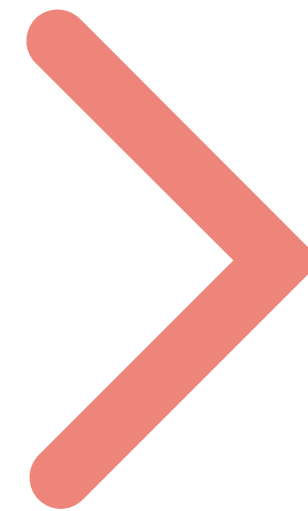


**CATHY NELL**  
Co-founder

## SEEN & HEARD INITIATIVE

The Seen&Heard Initiative has a skilled and dedicated team of practitioners funded in the 2023 financial year by donations and grants from auDA Foundation, Commonwealth Department of Education's Emerging Priorities Program, Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, Tasmania Community Fund and TPG Foundation.

The team provides quality practice, service and support, management, promotion, and monitoring and evaluation.





# THE SEEN&HEARD INITIATIVE

MissingSchool has achieved so much through a skilled and committed team.



**SARAH JONES**  
Impact Director



**VIRA RUBENSTEIN**  
Community Manager



**KIRSTY GUSTER**  
Partnerships &  
Capacity Building



**DOREEN MASAUDING**  
Community Assistant



**NAKUL NAMBIAR**  
Technology Helpdesk &  
Automation



**QING HUANG**  
Evaluation Analyst



**ELIZABETH PERRY**  
Content Analyst



**NICOLE ALIMES**  
Executive Assistant



**AMANDA SANG**  
Accounts & Finances



**BRIDGITTE BATEMAN**  
Branding & Design

# MEMBERSHIP

MissingSchool retained five enrolled members at June 2023.

MissingSchool maintains a fee for membership, and reconfirmed member commitment to the organisation.

MissingSchool's membership continues to be open to parents and carers of children with complex health conditions and others who are interested in achieving sustained school connection for these students and their school-aged siblings.



# STUDENT SNAPSHOT: HAMISH

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“When we were in hospital and used the robot for him to be able to log on and see his classmates, that social connection was the best for him. One time his friends walked the robot back to his classroom and they were talking to Hamish and he was having a laugh and he enjoyed that, it was really important to him.”

~ Parent



HAMISH, YEAR 7, ENJOYING A  
LAUGH WITH FRIENDS

# GOVERNANCE

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

MissingSchool's Seen&Heard pilot initiative headlines our platform strategy and launched in the 2023 financial year.

MissingSchool actioned our impact filter frameworks for Public Actions, Partner Activations, and Government Relations and developed new impact filters for Seen&Heard pillars.

Team focus and efforts remain operationally aligned to the strategic plan at Objective, Activity, and Action levels which are integrated through our management information system.

## STATUTORY REPORTING

MissingSchool maintains its statutory registrations and reporting obligations with the Office of Regulatory Services in the ACT, the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), ASIC and state/territory fundraising bodies. The Management Committee meets monthly on the second Monday of each month (except January), agendas, minutes, and financial reports are kept for each meeting.

The Annual General Meeting takes place prior to the December Management Committee meeting and was held on 11 December 2023.

The Annual Information Statement was lodged to the ACNC on 14 December 2022.

MissingSchool is committed to good governance, and is continuously improving processes and approaches. In the reporting period, the organisation was strengthened through team time logging to actions and activities and updating 70 policies and work procedures.

# FINANCIAL REPORTING

At the end of June 2023, MissingSchool held assets totalling \$650,149, with liabilities of \$576,684 (of which \$538,181 is grant funding held in advance).

MissingSchool's accounts were audited by Certified Practising Accountant, Hardwicks. Certified Audited accounts and Annual Information Statement can be found on the [ACNC Charity Register](#).

**MissingSchool's imagined future is that today's "radical notion" of continuous school connection for students with complex health conditions is something that will someday be taken for granted. A time when all students with serious health conditions receive full support from their schools as a matter of course and MissingSchool can close its doors.**



# CONTACT US

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1300 237 234



[info@missingschool.org.au](mailto:info@missingschool.org.au)



[www.missingschool.org.au](http://www.missingschool.org.au)



37 Constitution Ave, Reid ACT 2612



[missingschoolinc](#)



[missingschool\\_org](#)