



# **2022** ANNUAL REPORT



CELEBRATING  
**35 YEARS**

[www.outdoorsinc.org.au](http://www.outdoorsinc.org.au)  
(03) 9417 2111



## Our Principles

Out Doors believes that a person at risk of poor mental health and other disabilities:

- is considered as someone with potential, abilities and a future;
- has the right to choose; and
- is involved in planning of outdoor adventure activities

Out Doors Inc. (Out Doors) is a not for profit, community managed mental health organisation that delivers a range of outdoor adventure and recreation programs to people at risk or experiencing mental health issues in Victoria.

Out Doors was founded in 1987 by people primarily working in mental health who believed recreation, play and outdoor adventure are valuable parts of a holistic approach to personal development and mental health. What makes Out Doors unique is that we use the medium of outdoor education, with an emphasis on action, challenge and healthy risk-taking, to deliver a diverse range of programs such as rafting, rock climbing and surfing, as well as creative programs like bush art & music. These programs support our view that people learn best by 'doing' and focus on participant's ability rather than illness or disability.

For 35 years, Out Doors has been developing programs that support participants to live independently, to keep physically and mentally active and develop formal and informal social relationships using the medium of the natural environment. Out Doors also has many years experience working with various cultural groups and communities who are at risk of mental illness, and specialises in education and skill development in a social, practical and less structured environment. Our programs not only improve learning outcomes but they also improve the overall wellbeing of people who are vulnerable and in need of support.

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## OUR VISION

is that Out Doors Inc. will be the pre-eminent provider of adventure programs that promote mental health and wellbeing.

## OUR MISSION

is to provide challenging approaches to better mental health by empowering people to get out the door and to participate in the life of their community.

## OUR VALUES

underpin everything that we do, every day.

### Respect

Respecting the diversity of our participants, staff and leaders is fundamental to us. We operate with inclusiveness and empathy; we uphold standards of ethical behaviour; and we work with participants in their interests.

### Passion

Our participants will be rewarded by their experience. We provide hope and encouragement to our participants to take up challenges and to reach their potential.

### Excellence

We maintain high standards in everything we do, particularly the safety and wellbeing of our participants. We will innovate and constantly seek to improve our services.

### Integrity

We will be accountable for delivering our mission, having regard to the highest ethical standards.

### Environmental Stewardship

We are committed to practices that ensure minimal impact on the environment. We acknowledge our responsibility for efficient use of resources to ensure environmental sustainability.



## CHAIRPERSON & CEO MESSAGE

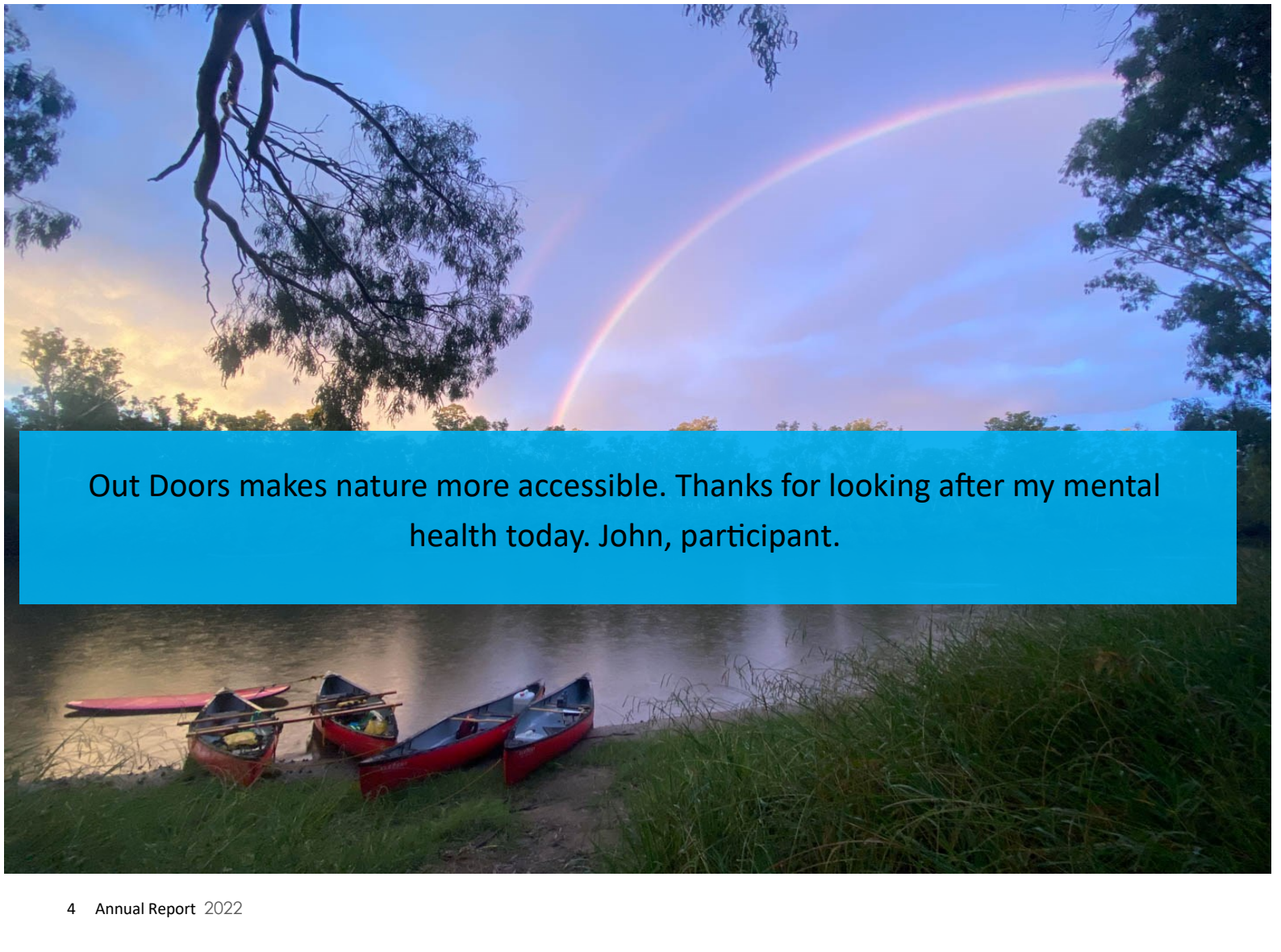
Welcome to Out Doors Inc.'s 2021-22 Annual Report.

Out Doors Inc. has experienced another challenging year and yet has continued to adapt, transform and remain true to its purpose. It has been a very busy 12-month period for our organisation, largely driven by Covid lockdowns and re-engaging with participants on programs. By embracing a year of transformation, Out Doors has sought to realign its future despite significant financial challenges that arose during the pandemic and our inability to run programs for our participants. Nevertheless, our strategic principles remain intact

as we continue strengthening relationships with stakeholders and plan for growth in the Western Metro Region of Melbourne.

Out Doors' key focus throughout the financial year was to challenge ourselves and explore various engagement strategies during the restrictive Covid economic environment while in-person activities were not possible. We planned and developed an array of innovative pathways for people to stay engaged with one another, share their stories and remain connected with the community. These included activities that Out Doors organised online for

engagement by participants with each other in real time and by themselves in their own time as travel restrictions allowed. Following the lengthy Covid lockdowns, the focus was shifted to encouraging participants to come 'out of their homes' and engage with others at their own pace. Our Covid safety plan was implemented post-lockdown last November and communicated to participants at every stage. The lack of engagement with others and participation in activities was a challenge for many during the months-long periods of isolation which impacted negatively on many peoples' mental and physical health.



Out Doors makes nature more accessible. Thanks for looking after my mental health today. John, participant.



Along the way, Out Doors ensured its compliance with NDIS Quality Systems, Quality Management System (AS/NZS ISO 9001:2015) and OH&S Management System (AS/NZS 4801:2001).

The past year placed extraordinary demands on the team - an increased workload and many new portfolios. The team not only rose to these challenges but did so with great energy, good humour and a strong sense of purpose. The team delivered high quality programs and compassionate support for our participants; they worked on special projects and forged new relationships with other agencies and stakeholders, whilst adapting to the changes and new work practices. Out Doors is a unique organisation with passionate and enthusiastic staff, Council and mentors, who are not afraid of trying new ideas or investigating new ventures.

From January 2022, we delivered a full suite of day and overnight recreational and adventure activities that included nature walks, bush art sessions, mountain bike rides, canoeing

trips and overnight camping. None of these activities would have been possible without the logistical support provided by our dedicated office staff or the outdoors leadership provided by our professionally trained sessional staff. The year also saw an expansion of our delivery of Mental Health First Aid courses to the public who we are pleased to see acknowledge the importance and awareness of mental health.

We take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Council members for their commitment and generosity with their time, skills and knowledge. A very professional Council has provided stability and guidance through many challenges. This year we welcomed a new Council member, Nathan Schram (former Marketing and Communication Manager with the organisation) who brings a wealth of experience and expertise from business, start-ups and marketing industries.

Throughout 2021-22, we continued to listen to stakeholders' point of view and your feedback has subsequently contributed to ongoing

improvements in the way we deliver our programs. We encourage you to continue to provide this feedback to us; as we move into what promises to be another exciting period of development for Out Doors.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing staff continued to be very supportive of Out Doors as have the donors, sponsors, service providers and participants who have worked effectively with us throughout the year and we thank them all.

We look forward to embracing another year of opportunities and substantial progress as we continue our transformation and growth in the Western Region of Metro Melbourne.

Thank you all for your support and commitment to Out Doors!



*Allan Davey*

**Allan Davey**  
Chairperson



*Iudita*

**Iudita Trifa-Schmidt**  
CEO

Being new to the program and not knowing anyone, I felt a bit anxious at the start but the other participants and the staff engaged with me from the start. This made me more comfortable and confident to express my own views and opinions. By the end of the week, I made some really good friends that I hope to keep in touch with. Out Doors Inc. new participant.

# Strategic Plan 2021-2024

This Strategic Plan 2021/2024 has been created to be responsive, contemporary and adaptable. Following the release of the report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the Victorian Government pledged its commitment to implement the recommendations set out over the next 10 years. Out Doors aims to provide relevant services at the right time in accessible locations.

## Strategic Priority 1

- Growth, planning and service delivery

## Strategic Priority 2

- Continuous improvement and innovation through research and evidence-based practices

## Strategic Priority 3

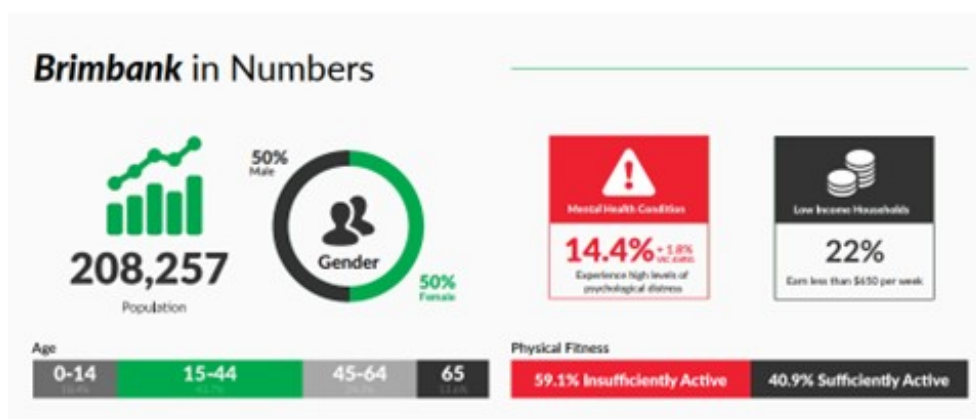
- Building organisational capability by exploring alternative funding opportunities and sustainable solutions.





## Out Doors Inc. Growth Plan Stage 1: Brimbank

The City of Brimbank has been identified as having one of the highest levels of psychological distress reported across Victoria. The Commission has set out an ambitious reform agenda to redesign Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system. Achieving its vision will require a collaborative, collective effort and shared responsibility across governments, service providers, community groups, advocates, people with lived experience of mental illness, families, carers and supporters.



### An additional location

An Out Doors Inc. hub in Brimbank to be opened in the next financial year will provide locals with a much-needed mental health service. Our programs focus on an individual's ability and a strong emphasis is placed on choice, providing participants with the opportunity to challenge themselves at a level with which they feel comfortable. Programs assist participants to build positive social connections, reduce stress and anxiety, regain confidence, develop new skills and reconnect with their communities.

### Health & Wellbeing Domains

Out Doors programs support skills development in the following health and wellbeing domains:

- 01 Physical**  
Participation in physically challenging activities at a level the participant feels comfortable.
- 02 Mental**  
Explore new experiences, broadening of interests, opportunities for learning new information, practical skills and opportunities for independent thinking.
- 03 Social**  
Opportunity to develop social confidence, manage triggers, identify own strengths in social settings and opportunities to build social connection and friendships.
- 04 Behavioural**  
Opportunity to manage life skills, including own medication, hygiene, nutrition, behavioural responses to challenging circumstances and opportunities to learn about the effects of new activities on mental state.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

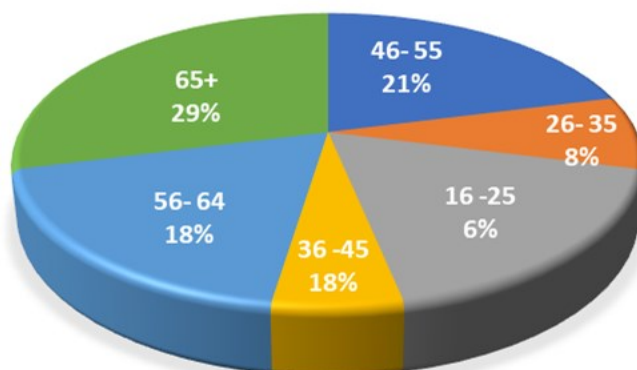
## Engagement with Participants during Covid-19

In the effort to keep engaged with our participants, Out Doors staff continued to make regular phone calls and send out newsletters. Social Media has also kept us connected during the lockdown periods, including the stories developed by participants through the Out Doors Ink newsletter.

## Program Highlights

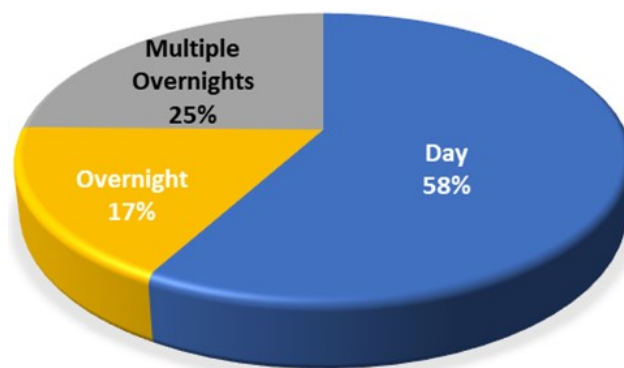
65% of our participants are adults (25 –64 years of age. Our youngest participant was **21 years of age** and the oldest **90 years of age**. Out Doors programs cater for all ages and fitness levels.

AGE GROUP



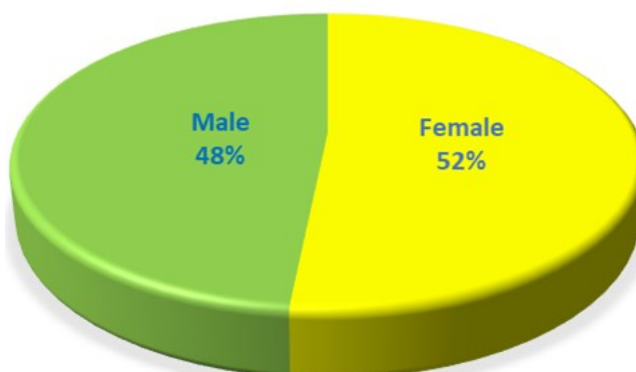
Following the lengthy lockdown in the second half of 2021, Out Doors started providing half day programs at the end of October 2021. From November 2021 to June 2022, we had **772 participations**, over **20,730 hours** of activity time.

PROGRAM TYPE



Participants identified as either male or female with a close distribution between the two genders.

GENDER







## Out Doors Ink Newsletter

The participant led newsletter, Out Doors Ink, continued in 2022. The newsletter is popular with both participants and supporters of Out Doors Inc. It provides a unique snapshot of a mental health organisation from the participant's perspective and helps document the benefits of engaging in nature-based activities to our audience.

The team continues to be engaged with the project and welcomed a new team member this year.



### Wilsons Prom Review

MARCH 22, 2022 HEALTH, OUTDOORS, PARTICIPANT STORIES

After a tough couple of years, a five-day trip to Wilsons Prom in December was just what the doctor ordered, according to Stephen...

[READ MORE >](#)



### Balnarring Mental Health First Aid Program Review

MARCH 22, 2022 HEALTH, OUTDOORS, PARTICIPANT STORIES

Hear from Brad and Caz as they recount their experience at the Balnarring Mental Health First Aid program...

[READ MORE >](#)



### Participant Stories: "The Italian Friendship Group Holiday"

JUNE 23, 2022 OUTDOORS, PARTICIPANT STORIES, UNCATEGORIZED

The Italian Friendship Group loved their getaway with Out Doors Inc. in March. Maria shares the group's experience as a special guest contributor...

[READ MORE >](#)



### The Great Ocean Road Wellbeing Holiday

JUNE 22, 2022 OUTDOORS, PARTICIPANT STORIES, UNCATEGORIZED

Great Ocean Road Wellbeing Holiday is a favourite with participants. Read all about our recent program from a participant's perspective...

[READ MORE >](#)



### Hot Tips for Autumn

MARCH 22, 2022 HEALTH, OUTDOORS, PARTICIPANT STORIES

Brad and Caz recount their experience of a five-day yoga program in Balnarring that was held in April this year...

[READ MORE >](#)



### Participant Stories: "Make Your Own Cabbage Patch"

MARCH 22, 2022 PARTICIPANT STORIES

John has everything you need to know about growing cabbages and a couple of delicious recipes you can use once they're ready for harvest...

[READ MORE >](#)



### Participant Stories: "Highlight Of The Year"

NOVEMBER 30, 2021 PARTICIPANT STORIES

Spice up your meals over summer by growing your own chillis this summer. They're easy to grow and you don't need much space...

[READ MORE >](#)



### Yoga Holiday Review

SEPTEMBER 9, 2021 HEALTH, OUTDOORS, PARTICIPANT STORIES

Brad and Caz recount their experience of a five-day yoga program in Balnarring that was held in April this year...

[READ MORE >](#)



### ***Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)***

Providing MHFA in the original standard face to face format became unviable during covid. Consequently, MHFA Australia created a 100% online format of the course which enabled the community to continue being educated in MHFA. In fact, the success of the online format means that it is here to stay beyond the constraints of covid. Whilst the standard format courses offered early in 2022 had to be cancelled, we have been able to provide 6 online courses to staff, participants and public from January to June 2022. In total we have trained 31 people in MHFA in 2022.

“

*I could tell the instructor knew the content very well and had lived experience working in the mental health sector. The content was delivered in a way that didn't shy away from sensitive topics like suicide or self harm which gives participants of this course a little bit more confidence when talking about or dealing with these potential situations . Participant, MHFA 15-16 June 2022*

”

### ***Melbourne Disability Connection Expo***

Out Doors Inc. was one of **144** exhibitors at the Melbourne Disability Connection Expo in January 2022. Over two days, the event brought together hundreds of NDIS business providers under one roof so that participants, their carers, and families could get expert advice, hear about valuable products and access new services. Out Doors Inc's site was very popular both days - with free smoothies, DIY seed pots, and a surprise appearance from the Hon Bill Shorten MP. Out Doors Inc. was awarded the prize for **Best Expo Display** as voted by attendees. Following the event, the number of followers, subscribers and interest in engaging in programs increased 500%.





MELBOURNE  
DISABILITY STAFF  
RECOGNITION  
AWARDS 2022

EXPO DISPLAY AWARD  
WINNER

**OutDoors  
Inc**



“For more than 30 years, we’ve been providing outdoor adventure and recreational programs for better mental health. It’s been great reconnecting with participants in the outdoors and getting back to what we love – making a meaningful impact on people’s lives.”



***Over 1,850 visitors and 144 exhibitors attended the two days  
Melbourne Disability Expo in Jan 2022.***









## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2



### *Quality*

Out Doors has a strong focus in risk management, safety and quality. It has been independently reviewed by the NDIS Safety Quality Commission and certified under ISO: 45001 and ISO: 9001. Risk management, safety and quality is embedded in our culture and across the organisation. Out Doors has implemented a risk management framework that ensures key risks are identified, managed and communicated across the organisation. Out Doors is committed to ensuring high quality service delivery and upholding the rights, safety, dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of people with mental health concerns. Proactive risk management and best practice compliance with legislation, standards and guidelines supports effective business planning and operations and our ability to meet these commitments.



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## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

### ***Evaluation of Programs***

Out Doors rolled out its new evaluation framework in June 2021. The organisation wanted to better understand how participant wellbeing, goals and outcomes are being met because of program participation. The new framework used a pre- and post- program design and two surveys were used - a validated tool – the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) to measure participant wellbeing and a program specific survey to measure participants outcomes. With the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, Out Doors programs returned to their regular format in November 2021.



### ***Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI)***

The PWI survey was sent out at two different time points – June 2021 and December 2021. The PWI measured satisfaction across different wellbeing domains such as: standard of living, health, achieving in life, relationships, safety, community-connectedness, and future security.

The Personal Wellbeing Index was sent to a total of 169 participants. The baseline survey (June 2021) was completed by 49 participants and the follow – up survey (December 2021) completed by 28 participants. Participants reported an increase in the following wellbeing domains: personal health and future security with the average rating increasing 4.43% and 1.02% from pre to post respectively.

**“1619 clients participated in the survey and 49 clients completed the follow up survey”**

The baseline and follow up surveys were sent to participants whilst Melbourne was in between lockdowns with the follow up survey being sent following the 6th lockdown which lasted from August to October. The survey did not provide the opportunity for participants to provide any insight into what was happening in their life. Future evaluations may consider a qualitative piece to explore in more depth what is impacting participant wellbeing and what role Out Doors is playing in their recovery.



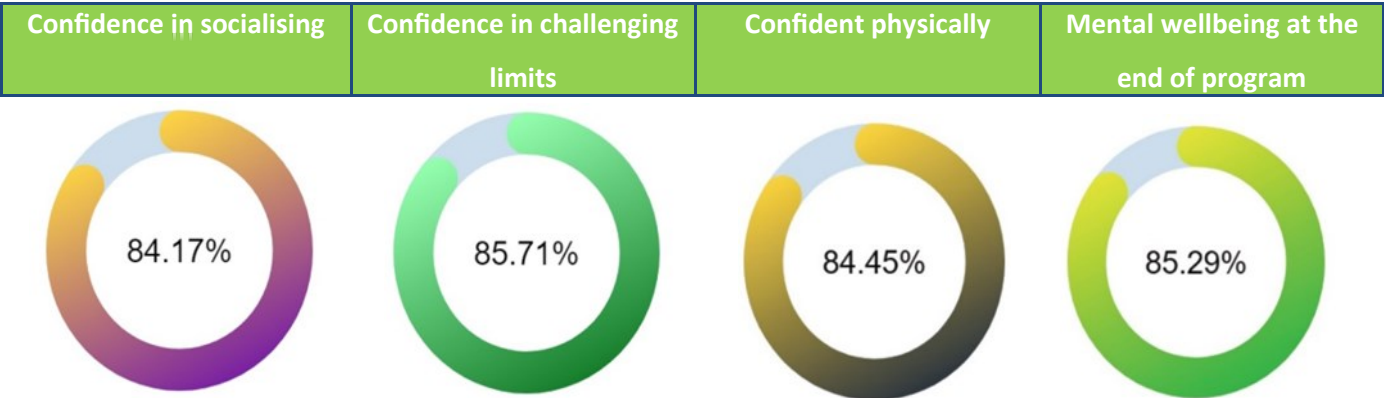
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Out Doors Program Specific Survey

Out Doors program specific survey measured participants satisfaction across goal achievement, social competence, skill development and mental wellbeing. This survey was provided to participants who attended overnight program/s. Participants were asked to complete the survey at the pre-program planning session and on the last day of the program.

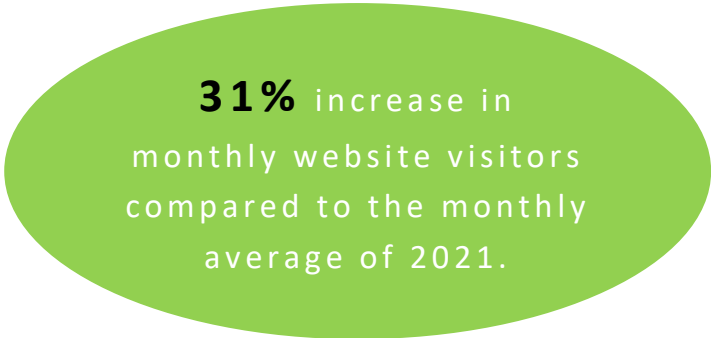
Participants completed a total of 271 surveys (154 pre-program and 117 post program) across twenty-three overnight programs from November 2021 – June 2022. Participants mostly identified physical activity and mental wellbeing as their goals for the program at 81% and 79%.

Participants reported an increase in the average rating across all outcome areas: social competence (+5.29%), self-efficacy (+7.52%), physical activity (+4.89%), mental wellbeing (+5.28%) from pre to post respectively. Participants reported feeling confident in all outcome areas at the pre-program stage and the average rating slightly increased post program. This indicated that participants attending programs post-lockdown felt Out Doors Inc. was a safe space for them to achieve their goals. These findings were supported by the comments provided by participants when asked to expand on their rating with a brief explanation.



Social Media

A total of **107 social media posts** were posted since the beginning of 2022 across our social media platforms - Instagram®, Facebook®, Twitter® and LinkedIn®. There was a **64%** increase in monthly reach and engagement across all channels in 2022 (3,502) compared to the monthly average in 2021 (2,140). Total subscribers and followers increased by 17% in 2022 (1,604 in Dec-21 to 1,884 in Oct-22)



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

### Website

We made a number of improvements to the website in 2022. Some highlights include:

**Eligibility Quiz** – A simple quiz individuals can use to see if they qualify for NDIS or State Government Funding to attend our programs.

**Intake Booking Portal** – A portal that gives individuals and health providers the ability to choose a suitable time for an intake interview. The system is linked to the Intake Coordinator's calendar and automatically schedules the meeting, emails both parties and notifies the individual of the next steps.

**Event Registration and Payment System** – We linked Eventbrite to the event section of our website. This integration provides us with the control and flexibility needed to run our events smoothly and serves as a secure payment gateway for events that cost money, such as Mental Health First Aid.

**Improvements to the NDIS Quoting Tool** – The tool was improved to make it quicker and easier for participants to get quotes for multiple programs.





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

The Victorian lockdowns from late July 2021 to mid Oct 2021 had a significant impact on Out Doors' ability to run programs and consequently obtain a revenue. The government support was also pulled back during this period

For the past 12 months, Out Doors Inc. chose to look at opportunities by increasing system capacities to support the commencement and implementation of our **Growth Plan** in the next financial year.

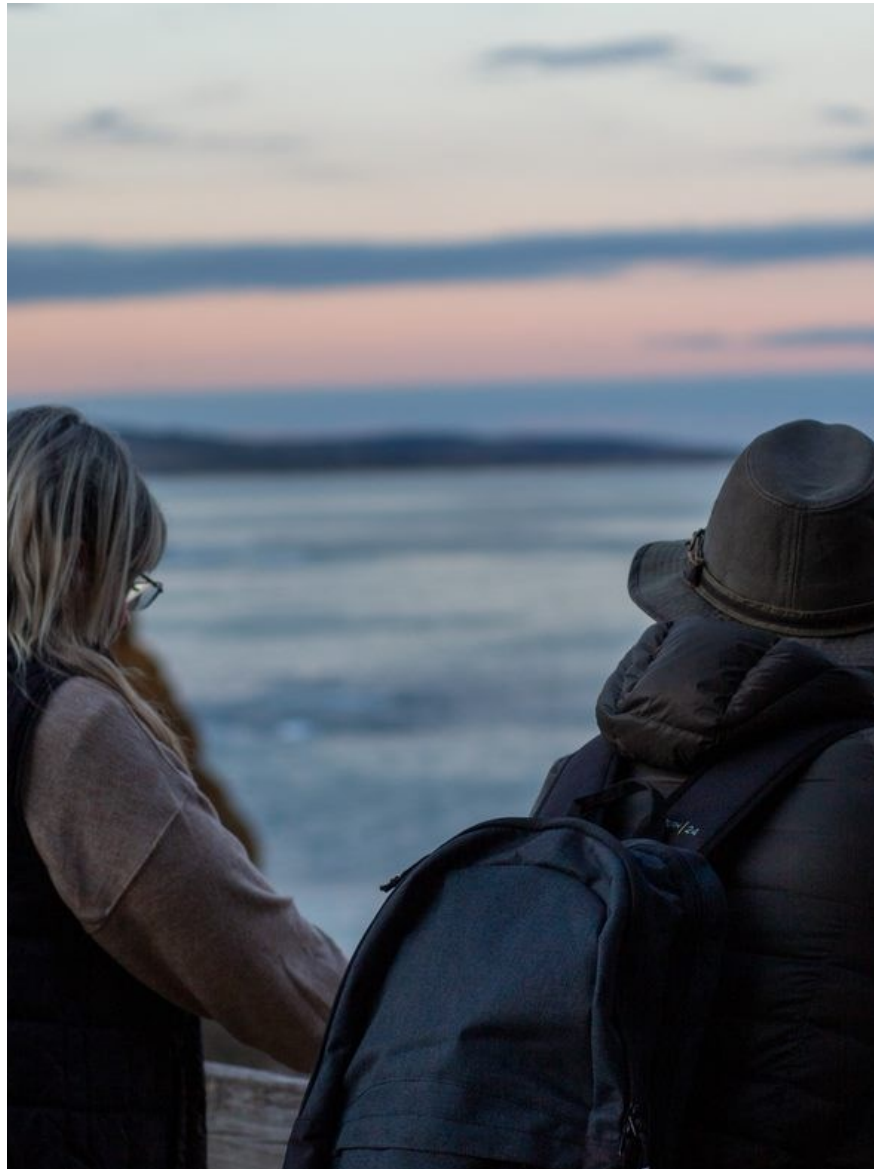
### ***Pathways through our website***

*Eligibility Quiz* – A simple quiz to be used by individuals to determine their eligibility for programs.

*Intake Booking Portal* – A portal that gives individuals and health providers the ability to choose a suitable time for an intake interview. The system is linked to the Intake Coordinator's calendar and automatically schedules the meeting, emails both parties and notifies the individual of the next steps.

*Event Registration and Payment System* – Our events section has been integrated with Eventbrite to provide flexibility which was needed to run our events smoothly. This option also serves as a secure payment gateway for events that incurs a fee, such as Mental Health First Aid.

*Improvements to the NDIS Quoting Tool* – The tool was improved to make it quicker and easier for participants to get quotes for multiple programs.



The challenges were many and varied. The lockdowns impacted on the mental and physical wellbeing of staff and participants; the Covid based government support was withdrawn and the NDIS revenue decreased substantially due to lack of outdoor programs. Whilst the organisation has made a loss during this financial year, it was agreed that the fee for programs will remain consistent with the 2021 fee schedule. This means that participants will be able to access more programs in the short term to alleviate some of the anxieties and fears associated with long lockdown periods.



**The Challenge:** Ensuring staff have access to current policies, that are up to date with evolving regulations, accreditation standards and best practice guidelines.

**The Solution:** A cloud-based policy management platform system that acts as the single source of policy truth for the organisation. All policies are stored exclusively in the platform, with key document control elements, including version number, date of approval and next review, and policy ownership recorded. The Risk Manager controls and manages policy reviews and updates through the platform with staff having read only access.



**The Challenge:** Out Doors, like many other NFP, has been financially affected by the long lockdowns.

**The Solution:** Maintained the current workforce and increased programs to cater for all needs and interests. Engaged with participants, kept the communication open and provided flexibility in program delivery. Simplified referral pathways and modified systems to make it easier for support coordinators/carers to provide the necessary documentations for assessments.



**The Challenge:** Working remotely whilst assisting participants on a daily basis continues to be a challenge for the organisation.

**The Solution:** The implementation of cloud based participant database has made it easier for staff to engage and plan activities. Staff are now working in a hybrid model (working form the office as well as remotely)..











# OUR TEAM

## ***Board / Council***

Allan Davey, Chairperson  
Caryl Hertz, Deputy Chairperson  
Jonathan Kneebone, Secretary  
John Marshall, Treasurer  
Rahul Chauhan  
Carole Hatherly  
Darryl Flukes  
Chris Harrison  
Nathan Schram from Dec 2021

## ***Staff***

Iudita Trifa-Schmidt, Chief Executive Officer  
Jennifer Norris, Chief Operation Officer  
Libbi Cunningham, Program Manager from Aug to Oct 2021  
Lisa Johnson, Program Manager from May 2022  
Meng Ng, Quality Manager to Oct 2021  
Liz McMillan, Administration Officer  
Jeny Gosal, Senior Finance and Fleet Management  
Sophia Tzougravou, Health Promotion Coordinator  
Calum Leckenby, Marketing Coordinator  
Simon Morrison, Risk and Compliance Manager

## ***Sessional Staff -***

### ***Outdoor Program Workers***

Alexander Ward  
Chris Couper  
Carel Pluis  
Elizabeth Waters  
Emma Renkema  
Jack Gamble  
Maureen Fallon  
Mitchell Barnes  
Oliver Butt  
Pei Ting Tham  
Sofia Rodrigues-Berry

## ***Program Staff -***

### ***Outdoor Program Coordinators***

David Weeks  
Maureen Carey  
Christophe Perrot  
Asher French  
Benjamin Wilkinson  
Cassidy Brown to Aug 2021  
Cristian Orellana from Jan 2022  
Pei Ting Tham from Jan 2022  
Emma Renkema from Jan 2022

## ***Inclusion and Community Liaison Coordinator***

Gavin Jesson to Nov 2021  
Reuben McMahon from Dec 2021  
Samuel Robb from May 2022





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Out Doors'

achievements are made possible because of the commitment, dedication, generosity and efforts of many individuals and organisations.

Out Doors' Council and staff wish to acknowledge and thank our many supporters for their contributions over the last 12 months.

## Government

Out Doors receives funding from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Health. We acknowledge the importance of their funding and thank them for their commitment to supporting people with mental health issues during the Covid pandemic period.

## Participants

Out Doors would like to thank the people it has had the privilege to work with over the past 12 months in supporting them through their journey in recovery.

## Families, carers and friends

Many people provide input into Out Doors' consultative and support processes and we thank them for their contributions.

## Partnerships

Out Doors partners with many health and community service organisations to support our participants. Out Doors thanks these organisations for their collaboration, referrals and engagement with our programs.

## Donors

Thank you to all Out Doors donors who generously contributed funds to support our programs and initiatives. We appreciate your ongoing commitment to supporting people at risk or living with a mental health issue.

A special thank you to those who have allowed Out Doors to use their photos in this publication.



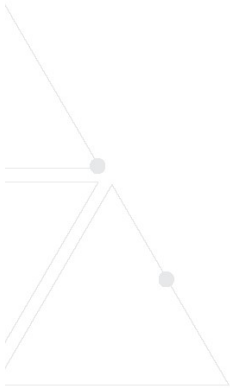
**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**





“Out Doors Inc. has some awesome programs for different interests and physical ability. I enjoy both the recreational and adventure activities, it depends on how I am feeling at the time. Traveling to different locations with people that understand me, makes it more enjoyable and relaxing”. Out Doors Inc. Participant





# CONTACT US



17 Stubbs Street,  
Kensington, VIC 3031



(03) 9417 2111



[indoors@outdoorsinc.org.au](mailto:indoors@outdoorsinc.org.au)

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