



ANNUAL REPORT

- 2024 / 2025 -



BATForce is privileged to work across the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung, Gulidjan and Gadubanud People. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge that the land we sit on was never ceded - always was and always will be Aboriginal Lands.

CHAIRPERSON REPORT

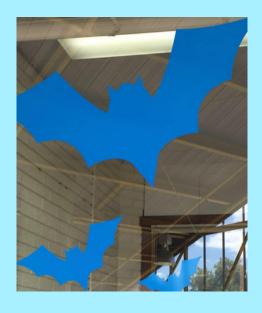
PREPARED BY: Liz Everist

BATForce acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work, including Wadawurrung, Gulidjan, and Gadubanud Country, and pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present.

I thank the combined efforts of the BATForce staff and Board for their continued commitment to our mission: improving outcomes for young people through advocacy, education, and stronger networks.

The School Focused Youth Services (SFYS) program, funded by the Victorian Department of Education, is our key focus. Through this program, we provide targeted support to students at risk of disengagement through tailored interventions and workshops. Our Coordinators Kylie and Naomi, led by Executive Officer Leigh, continue to achieve excellent outcomes for schools, families and carers.

Beyond SFYS, BATForce continues to evolve, with genuine codesign led by community and young people, guiding and refining our work. This includes:



- * Community Wellbeing
 Dashboard, where views have
 increased from 10,348 in 2023 to
 30,659 in 2025, representing a
 three-fold growth in
 engagement over three years.
- * Digital Tattoo 2.0 (funded by Anthony Costa Foundation) continuing to provide key resources to assist young people, parents and carers navigate technology safely.
- * Vaping Prevention Project (funded by VicHealth in partnership with City of Greater Geelong) delivered 22 codesign workshops across the region, leading to a new support board, and targeted workshops for schools.

CHAIRPERSON REPORT

* Listening Posts, offering informal, local opportunities to connect directly and in person on key issues including inclusive employment and survival of cults, leading to a request for support for the current Parliamentary Inquiry (and new support boards).

Our website and social media presence improves our capacity to connect with vulnerable communities and measure impact.

We thank Geelong Connected Communities for continuing to ensure we can share resources more broadly via printed postcards, another way to reach more community members.

Since our last Annual Report, David Moody has resigned from the Board, and I wish to thank him for his contributions and thoughtful advice. I am very grateful for the remainder of our small and mighty Board, with good humoured and insightful support from Chris, Stephen, Jen and Cass.

As a small not for profit reliant on external funding, our economic circumstances are extremely challenging. As noted in our Treasurer's Report, while BATForce is showing a temporary loss in the 2024/2025 Financial Year, this is owing to contracted payments aligned to the calendar year (subsequent payments in the 2025/2026 Financial Year have moved BATForce into profit). We have made significant adjustments to staffing and costs, to prevent this loss from reoccurring in the future. The staff and the Board are committed to ensuring our ongoing sustainability.

As the youth sector faces ongoing challenges, BATForce remains committed to adapting and responding to the changing environment so we can support those most in need, now and into the future.

-Liz Everist

TREASURER'S REPORT

PREPARED BY: Chris Loughheed - Acting Treasurer

I am presenting this report of BATForce's financial performance for the financial year ending June 30, 2025.

The accounts have been audited and the auditor's review is available with a detailed profit and loss report and balance sheet.

BATForce reported a significant loss resulting from reduced funding and retrospective timing of major payments from the Department of Education.

It is important to note that these losses were anticipated and have been strategically managed within the calendar year. The organisation has taken several steps to mitigate the impact of these losses, including reduced staffing levels and operational adjustments, as part of robust financial plans to ensure sustainability.

Looking ahead, our budget for the next financial year projects a positive outlook and we will return to a financially stable position.

I would like to extend my thanks to our Executive Officer and Bookkeeper Geoff Trabant for managing the finances with clear vision and pragmatism, and our Board of Management for their commitment to BATForce's vision.

The Board's plan for financial sustainability is both practical and feasible, and we are optimistic for our financial future.

- Chris Lougheld



EXECUTIVE REPORT

PREPARED BY: Leigh Bartlett

Small NGOs are few and far between these days. Whilst it is never easy financially keeping small NGOs viable the phone never seems to stop ringing. BATForce's ability to be responsive to community needs and create space for agencies to come together, share ideas and activate responses has been a great adventure.

With ongoing reductions in state and federal youth funding, competition for philanthropic support has intensified. In response, we intentionally shifted our approach to "chunk" our work into targeted, community-driven projects. These smaller but meaningful initiatives build momentum toward broader system change while maintaining the integrity and responsiveness we're known for.

Digital Tattoo: Responding to the Now

Demand for our student and parent/carer Digital Tattoo workshops in 2023/24 grew significantly, especially across Year 4 cohorts. We are seeing the real impact of early access to social media — particularly for children whose formative years were shaped by COVID-era isolation.

The challenge is evolving quickly: as governments grapple with locking down social media for young people, AI has already moved ahead. Young people are being exposed to language, validation, and content from systems that do not have their wellbeing at heart.

EXECUTIVE REPORT

In 2024/25 our conversations about consent shifted. We began focusing heavily on 'sitting with no' and the emotions that accompany saying it, hearing it and acknowledging it. This included acknowledging the influence of AI companions and bots in shaping identity, relationships, and belief systems. With AI bots designed to validate your every emotion and influence the thoughts that are linked to it – conversations about consent and emotional regulation are critical both within the online space and the living directly space.

We also developed a new Digital Tattoo workshop for Parents and Carers of children aged preschool to Year 2, recognising that the strongest protective factors start early.

As we have always said — the best youth work happens between 0-8.

Through support from the **Anthony Costa Foundation**, we partnered with **WHR Allied Health** to co-design a
Digital Tattoo intervention for young
people with disabilities who are using
technology in risky ways.

This work included critical observation of our content, co-design with parents/carers and teaching staff, professional development, and the creation of a specialised six-session Digital Tattoo intervention program

Growing Our Digital Ecosystem

This year saw a major lift in our online resources:

- Website: A continually expanding resource hub supporting the whole ecosystem around young people.
- Community Wellbeing
 Dashboard: Now 11 support
 boards strong, with our first
 externally developed board
 added a wonderful example
 of true collaboration (thanks
 to Gretta Kane from Carers
 Support).

Growing Our Digital Ecosystem

- YouTube Channel: 60+ free videos across wellbeing, regulation, professional learning, and inclusive pathways.
- Podcast: BATChats launched on Apple and Spotify, created in response to community requests for quick, practical guidance.

We thank **Geelong Connected Communities** and the **Anthony Costa Foundation** for enabling wider access to these tools — including QR-coded postcards and print resources now visible across local libraries thanks to **Geelong Regional Libraries**.



Co+Chats

I want to acknowledge those who trusted us to lead the Co+Chat work and commit to sharing resources.

Whilst we reduced the number of open meetings, the work done in the targeted mini communities of practice was absolute quality and the Inclusive Pathways work that resulted is something the sector can be proud of.

The BAT Team

A heartfelt thank you to Naomi and Kylie – the "little team that could" – for their adaptability, advocacy, and deep commitment to schools, families, and facilitators. Their relational work continues to build trust and make a real difference.

I want to acknowledge the facilitators who have delivered programs across the year, some great outcomes again in very trying times across both primary and secondary schools. The development of new models of service to deal with changing landscapes has been taken in their stride and we are very proud of the work that has been achieved in the past year.

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Our program facilitators and delivery partners have included; Talking Youth, We Made, Girlosophy, TESSA, Beyond Boxing, Surf Coast Sports Hub, Shake Counselling, I Am Mindful, Social Stencil and WHR Allied Health

The Community who Informs our Work

To the students (44 workshops),
Parents and Carers (27 workshops)
and Workers (12 workshops) who
showed up, shared insights, asked
questions, and helped shape the way
forward — **thank you**. You continue to
guide the direction of our work.

The Board

A big thank you to the Board at BATForce who trust the process. When you are guided by principles that begin with listening to community it really is a different way of working. This can be challenging, especially when funding uncertainty is a constant reality. But the work is both meaningful. It is rewarding. And it is needed.

Looking Ahead

The future remains unpredictable, and the era of long term strategic plans influencing our work is behind us. Our commitment is to remain:

- Evidence-informed
- Community-led
- Advocate whilst listening
- Responsive and relational
- Focused on measurable impact

I'm super proud of what we have achieved and commit to the fact that our work will remain informed by community for community.

We will continue to listen, learn, adjust, and always have great expectations.

-Leigh Bartlett







CO-DESIGN:

More Than a Method - It's How We Work

Throughout 2024–2025, BATForce continued to strengthen and embed codesign as a defining part of how we work. It's not a project add-on or a buzzword — it's our way of ensuring that the voices of young people, families, schools, and community actively shape the resources, tools, and systems designed to support them.

Our co-design work took shape in very different but equally powerful ways this year.

Vaping Prevention Project

As part of the VicHealth-funded state-wide vaping initiative led by the City of Greater Geelong for the Barwon South West consortia, BATForce developed and delivered 22 co-design workshops across the region. These sessions engaged students, parents, and educators in shaping content that became two tailored workshops — one for primary and one for secondary schools — now being delivered to schools both locally and beyond.

The project also helped us refine our digital ecosystem. Insights from participants were translated into accessible online resources housed on our <u>Community Wellbeing Dashboard</u> (CWD), ensuring that the learnings remain visible and useful long after the workshops ended. The project and its partners are now featured on our Projects webpage to keep the program's outcomes and learnings in a shared space — one that remains open and accessible to the community long after the project ends.

CO-DESIGN:

Vaping Prevention Project

MEASURING THE REACH

From January to October 2025, our Vaping Prevention Project webpage remained one of the top five most visited pages on our site – showing ongoing community concern and engagement.

KEY METRICS:

- 186 sessions (active visits)
- 137 active users
- 119 new users (majority first-time visitors)
- 825 on-page interactions

The data highlights both reach and relevance – especially via mobile, where parents and young people access information most frequently.

Listening Posts

Co-design sometimes begins with simply listening. In 2024–2025, we created Listening Posts for issues where "we don't know what we don't know."

Listening Post 1: Supporting Cult Survivors

After connecting with journalist Richard Baker about his reporting on cults in Australia, we were approached by survivors who wanted to share their stories and identify community needs. Through these conversations, BATForce began developing a new support board co-designed with survivors – and was invited to contribute to the Victorian Government Cults Inquiry.

Listening Post 2: Carers of Children with Disabilities

Through our Inclusive Pathways project, we identified a gap in how our resources supported carers of children with disabilities. Partnering with Carer Support at Gateways, we ran a co-design workshop with carers to explore what 'better' looks like. Their insights are now shaping future redesigns of the Community Wellbeing Dashboard and informed our formal response to the Federal Government's Thriving Kids consultation.

This work will continue into 2026.

Co-Design is how we learn and evolve. It keeps us accountable to the communities we serve and ensures that every resource, workshop, or dashboard is built with people — not for them.



STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS: Two Years of SFYS Impact

Over the past two years, the School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) program has continued to evolve to meet the shifting needs of students across the Barwon region.

Between 2024 and 2025, SFYS didn't just grow in numbers—it deepened its reach, broadened collaboration, and adapted to the changing wellbeing landscape of young people and their families.

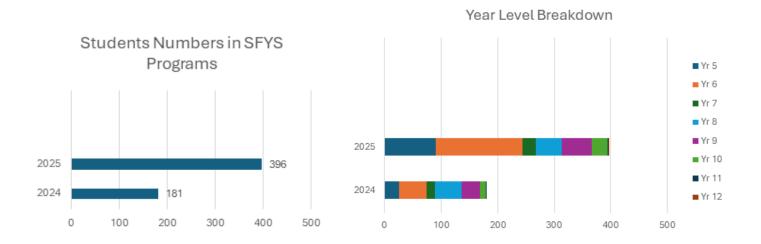
Expanding Reach and Earlier Intervention

SFYS supported 396 students in 2025, up from 181 in 2024 — **a 118% increase**. Participating schools also doubled, growing from 12 to 25, including more primary settings, which now represent 68% of all schools engaged.

The largest student cohorts also shifted younger:

- 2024: Year 6 (26.5%) and Year 8 (26%)
- 2025: Year 6 (39%) and Year 5 (23%)

This pattern shows the program is being accessed earlier—before transition challenges become entrenched.

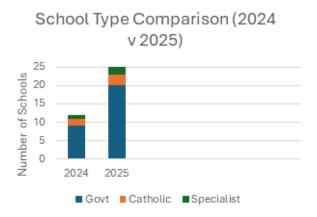


Expanding Reach and Earlier Intervention

School Level Comparison (2024 v 2025)

25
20
15
10
2024 2025

Primary Secondary Specialist

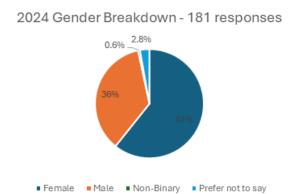


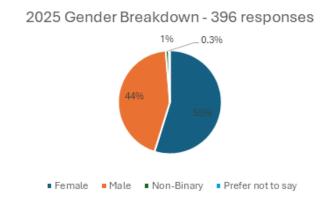
Balancing Representation

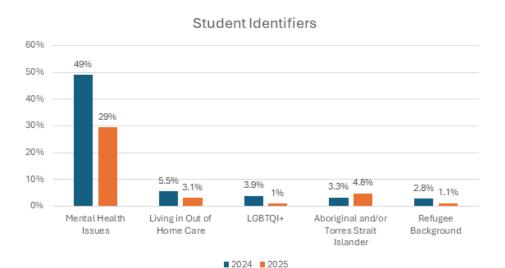
Gender balance improved slightly:

- 2024: 61% female, 36% male, 1% non-binary
- 2025: 55% female, 44% male, 1% non-binary

This demonstrates widening engagement across all genders and increased participation from boys and gender-diverse young people.



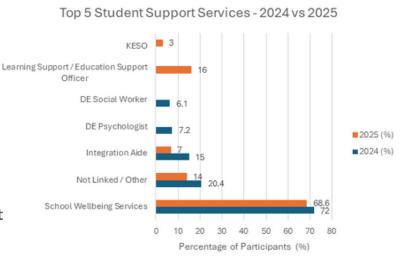




Changing School Systems and Supports

In 2024, **72**% of students were linked with school wellbeing services. In 2025, that figure slightly decreased to **68.6**%, but there was a rise in learning support and integration aides, showing that schools may be diversifying support pathways or young people are reaching out to those they feel connected to at school.

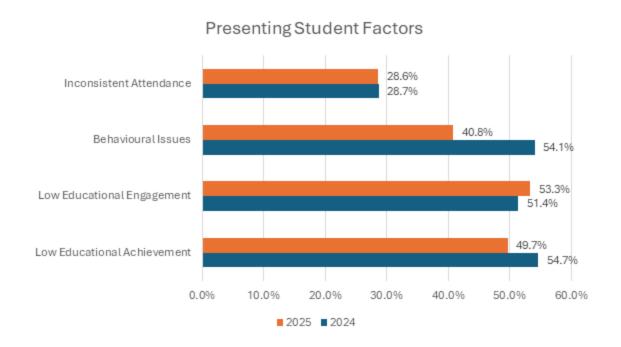
This diversification may indicate that while traditional wellbeing teams are stretched, schools are drawing on a wider network of supports to meet complex student needs.



Evolving Student Challenges

While low engagement and academic struggles remain key issues, 2025 shows a decline in behavioural concerns (from 54% to 40%) and mental health challenges (from 50.8% to 29.4%).

However, low educational engagement (53%) and attendance issues (29%) persist, reflecting ongoing barriers to consistent participation.

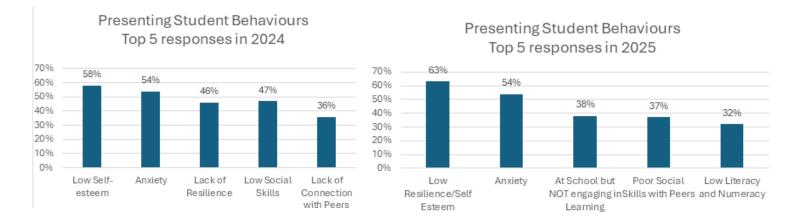


Shifting Social and Emotional Needs

Students continue to face complex, often internalised challenges. Socialemotional factors remain significant:

- Low resilience/self-esteem: 63% (up from 58%)
- Anxiety: steady at 54%

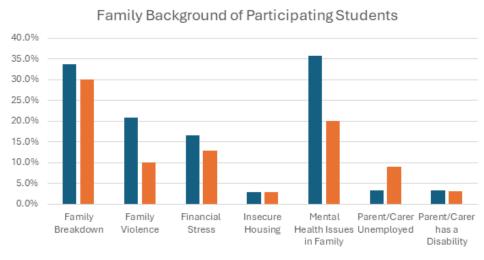
This shift from externalised to internalised struggles highlights the increasing complexity of young people's wellbeing profiles.



Family Context and Home Pressures

Home environments continue to shape student wellbeing and engagement. Notably, family violence reports halved (21% \rightarrow 10%), while unemployment tripled (3.3% \rightarrow 9%) and financial stress remained steady.

These pressures suggest a continuing need for wraparound and community-based support, especially for students facing compounding vulnerabilities.



Strengthening Family-School Relationships

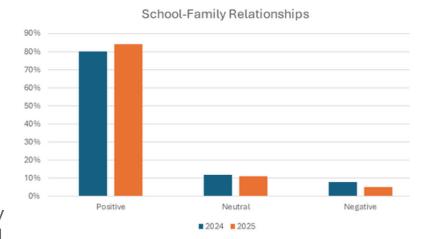
Perception data on the relationship between the school and family showed modest improvement:

• **Positive**: up from 80% (2024) to 84% (2025)

• **Neutral**: 11%

 Negative: reduced from 8% to 5%

This may reflect an increasing trust between schools and families—a key outcome that BATForce has worked towards for a number of years.



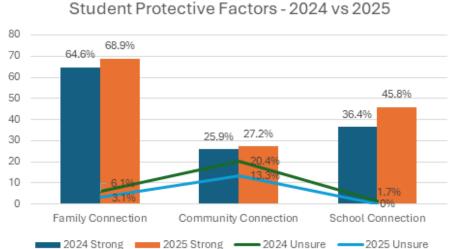
Building Protective Factors

Schools reported stronger connections across all areas in 2025:

- **Family connection**: 68.9% († from 64.6%)
- Community connection: 27.2% (from 25.9%)
- **School connection**: 45.8% (↑ from 36.4%)

These protective gains highlight increasing belonging and relational safety, which are crucial buffers against risk.

It remains a concern that many schools are still unsure whether their students are meaningfully connected to community support and activities beyond school. We know this is one of the strongest protective factors a young person can have.



What the Trends Tell Us

Earlier intervention works -

Younger cohorts and primary engagement show earlier identification.

Behaviour improving -

Fewer behavioural referrals and more engagement supports.

Wellbeing complexity deepens -

Resilience and anxiety remain high, showing layered needs.

Economic strain is rising -

Family pressures are changing the shape of student stress.

Partnerships matter -

SFYS continues to strengthen the bridge between schools, families, and services.

The Wrap Up

As the data shows, SFYS continues to make a measurable difference—not just by reaching more students, but by responding with adaptable programs and genuine collaboration with schools.

The challenge ahead lies in sustaining this momentum amidst systemic shifts, ensuring that local responses remain flexible and relational at their core.

Local community supports, information and shared resources for parents, carers, young people, community agencies & schools



COMMUNITY
SUPPORT
GUIDES

A guide to supports & services in the Geelong & Colac-



ADULTING 101

Tips to navigate the challenges that adulthood might throw at



PATHWAYS
FROM THE
SCHOOL GATE

Resources for school leavers, young people living with



LAUNCH
PAD: PRIMARY
& SECONDARY

Tips for Parents, Carers & Families navigating the growing up years.



SCHOOLS WELLBEING HUB

A collection of resources designed for wellbeing spaces

Growing Awareness and Connection Across the Region

The Community Wellbeing Dashboard (CWD) continues to be one of our most powerful tools for helping young people, families, schools, and community members find the right support, at the right time, in the right place.

Built on Trello and openly accessible, the Dashboard offers real-time links to local services, programs, resources, and pathways. Since its initial launch, it has steadily grown — not just in the number of boards available, but in how people use it.

What We've Seen Over Time

Since launching in October 2022, the Dashboard has expanded to include support boards across transition, employment pathways, family connection, school wellbeing, and community-based opportunities. Some of our most accessed boards to date include:

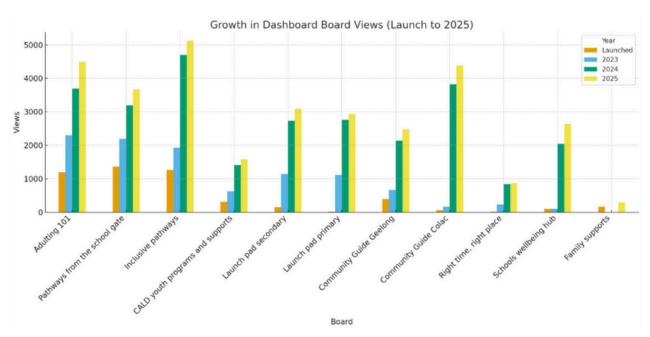
- Pathways from the School Gate 3,667 views
- Adulting 101 4,487 views
- Inclusive Pathways 5,124 views
- Schools Wellbeing Hub 2,636 views
- Launch Pad (Primary & Secondary) 6,021 combined
- BATForce Community Guides
 (Geelong & Colac Otway) 6,861
 combined

What We've Seen Over Time

These numbers show a steady and ongoing community appetite for accessible, easy-to-navigate support links – especially around life transitions, after-school pathways, and inclusive community participation.

Views have continued to climb each year and with the addition of new boards through 2023 and 2024, along with increased school and service sharing, this has contributed to a broader and more diverse audience.

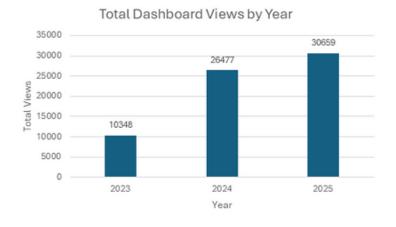
Overall, the Dashboard has grown from a small set of early boards into a widely-used, community-trusted navigation tool — with usage increasing by approximately 200–300% over three years.



The graph shows a clear upward trend across all boards. Boards that support transition to independence (Adulting 101, Inclusive Pathways) and post-school pathways (Launch Pad and Pathways from the School Gate) show particularly strong increases, now reaching 3,000-5,000+ total views each.

Community-specific boards, including the Community Guides (Geelong & Colac), have also shown significant uptake as awareness has increased across networks.

We've seen total dashboard views increased from 10,348 in 2023 to 30,659 in 2025, representing a three-fold growth in engagement over three years.



WHAT PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR

The most clicked categories across the boards this year were:

- 1. Transition to secondary school
- 2. Mental health and wellbeing support
- 3.Community participation / belonging activities
- 4. Pathways to work, volunteering and training

This aligns strongly with the needs and concerns consistently raised in schools, youth programs, and family support conversations across the Barwon region.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Community Wellbeing Dashboard is doing exactly what it was built for:

- Reducing service-finding overwhelm
- Giving young people and families confidence to take next steps
- Helping schools and community workers respond quickly
- Strengthening early support and prevention pathways

And importantly – it's doing this with free, local, co-designed, easy-to-navigate resources.



2024/25 Webpage Insights

Since launching in late 2022, the Community Wellbeing Dashboard has seen steady and meaningful growth in both the number of boards available and the number of people accessing them.

Between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025, the Dashboard webpage saw consistent traffic. Looking at our Google Analytics, this year, we saw:



The most engaged users spend time on multiple boards, suggesting they are exploring and comparing options — supporting the idea that the Dashboard is helping create informed choice.



30-50% of visitors were new users, meaning we continue to reach fresh audiences through word-of-mouth and school sharing.



Users are engaging most during school terms, especially around transition times (late Term 2 and early Term 4).



Returning user
engagement has
steadily increased,
showing that the
Dashboard is not only
being visited but is
being used as an
ongoing support tool,
not a one-off resource.





Join the conversation!

BATForce has a simple vision, to improve opportunities and supports for young people through advocacy, education, the strengthening of networks for families and the workforce.



Social Media Website

Podcast

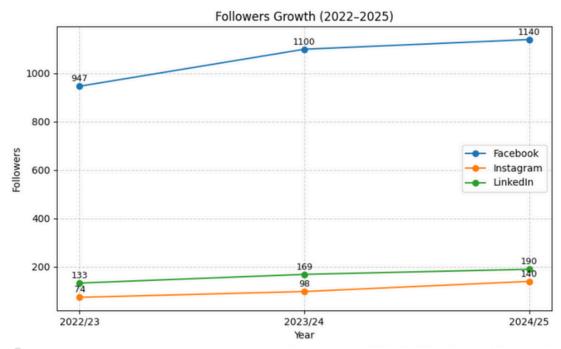
YouTube

GROWING DIGITAL REACH AND REFINING ENGAGEMENT

Over the past three years, BATForce's online presence has grown steadily across all platforms, reflecting our ongoing effort to connect with schools, families, and community partners in accessible ways.

Followers:

Across all channels, follower growth continues—especially on Instagram, which almost doubled again in 2024/25 (up 43% from last year). Facebook remains the largest community, now sitting at 1,140 followers, while LinkedIn has expanded its professional audience to 190. The upward trend shows that both community and sector-based audiences are increasingly engaging with our stories and resources.

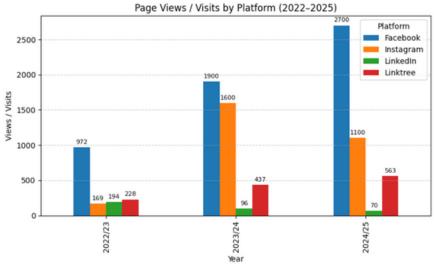


Page Views and Visits:

Facebook traffic has been the biggest mover—rising from under 1,000 to 2,700 views over three years. This jump reflects stronger, more consistent posting and cross-promotion through campaigns like Tools for Transition and WorkCare Factor.

Instagram views dipped slightly this year after a big leap in 2023/24, hinting at content fatigue or algorithmic changes—something we'll watch closely.

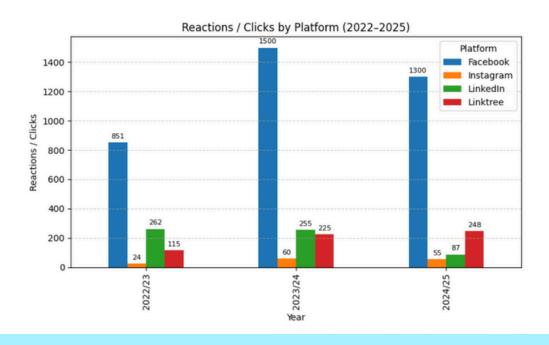
Linktree traffic (from our resource boards and dashboards) continues to



climb steadily, up 146% since 2022/23—proof that people are following through to explore our deeper content, not just scrolling past.

Reactions and Clicks:

Facebook and Linktree remain strong performers, while LinkedIn engagement has dropped as we've refined its focus toward professional updates rather than general posts. Instagram interactions have held fairly steady, though short-form video continues to offer room to grow.



Key Takeaways

- **Consistency works**: Facebook continues to reward regular posting and event promotion.
- Linktree may be gold: The steady increase in clicks confirms that users are using our social channels as gateways to real resources.
- **Platform-specific strategy matters**: Instagram may need refreshed visuals or reels to regain 2023/24's engagement levels, and LinkedIn could benefit from more thought-leadership style content rather than announcements.

Next Steps

- Lean into what's working: Keep Facebook as the central hub for community stories, photos, and event recaps.
- **Boost visual storytelling**: Test reels and carousel posts for Instagram to engage younger audiences.
- **Sharpen professional reach**: Use LinkedIn for insights, partnerships, and funding updates.
- **Track deeper engagement**: Integrate Linktree and dashboard analytics into quarterly reviews to measure impact beyond likes and follows.

GROWING STRONGER ONLINE CONNECTIONS

Over the past year, BATForce continued to strengthen the way young people, families, and community services connect with support in the Barwon region. Across our programs, campaigns, school partnerships and digital tools, we saw steady growth in online engagement and increased awareness of the practical resources available through our website.

Website Analytics

Our website is now a central access point for information, guides, and pathways to support. Between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025, we saw:



^{*}interactions such as clicks, downloads, link opens and resource navigation

These numbers reflect not just traffic—but real people navigating support, finding resources, and connecting with services.

Where People Are Going - and Why That Matters

The most-visited pages for the year highlight what families, schools and young people are looking for:

- 1. Homepage central access to everything
- 2. Quick Help Guide
- 3. Community Wellbeing Dashboard
- 4. Holiday Help Campaign
- 5. Projects & Programs Overview

The interest in the Quick Help Guide and Community Wellbeing Dashboard confirms what we hear in schools and community meetings: **people want support that is easy to find, up-to-date, local and trustworthy.**

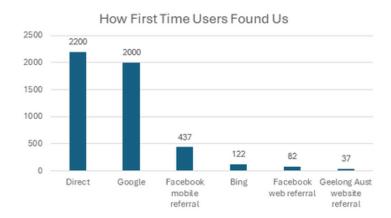
How People Are Finding Us

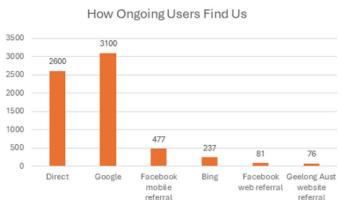
Understanding how users discover BATForce helps us stay visible where it matters.

- First User Source / Medium shows where a person found us the <u>first time</u> —
 often through:
 - Community referrals
 - Search engines
 - Social media links

- Session Source / Medium shows where they come from when they return this changed more frequently and suggests:
 - People are bookmarking us
 - Schools are re-sharing links
 - o Professionals are using the site in real-time with families and students

This tells us the website has become not just a destination, but a working tool in everyday practice.





Why This Matters

The website isn't just a digital space - it's a community connector.

It aims to support:

- · Teachers talking with students
- Parents looking for help outside of 9-5
- Youth workers guiding young people through tough decisions
- Young people seeking support privately and safely

The data shows that the platforms we've built together continue to be used actively and purposefully.

THE BAT TEAM

The Board (2024 / 2025)



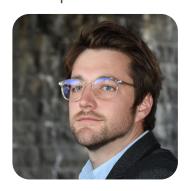
LIZ EVERIST Chairperson



CHRIS LOUGHEED Treasurer



JENNY SPEED Secretary



STEPHEN KEANE



MALCOLM SCOTT current leave of absence



CASS LANGDON

The Team (2024 / 2025)



LEIGH BARTLETT Executive Officer



KYLIE FOX



NAOMI MADIGAN

2024 / 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

Barwon Adolescent Task Force Inc

ABN:16 744 863 100

Statement of Profit or Loss

For the Year Ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 \$	2024 \$
	Note	•	•
Income			
State Grant Funds		362,312	446,694
Other income		30,470	20,880
Interest Income		417	384
		393,199	467,958
Expenditure			
Other Expenses		167,133	47,325
Employee Benefits		288,288	333,829
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment		2,316	3,758
Finance costs	_	119	126
		457,856	385,038
Income tax expense	_	-	
Profit (Loss) after income tax		(64,657)	82,920





Thank you for taking the time to read the BATForce Annual Report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss it further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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batforce.org.au

'Real co-design isn't a survey, a feedback form, or a consultation session.

It doesn't bend to strategic plans, 9-to-5 schedules, or neat timelines.

It rarely fits funding cycles and it is not linear.

Co-design is, at its core, community — and its success is measured by who uses the outcome, when they use it, and how well it works.

And once it's out in the world, the cycle begins all over again.'

> THE BATTEAM'S REFLECTION ON THE LAST 5 YEARS.