


rough
patch

ROUGH PATCH

ANNUAL
TRANSPARENCY
REPORT

1ST AUGUST 2020 -
31ST JULY 2021



Rough Patch operates on unceded Gadigal and Wanggal Country.

We pay our respects to the country we are on, as well as the Gadigal and Wanggal People.

We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and that the violent, imperialist colonisation of so-called Australia has caused deep, lasting harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, culture and way of life.

We acknowledge that Western and European psychology practices continue to cause harm to Indigenous people in so-called Australia, and all over the world.

We acknowledge the wisdom, strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and culture.

We extend our admiration and respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and Elders past, present and emerging.

Always Was, Always Will Be.

WHAT IS A TRANSPARENCY REPORT?

Registered charities and non-profit organisations require an annual report and financial statement to demonstrate transparency to their funding bodies, boards, stakeholders, staff and service users. As a social enterprise, Rough Patch is not legally required to generate an annual report, but we have chosen to demonstrate transparency to our counsellors, volunteers, staff and the community by releasing this report. We hope this fosters trust in the Rough Patch brand and demonstrates our commitment to operating to the highest ethical standards.

WHY IS ROUGH PATCH IMPORTANT?

Everyone experiences rough patches in their life. Things like worry, anxiety, grief, sadness, anger and pain are a normal part of being human. We know that these things are normal, and yet there's still so much stigma about the idea of talking to someone who can help us understand them better, so we can feel better.

Research tells us that when we get support and understanding to help us through a rough patch, we tend to feel better more quickly than people who don't. We also know that counselling and support leads to better overall health outcomes, including physical health.

We want everyone to know that talking to a counsellor and learning about mental health can help us all feel and be better. Rough Patch is here because everyone goes through a rough patch sometimes, and that's totally normal.



FROM THE FOUNDER

It's my absolute pleasure to deliver Rough Patch's first Annual Transparency Report.

After several years of planning, we opened at the end of the 2020 lockdown - a time of **extreme distress** for many people. There were **huge waitlists** for mental health services, some up to 6 months long, with many people **unable to afford** ongoing mental healthcare because of their financial position.

In those early days, we received an **extraordinary amount of support**; contractors, volunteers, community members and friends **came together** to renovate and set up Rough Patch. I was, and continue to be, struck by how enthusiastically we received support from our community. Anyone who has needed to access mental healthcare themselves knows the importance of **affordable, accessible counselling** for healing and growth, and Rough Patch has facilitated this for many people who wouldn't have been otherwise able to.

My **thanks and admiration** go to everyone who has supported Rough Patch along the way; our Counsellors, Volunteers and Advisory Members; our Sponsors and Consultants; and members of our local community.

I extend **special thanks** to Kate Scowen at Hard Feelings for her generosity in sharing the model with us, and for being so available and willing to support me from afar. Kate's gentleness, warmth and encouragement has been essential to Rough Patch's success.

Rough Patch is **deeply personal** for me; I know what it's like to need mental health support and not be able to find it, and I know what a difference it makes when you do. Despite our small beginnings, I have great faith that Rough Patch is going to continue to grow and develop into an essential part of the mental healthcare landscape in Sydney/Eora.

If you have any feedback or questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at amber@roughpatchcounselling.com

With gratitude and in solidarity,



Amber Rules

Amber Rules

B.CHC (Applied Psychotherapy), M.PACFA (Clinical)

Director and Founder

Rough Patch Affordable Counselling and
Mental Health Supports

HOW IS ROUGH PATCH DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IS ALREADY AVAILABLE?

Traditionally, mental health services in Australia are either full-fee, for-profit businesses which charge up to \$300 per hour, or free services which are funded by faith-based charities or government departments. Often, the waitlists for free services are very long, and the organisations that provide them are underfunded, overstretched, and pay their therapists a very low wage. They are also often faith-based organisations which isn't the right fit for many people. At the other end, for-profit businesses attract high fees which aren't affordable for many people, and generally only attract a partial Medicare rebate for a maximum of 10 sessions per year.

Rough Patch provides a solution that sits somewhere between these two extremes. By offering a service that is subsidised by sales from our shop, by revenue from training, consulting to other health practitioners, organisations and businesses, and through donations and grants, Rough Patch provides counselling that is both affordable and accessible.

We know that mental health care and support is a priority to improve Australian lives. We know that government-funded services are chronically overwhelmed, overbooked and under-resourced. We know that counsellors in these services aren't paid a wage that supports their own self-care or wellbeing, or is commensurate with their wealth of knowledge, compassion and care. We know that affordable, accessible mental health care - like we provide at Rough Patch - can alleviate some of these problems.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE?

A social enterprise is a business that uses its revenue to improve communities, the environment or contribute positively to social wellbeing and advancement. For-profit businesses give their shareholders, including the owners, dividends of the profit made. In non-profit organisations, profits are reinvested and dividends are distributed to the community in the form of services, programs, employment and other resources. A social enterprise strengthens the community by providing a service that benefits everyone.

A non-profit social enterprise is not a registered charity. There are no tax breaks for the business, and they are not eligible for government funding in the same way charities and non-government organisations are.

At Rough Patch, we reinvest any profit back into the business to provide further affordable counselling and mental health supports to those who need us.

OUR CORE VALUES

Rough Patch's mission is to provide affordable, accessible and innovative mental health supports.

We do this in several ways;

- By providing counselling on a sliding scale to make it more affordable for people who wouldn't ordinarily be able to pay market rates for counselling,
- By offering time-limited counselling services in order to increase accessibility and decrease waitlist times,
- Having a non-clinical, welcoming mental health shop that decreases barriers and stigma around mental healthcare,
- By providing a supportive community of practice for counsellors to work within,
- By using an innovative social enterprise model,
- By pursuing innovative, non-traditional ideas about mental healthcare provision and governance,
- By using a social enterprise model to avoid relying on government funding.

Our organisational values include: compassion, empathy, inclusion, anti-oppressive stances, openness, transparency and innovation. We strive to uphold these values both within our community of practice, and in relation to our service users, customers and the wider community.



UNDERSTANDING THE ROUGH PATCH MODEL

Based on Canadian service Hard Feelings, Rough Patch aims to make mental health supports more affordable and accessible. Accessibility includes being able to access a counselling appointment without a months-long wait, being able to see a counsellor who meets a person's unique needs around culture, race, gender, sexuality or physical needs, and being able to access mental health supports that aren't just counselling, including books, products, resources and referrals.

Our model aims to support the following;

CLIENTS

We help clients access affordable, accessible counselling which meets their unique needs. When clients visit Rough Patch, they enter a non-traditional space that offers a new approach to mental health service delivery.

CUSTOMERS

We help customers with book and product recommendations and provide informal access to qualified mental health practitioners in a non-clinical, familiar space. Our shop offers new ways to access, learn and talk about mental health, fighting stigma and encouraging conversation. Rough Patch is a go-to destination for carefully curated books and self-care products.

COUNSELLORS

We provide a supportive community for counsellors to grow their skills and practice. We offer very low-cost room rentals, wrap-around business support services and professional development opportunities. Our model enables counsellors to do meaningful work that matters to them.

COMMUNITY

We provide information and mental health support to the community via partnerships and our affordable Employee Access Programs for micro and small businesses.

CONVERSATIONS

We foster conversations about innovative, non-traditional ways of promoting mental healthcare, and demonstrate the possibility of new ways of working.

COLLABORATION

We join with local businesses and organisations to expand our reach, without the usual barriers that come with working with government funding bodies.

MENTAL HEALTH SHOP

Our mental health shop is a key component of the Rough Patch model, and helps us meet our mission in several ways. The mental health shop is a welcoming reception space for our clients, and a place where community members can have access to mental health professionals in an informal setting. It's rare to be able to chat to a mental health practitioner without having to book an appointment, and Rough Patch aims to provide a space where brief conversations about mental health can be had. Customers can drop in and ask questions about mental health resources, ask for referrals to counsellors within Rough Patch or in external organisations, and to have conversations about mental health. This also contributes to destigmatising mental health conversations.

The shop also offers mental health resources for people who may not need, want or be ready for formal mental health supports such as counselling. We've had many customers drop into the shop and buy books for their personal development and mental wellness, some of whom come back for counselling later. We have also had customers drop in to ask what they can read or do to support a loved one who is struggling with their mental health.

The shop also aims to create revenue to support our sustainability and in time, we hope to use this revenue to offer group programs and further affordable mental health supports.



2020-2021 IN NUMBERS

Reduced-fee
sessions provided:

1,117

Number of
clients seen:

467

Estimated fee
reduction
provided
to clients:

\$130,040

Free sessions
provided by
student
counsellors:

156

Hours
volunteered:

5,730

Counsellors
who have
applied to
work with us:

178

Please note: Given the structure of Rough Patch, and the fact that our counsellors are responsible for maintaining client records in a way that assures confidentiality, some of these numbers are approximate. Rough Patch is still developing ways to more accurately capture anonymous data, so that we may provide more detailed demographic information as we grow.

FINANCIAL POSITION, START UP COSTS AND BUDGET

Rough Patch's primary creditor is Founder and Director, Amber Rules. An initial loan of \$40,765 from Amber to allow Rough Patch to meet start up costs (see breakdown below). Additionally, Rough Patch received donations from building contractors on behalf of our major sponsor, Derek Raithby Architecture. Rough Patch shares an office space with Derek Raithby Architecture, which allows us to reduce our operational costs.

Rough Patch carries a total of **\$152,802** debt, and we are working closely with our financial advisor to develop a budget designed to meet operational costs and pay down deferred debts when we are in a position to do so.

We continue to seek opportunities for grants, donations and philanthropic funding to increase our sustainability.

\$40,765	Start Up Costs
\$31,816	Retail Stock Costs
\$18,654	Deferred Debt
\$93,383	Deferred Directors Fees
\$22,724	Rental Costs
\$4,714	Administrative Staff Wages
\$152,802	Total Current Debt
\$16,600	Donated services, materials and goods (estimate)
\$38,178	Income from counsellor rental fees
\$18,481	Profit from mental health shop

CHALLENGES

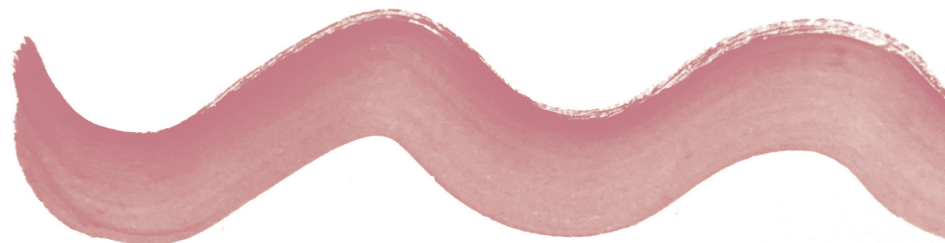
Rough Patch opened in August 2020, in the wake of Sydney's months-long lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In many ways, it was the right time to open - we were able to meet the skyrocketing need for mental health supports during a highly stressful time for the community. However, Covid-19 created complications and in particular, costs which couldn't have been predicted.

Our shop and counselling rooms are modestly sized, and the premises is shared with our major sponsor. There are many people who use the site and it can be difficult to maintain social distancing measures. We had to spend significantly more money than predicted on Covid safety measures, including hand sanitising stations, HEPA air filters, air conditioning units and additional cleaning products.

Our ongoing challenge is financial stability. We have applied for philanthropic grants and undertaken planning to grow our financial position, as well as applied for mentorship programs to support the organisation and executive team. We planned to host a first birthday fundraising event, but were unable to due to Sydney's 2021 Covid lockdown orders. We expect to be able to hold this event in 2022 and hope this helps us raise funds for our continued growth.

We survived a 2-week Covid lockdown in Dec 2020/Jan 2021, and were able to put in place policies and procedures to help us better deal with any future lockdowns. Then at the end of June 2021, NSW entered another lockdown which is still in place at the time of writing this report. We transitioned our counselling online and dealt with the challenges of working remotely, for both counsellors and service users. We saw an immediate, significant drop in retail sales, as the majority of our sales come from foot traffic and in-person purchases.

We are yet to fully understand the extent of the impact of lockdown, but predict this will cause financial strain which lasts for some time.





SUCCESSES

We launched our retail shopfront in October, just 10 weeks after the opening of the counselling practice. It was a huge effort to get the shop stocked and looking good, and took some trial and error to streamline the processes required to run a successful retail space.

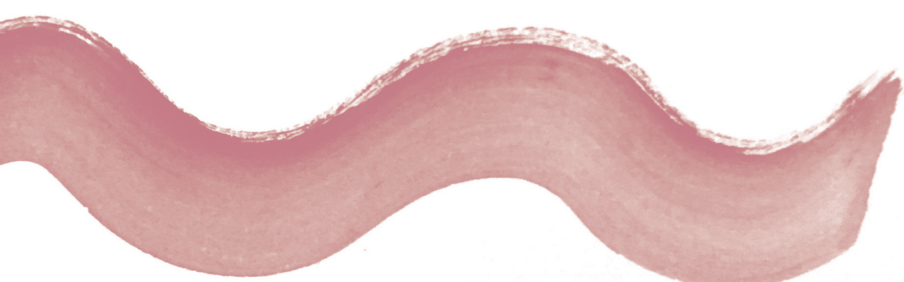
We were asked to contribute our expertise to over 25 articles, Op-Eds, podcasts, radio shows and online content about mental health and counselling. We were featured on Ticker TV, Radio Skid Row, Radio RTR, The Latch, PopSugar, Channel 9 Essential Kids, City Hub Sydney, Fashion Journal, and several other platforms. A full list of these articles and interviews can be viewed at the end of this report.

We had 178 counsellors apply to work with us over our first 12 months, which we believe is a positive indication of how the mental health community feels about affordable, accessible mental healthcare. We have also received many requests from counsellors in different states wanting to better understand the model with a view to opening their own service.

We hosted 4 students from 2 universities, all of whom completed part of their student placement requirements with Rough Patch. The students added a richness and fresh perspectives to our community of practice, and were an enormous support to the organisation with retail and administrative support.

We onboarded 7 retail volunteers who help us look after the shop and provide a warm welcome to our counselling clients and shop customers.

We have had enthusiastic support from the community, and received emails, phone calls and visits from people wishing us well. We have also had the well wishes of local government councillors and MP's.



GROWTH AREAS AND FOCUS

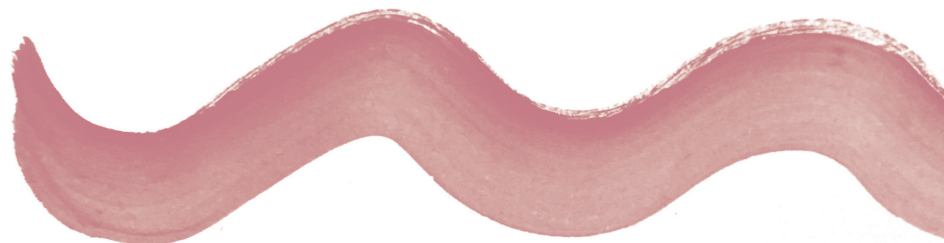
The Executive and Advisory Team have been applying for grants and philanthropic funding, and will be increasing our focus on this in the next 12 months. Not only are we seeking funding to support our financial sustainability, we will also be seeking a more permanent premises with a long-term lease. If we are able to secure a long-term, fixed-fee premises, this will considerably strengthen our sustainability and longevity.

We will continue to pitch our training services to businesses who wish to utilise the wealth of mental health knowledge available within Rough Patch. We currently offer corporate training packages for companies who wish to support their workforce with mental health and wellness content, including education about stress, anxiety, depression, relationships, communication, addiction and more.

We have also been actively seeking partnership opportunities with other businesses and community organisations. Through these partnerships, we hope to be able to extend our reach and join with like-minded organisations to offer more robust mental healthcare to our community through shared funding opportunities over the coming year.

We introduced an Employee Access Program (EAP) for micro and small businesses who can't afford the usual costs of counselling and mental health supports for their workforce. Our promotion of the EAP has primarily been to local businesses with less than 5 employees. Not only does an EAP create extra revenue for Rough Patch, it ensures that our mission of affordable and accessible mental health services extends to businesses and the local workforce. In the coming year, we'll be expanding the program to also offer market-rate service to other businesses who wish to support our sustainability by using Rough Patch as their EAP provider.

We have already begun to undertake research projects to better understand our client demographic and to ensure we're on the right track with our offerings to the community. Our focus over the next 12 months will be to gather anonymous data from clients, counsellors in our community of practice, and the broader community to help us discern where to best channel our limited time and resources.



WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY ABOUT US

"I really like the rooms and the shop. The ambience is so calming."

"Thank you so much, you've been very helpful to me. I really appreciate your service. I definitely couldn't have afforded counselling without you."

"I'm very happy to have found Rough Patch because I can't afford full priced counselling, and this still feels like I'm getting quality help without sacrificing anything for the cheaper rate."

"Very happy with my experience so far. Great staff and very thankful for this initiative".

"Incredibly welcoming space, very professional, very comfortable. Location was easy to access and park".

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

We are committed to diversifying our team in order to provide the best possible care to clients and to ensure we are walking our talk. Unfortunately, we have not received many applications from counsellors or advisory members who are racially or culturally diverse, gender-diverse, male, have disabilities or neurodivergencies, or with lived experience of mental illness. We continue to seek counsellors, advisory members and volunteers from diverse backgrounds and welcome input from the community on this matter.

Our Community of Practice actively seeks to expand our knowledge around race, culture, gender, sexuality, disability, neurodivergence, chronic illness, fatphobia, and other intersections of oppression. We acknowledge that we are always learning and commit ourselves to personal responsibility around educating ourselves about these experiences, as well as supporting each other with learning.

We stock books and products in the mental health shop which address diverse topics and support diverse vendors. Where possible, we purchase from businesses who share our passion for social justice and the environment. We prioritise products which are hand-made and local, environmentally-friendly, or support marginalised groups of people, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people of colour, womxn and non-binary people, LGBTQIA+ people, and people living with mental illness, disabilities and chronic illness, among others.

We acknowledge that we may not be a culturally-appropriate fit for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In addition to continuing to seek Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors and advisory members, we make a monthly donation to [Gunnawirra](#), a local service which focuses on healing intergenerational trauma, trauma and grief through the influence of cultural identity, knowledge, and creativity. Gunnawirra programs use professional clinical care, treatment and support to improve lifestyle, health and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

WE ASKED OUR CLIENTS SOME QUESTIONS...

100% of respondents said they believed counselling at Rough Patch was good value for money

92% of respondents said they would not have been able to afford counselling if Rough Patch fees were the same as market-rate counselling

100% of respondents felt their counsellor was helpful and welcoming

100% of respondents reported an improvement in the areas they sought counselling for

20% of respondents reported travelling more than 45 minutes to access counselling with us

100% of respondents were able to book an appointment within 2 weeks of their initial enquiry

Ticker TV

<https://tickernews.co>

Radio Skid Row

<https://soundcloud.com/radio-skid-row/rough-patch-counselling-with-amber-rules-8102020>

Feminist Fridays podcast

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0C0MioHiNaJ1ylbdrNAuVA?si=aed73a1586224551>

Talklink podcast

<https://talklink.com.au/podcast/32-is-low-cost-mental-health-support-possible-with-amber-rules>

RTR 92.1FM - On The Record

https://soundcloud.com/olivia_diorio/musics-me-too-moment

Online articles and Op-Eds

<https://cityhubsydney.com.au/2020/11/a-new-model-for-mental-health-care/>

<https://theindustryobserver.thebrag.com/metoo-sexual-assault-mental-health>

<https://thelatch.com.au/how-to-find-a-therapist/>

<https://thelatch.com.au/mental-health-at-work/>

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<https://www.popsugar.com.au/living/why-am-i-single/>

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<https://www.popsugar.com.au/living/mental-health-conversation-starters>

<http://www.essentialkids.com.au/education/school/high-school/is-it-time-schools-offered-official-mental-health-days-kids-and-teens-are-not-all-ok-20210909-h1yh1t>

<https://www.training.com.au/ed/insights-on-becoming-a-counsellor/>

Social Media

Bendigo Bank, Leichhardt ([instagram.com/bendigobankleichhardt](https://www.instagram.com/bendigobankleichhardt)) - Ask A Counsellor Series

Beneath The Glass Ceiling ([instagram.com/beneaththeglassceiling](https://www.instagram.com/beneaththeglassceiling)) - Ask A Counsellor Series