



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

6 APRIL 2020

### **On-demand support via smartphone app booms during coronavirus pandemic**

Mental health emerging as major issue during COVID-19 pandemic

An Australian tech start-up providing 24/7 on-demand physical and psychological support to large companies and institutions says mental health is emerging as the major issue during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sonder is the first of its kind in the world and provides scalable, cost-effective on-demand support to businesses, universities and governments by linking staff and students to highly-skilled emergency personnel via a smartphone app.

Sonder's support network can connect 90 per cent of Australia's population to someone who can provide on-the-ground assistance within 20 minutes.

Founded less than four years ago by two former Special Forces officers and a corporate lawyer and defence force reservist, Sonder is experiencing a significant rise in business since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged.

Co-founder Christopher Marr DSM said Sonder's initial focus was on international students.

Australian universities looking to support foreign students experiencing mental health, medical or personal safety concerns but unfamiliar with where or how to seek help, signed up about 120,000 students by 2018.

"We can get one of our team members by somebody's side in major centres in less than 20 minutes. We do it every day," Mr Marr said.

Among its first clients were Monash University and major insurer Allianz, while the Commonwealth Bank of Australia saw the potential for monitoring the safety of its 1500-strong mobile lenders.

But as the coronavirus pandemic forces many businesses to abruptly change how they operate a new market is emerging: assisting companies large and small meet their duty of care to employees who are suddenly working remotely.

“Mental health support is emerging as the major issue during coronavirus – many employees and international students are anxious, misinformed and isolated,” Mr Marr said.

“Families are facing unprecedented situations including closures of schools, day care centres, workplaces, residential care facilities, which is throwing up practical and psychological issues employers are having to manage without a framework in place,” Mr Marr said.

Applications such as Sonder can help companies mitigate the legal liability to protect employees’ physical and mental health whether they’re in the office, off-site or working from home.

About 12 per cent of workers compensation incidents are mental health, but account for 37 per cent of costs. Mr Marr said since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, Sonder has provided advice on the latest health and medical information and facilitated health care for serious medical cases.

“We check in on people who are self-isolating, particularly their psychological wellbeing, we check in on people working from home. We help people work out what to do if they have symptoms, believe they have been exposed or know someone who has been exposed.

Sometimes just talking to someone is all they need.”

In November 2018, a driver went on a rampage in Bourke Street in Melbourne’s city centre, killing one man and injuring two others. Sonder was able to geofence its members in the immediate vicinity and send them a push notification telling them what to do and where to go during the terrifying incident.

*Christopher Marr is available for interview.*

*The Sydney control centre is available for video and photographic shoots on request.*

**Media Contact: Marsha Jacobs – John Connolly & Partners – 0417 245 446**



## How it works

- Users download the Sonder app on their smartphone.
- Three modalities:
  1. Urgent assistance: User swipes to automatically send a help alert to Sonder's support centre, notifying them of exact location and initiating remote or in-person assistance.
  2. Check on me: If meeting someone new or going to an unfamiliar destination makes you feel uneasy or uncomfortable, Sonder's 'Check on me' feature allows the team to contact you regularly to make sure you are OK.
  3. Track my journey: Users can choose to have their journey monitored 24/7. This may include walking, taxi ride, private car or public transport.
- The employer or education institution pays Sonder on a subscription basis per person (less than a dollar a day).

## Awards

- Telstra NSW Business of the Year 2019
- "Energised and Emerging" Telstra Business Award 2019.
- LinkedIn Top 10 start-ups of 2019.
- AFR/Boss: 10 most innovative technology companies 2019

## Clients include:

- University of Queensland
- Kaplan Business School
- Murdoch University
- Monash University
- Allianz Partners
- Scape Student Accommodation



Tel: +61 2 8379 7739

Sonder  
834 Elizabeth Street,  
Waterloo NSW 2017  
Australia