



connect  
ABILITY  
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AUSTRALIA



*Annual Report* 2017 - 2018

# *Our Mission Vision and Values*

## **Our Vision**

We create fulfilling opportunities for people and communities through our passion

## **Our Mission**

Empowering people to achieve

## **Our Values**

Relationships

Excellence

Strength

Passion

Experience

Community

Trust

The **Respect** we have for each other and the **Respect** we have for people and communities gives us the opportunities to build for today and grow for tomorrow.

ConnectAbility acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of this land where we work and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and future. Together we acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal Australians and non-Aboriginal Australians with a disability to this country, and reaffirm ConnectAbility's purpose of building an inclusive society where people can live the life they choose.



# Welcome

## From the Chair and CEO

Welcome to the ConnectAbility Annual Report of 2017—2018 where we celebrate the people who choose to use our service and the organisation. It is for them that we drive innovation and excellence in service delivery.

### From the CEO

Another year has flown by and it too has proven to be a very busy one for ConnectAbility. Growth and change has been our constant companion this year.

Celebrating 25 years of service delivery in the Hunter has been quite a milestone for ConnectAbility with Ex staff, Board members attending along with current staff, families and customers gathering at the January event. Although the weather was very warm food, fun and celebration were the order of the day.

On the first of July operational control of the Hunter Valley Disability Service (HVDS) Supported Independent Living (SIL) homes was devolved to the three members; ConnectAbility, Finding Yellow and Ability Options. For ConnectAbility this means managing seventeen homes and two drop in support models. Supporting over 80 customers and working with over 200 staff. This is a major milestone for the transition of the homes to the non government sector and ConnectAbility are on track for completion within our time frames. With devolvment in mind the Board of HVDS employed a Transition and Governance manager to enable the separation of the members in an orderly manner over the next 12 months. This is a complex piece of work which has no precedent to refer too, so each step is uncharted.

Separate to this ConnectAbility also was successful with customers moving service providers from EGA to ConnectAbility and the commencement of another SIL home on the Lake.

As part of the devolution we need to build and end to end software product that encompasses the entirety of our business; Disabilities, Aged Care and Community.

The components are; rostering, award interpretation, CRM, HRIS, Incident and Policy access systems that will allow a one stop approach to accessing information and reports that will allow a higher level of informed decision making and give lead indicators of resourcing, training and planning. The build and testing is well under way with completion by April 2019. This will be a key requirement to continue to grow our services into the future.

We have also acquired Central Coast Disability Network (CCDN) who provide; Community Access, Aged Care, Multicultural services, SIL, Continuity of Supports, Support Coordination. Sixty staff provide support to over 270 customers on the Central Coast. We are proud to welcome CCDN to ConnectAbility. We are keen to grow our services on the Central Coast over time.

Our third year of Wine & Dine was arguable the best ever where the best Hunter Chefs and Vignerons gathered to provide the best night out experience for over one hundred and forty Newcastle business people. Only made possible by the generous major sponsor—the Commonwealth Bank.

High tech came to town for our customers by way of Virtual Reality (VR), for those who have tried VR the possibilities become endless and that's what we want to see for our customers, from visiting other countries and cultures, learning to cook and just plain fun.

We have had strong growth in our Homecare services as older Australians convert from the block funded CHSP program to individual homecare packages. We have had excellent consistent customer surveys for our aged care staff.

Our Neighbourhood centre continue to invest in our communities with a major youth day event and a multicultural celebration day occurring throughout the year.

I would like to thank the ConnectAbility Board for supporting me and the team in what has been an extraordinary year for ConnectAbility. To the Senior and Team leaders and all staff at ConnectAbility thank you for being proud to fly our flag high.

*David Carey*

## From the Chair

The strategic outlook for ConnectAbility has been positive throughout this year with targeted growth and acquisitions enabling the organisation to be in a strong position in the coming years under a consumer directed market place in Aged Care and Disabilities.

It is interesting to note the third State of the sector report from National Disability Services as it points out the increasing cost pressures of the sector. Some 73% of the 626 respondent organisations either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the systems and processes of the NDIS were working well. Some 80% agreed that the NDIS policy environment was uncertain. Both these percentages were up from last year. Only 15% of providers agreed NDIS has respect for providers. Some 75% said NDIS was not working well.

As other states continue to roll into the scheme both NDIS and service providers need to work together to ensure both best practice and consumer choice is maintained or grown. There are over 17,000 providers registered with the NDIS but under half are active which indicates business are reluctant to commence until more certainty is in the market.

The emergency placement of customers into accommodation is also of concern as this has not been addressed by NDIS to ensure a fail safe system for our most vulnerable is in place and working effectively.

This year also sees the commencement of the NDIS quality and safeguarding commission. Shortly the Aged Care commission will also go live. The levels of compliance have increased from the state run system as NSW is the first to experience the new NDIS commission. With increased compliance cost comes increased expense for organisations and this is not reflected in the NDIS current fixed charge rates.

Over 50% of Aged care providers reported a loss last financial year which indicates financial pressures and price setting needs urgent review. The aged care sector will continue to grow with our baby boomers entering into homecare and residential services. This will put more pressure on the need for ever increasing numbers of staff. Given the Aged Care royal commission there is a potential for staff to shy away from a career in aged care.

There will always be opportunity within a human service delivery environment even amongst adversity and threats.

The way forward is precarious in an uncertain environment. It requires Boards to be vigilant in their strategic thinking and action. Budgets require ever increasing scrutiny to ensure best value for money and return on investment.

I would like to thank the Board members, CEO and the entire team at ConnectAbility which has grown considerably this year for continuing to provide service excellence to our customers.

On behalf of ConnectAbility I would also like to thank our funding bodies and the individual staff that work closely with the ConnectAbility team. I have been advised on many occasions that they have assisted in ensuring that customers have been able to secure the services and supports required to meet goals and maintain independence.

Finally to our customers, families and supporters—you remain at the centre of our planning and goal setting. We are here to live our Mission, Vision and Values across all of the services ConnectAbility now offer to meet your needs and expectations of us. We thank you for your continued faith in ConnectAbility and your ongoing business and support. For those new to ConnectAbility you may like to know that one of our longest standing Board members, Mrs Joan Gatt is also our consumer representative and advocate on the Board. Joan is valued by all the Board and Senior Management for her ability to support decisions (and occasionally remind us) to keep customers as our core reason for being in business.

*Nathan Franks*



# *A Celebration and A New Beginning*

In January of this year ConnectAbility celebrated 25 years of supporting local people from the Hunter across Aged Care, Disabilities and Community supports.

Commencing in 1992 through the efforts of a group of families with children who had significant disabilities, ConnectAbility started with ten customers and four staff working out of a small cottage to now supporting over four hundred customers with over one hundred and fifty staff out of a larger and purpose built centre which has allowed us to bring our Aged Care Senior Solutions business area under the same roof.

The new premises gives us over 800sqm of customer space plus office accommodation, a larger and more functional accessible kitchen, better bathrooms and more quiet spaces to undertake specific activities. Parking is also easier, safer and on site for our visitors and other service providers visiting ConnectAbility which was one of our major issues at Hamilton.

The Board and Management invested in a structural ceiling so that future expansion upstairs could be carried out without major disruption to activities taking place.

When planning our celebrations it was important to include the ConnectAbility Community in the celebrations so invitations were issued to our customers, families, corporate and community supporters, our disability partners, neighbouring businesses and our local politicians who have all supported ConnectAbility grow, change and adapt to a changing environment.

The Elmore Vale Lions Club, Habiba's Afghan Food, Mr Whippy and a coffee cart kept everyone well fed and hydrated on a very warm January Day.

Our Chair of the Board Nathan Franks and Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Claydon officially opened the new premises.

Many of our visitors had been connected to ConnectAbility for many years as volunteers, ex Board members and constant supporters. It was a pleasure to be able to share the official opening with them.

Customers then danced away the afternoon to their favorite DJ Paul Lister from the ETU (our landlord) was on hand to celebrate the transformation of the premises from training local electricians to training local people with a variety of skills. They have been fantastic in allowing us to develop the site into something that works for our customers and the community.

Moving to Warabrook was an opportunity for ConnectAbility to be able to have a purpose built space that allowed for expansion in the programs and activities able to be offered. Where we had a small cramped open to the air half garage for our art groups we now have a space three times bigger with built in sink with the kiln established outside in its own space. Our customers plan to commence making hand built pottery bowls for sale at the Hunter Arts Network Bazaar later this year and the kiln will get quite the test as hundreds of pieces go through the firing processes. The sale of goods in November will see the funds go directly back to the artists program so that they maintain choice and control over their art activities.









With generous donations we have been able to purchase arcade games and a virtual reality system that have been installed in the new premises. These provide not only enjoyment but assist in the refinement of fine motor skills, hand and eye co-ordination and the virtual reality system allows people to safely explore different and exciting pastimes that they might not be able to enjoy in their day to day lives.

Our new kitchen provides opportunities for learning new skills and making fantastic meal creations!. It is more functional than our previous space and more people can be accommodated comfortably.

The celebration provided an opportunity for everyone to tour the spaces and catch up with friends.

Face painting, balloon animals and celebration cup cakes were enjoyed by many customers and their families. Some of our original customers and Board were present and it was wonderful to be able to discuss the changes in ConnectAbility.

ConnectAbility is proud of the achievements we have seen over the last 25 years and from humble beginnings have evolved into an organisation known for quality of supports that provides people from all areas in which we support an ability to have choice and control over their lives.

We look forward to the next 25 years and the changes that we know will come. To everyone who has been involved with ConnectAbility over 25 years we thank you. It is you who have made us who we are today and therefore it is you who deserves recognition for our success.





# Supported Independent Living

## Welcoming New Customers and Staff in 2018

ConnectAbility, in conjunction with partners Finding Yellow and Ability Options were successful in winning the tender for the transfer of Government Supported Independent Living services to the not for profit sector. In December of 2017 ConnectAbility saw the beginning of the transfer of seventeen homes and around one hundred and fifty staff to ConnectAbility. The transition will continue for another twenty four months to completion.

A separate company, Hunter Valley Disability Services (HVDS) was established to take the initial transfer and was designed to be able to be devolved as each member entity gradually accepts responsibility for staff, customers and back of office services for the homes under each individual company.

Currently all the head office supports for HVDS are located at Warabrook but it is envisaged that staff will move during the year to their individual member organisations. ConnectAbility acknowledge the support and work of all the ex Ageing Disability and Home Care staff in ensuring continuity of care during the transition. The transfer of business has created challenges that staff deal with on a daily basis and we thank them for their flexibility and good humour as we continue to integrate services.

It is, and will continue to be a challenging and exciting time as we blend this business area building trust with the families, customers and staff and looking to share our Mission, Vision and Values with them all.

ConnectAbility has also opened another three homes across the Hunter increasing the number of people supported to live as independently as they choose.

The decision to commence accommodation supports was part of the Strategic direction to diversify services offered to the community and to add further value to the people supported across the Hunter.

It is also an opportunity for staff to look at working across business areas aligning their passion, strengths and skills with the work that they do.





# *The Importance of Friendships*

Our ConnectAbility Aged Care Friday Friendship Club is held every Friday from 10am-2pm at Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre.

On Friday the 26th Of October we celebrated Halloween. Customers and staff dressed up in Halloween costumes. The day was filled with entertainment, morning tea, a hot lunch and dessert. We also had a friendly game of bingo with lots of fun and laughs.

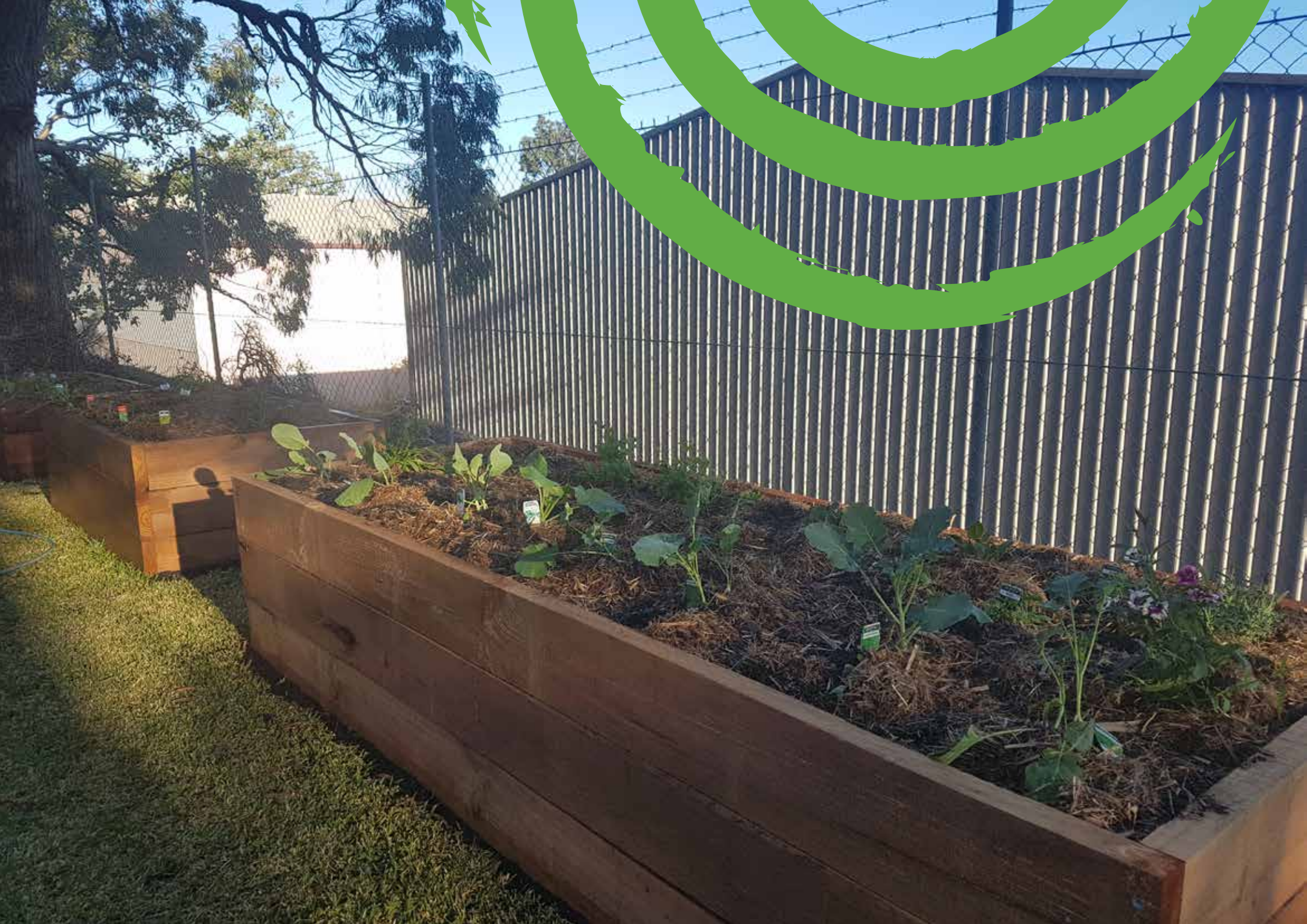
This is a weekly event where older people come together for a day with friends. We often underestimate when younger the value of human interactions and the support networks we develop that support us through the tougher times. As retirement approaches all we see are days to ourselves or time spent travelling and catching up with family. What we often fail to see is that as we age we become less mobile and that unfortunately we may lose friends and family.

The friendship group provides more than a meal. The people who attend have formed new friendships, share histories and support each other as circumstances change. For those who have lost a partner it is a safe place to grieve and talk about how they are coping. People find that the fun and social activities promote a greater sense of wellbeing and joy in their lives.

It is also a place where on going learning can occur. Later this year ConnectAbility are looking to commence a Choir where our older customers can showcase their love of music and singing. We are looking forward to the choir taking part in other community activities. There are also talks from the local community that educate in regards to local current affairs or on health related supports and services.

ConnectAbility believe that the Friendship group is an important part of the Newcastle community and that it can encourage individuals to continue to live a joyous and full life regardless of age.





# How Our Garden Grows

In 2017 we were fortunate to receive a community grant for a garden space at Warabrook. The space was designed to hold a sensory and cooks garden. This allows our customers to pick vegetables and use them in a sensory or healthy cooking program.

Raised garden beds were installed so that all customers could assist in the planting, growing and harvesting of the vegetables. Our craft group have even decorated the boxes to make the space more colourful with signs and hand decorated pots.

The lovely grassed area sees many a game and bbq being held each week.

For our sensory cooking customers it allows them to smell, touch and feel the food they are eating and have the pleasure of participating in mixing and molding food.

Our other cooks learnt how to make healthy, quick and interesting meals using ingredients from the garden. They learnt team work skills, food handling and storage skills and how to set and have a social meal. The smells permeate the building and staff often gravitate towards the kitchen as the delicious smells build.

Cooking is a basic skill that many of our customers have as a goal towards them being more independent and the garden makes learning a pleasure.





# Who Can — The Commonwealth Bank Can

Once again the Commonwealth Bank proved their commitment to enhancing outcomes within their local community for people with a disability.

In 2016 Colin Law, **Commonwealth Bank Executive Manager Business Banking SME** identified that ConnectAbility could use some assistance to raise funds to support and enhance customer programs and projects. He understood that additional funds would ensure the people who come to ConnectAbility would be able to achieve their goals and dreams.

The Commonwealth Bank have always had a strong relationship focused community program. They look at activities and fundraising events where the charity and the bank can work together within the community to achieve outcomes as this provides more sustainable projects.

**Wine and Dine for Disability** was born. In 2018 we celebrated the third year of this unique event that harnesses the generosity of the business community.

Over 130 people came to Marina Views Function Centre—generously donated for the night—to enjoy a night of fine food and wine mixed in with a little fundraising.

For many of the guests this was their third year supporting the event and key relationships have been made for ConnectAbility and between the guests.

Colin and his team organised for five of the top Hunter Chefs, wineries and Callaghan College Hospitality students to support the night.

Wines were matched with the food and the Callaghan Hospitality students capably provided front of house and back of house support.

The evening was a huge success with over \$15,000.00 raised on the night. From the funds raised ConnectAbility has been able to purchase technology for education and fun. This has allowed ConnectAbility customers to learn new skills, make independent choices and have fun taking photos or improving hand eye coordination playing games.

The night was again so successful that the Commonwealth Bank agreed that the event will run again in 2019. All the chefs and winemakers are keen to be back on board.

Feedback from those who attended was extremely positive with comments on how great the food and wine was and that they had a wonderful night.

Without the generous support of all who participated there would be less opportunities for people with a disability in the Hunter.

## With Special Thanks to;

- Colin Law and Danielle McCosker and all the Commonwealth Bank staff who assisted.
- Marina Views owners and staff
- Callaghan College Hospitality Students and Teachers

## Our 5 wonderful Chefs;

- Andy Wright from the Cellar
- Mark Hosie from Rustica
- Chris Thornton from Restaurant Mason
- Tom Robinson formally from Rascal
- Tim Montgomery from Rascal

## Beer & Winemakers;

- Deiuiliis Wines • Tullochs wines • Peter Drayton Wines • IronBark Hill Brewhouse

## And also:

- Yvonne Mullane from YCM Photography who not only donated her time on the night but all the images
- Musicians Chris and Anne Dawson
- Everyone who attended on the night and promoted the event for us or donated prizes for the night.

ConnectAbility love to think that this has become a “must” on the calendar of local people who not only want to support a charity but want to have a fabulous night out. Please support the organisations that support us. Looking forward to seeing everyone in 2019 and beyond.







# connect ABILITY

AUSTRALIA

Supported by **Commonwealth**Bank

# Donations and Technology

A big thank you to all our supporters for 2017/2018. ConnectAbility utilise funds raised through our activities for a variety of resources to support individuals and groups learn new skills and achieve their goals.

So what did you help us purchase this year?????

## Technology—both old and new.

Like every other young person the customers at ConnectAbility love to utilise technology for learning and fun. When deciding what might fit best for the majority of people we made a few key decisions.

Arcade games— We purchased one old table style game (for those old enough to remember these were the type found in milk bars) plus a downloadable game system housed in an old stand up casing.

What are the benefits of arcade games besides fun you ask? - hand eye coordination, the ability to learn to take turns and compete with friends knowing you may not win. It also offers those who find themselves with escalating behaviours a way of focussing on an alternate activity to assist themselves to calm down.

The games also offer a way to boost memory and play with simple technology. They are also a fun activity when the weather prevents you from being out in the community.

We have also purchased a virtual reality system. This allows customers to experience the world they may not be able to access in real life. You can go diving, motor racing, fly or scale tall buildings. You can also learn to shop, attend a concert or walk in a forest.

The customers are enjoying the opportunity to have the interactive experiences and widen their world. It is a simple matter of putting on a pair of special goggles that hook to the computer and sensors in the room. We have provided education to a number of staff so that they can assist customers and other staff with the system to ensure all customers can benefit from the equipment.

There have also allocated funds for the purchase of IPADS to support our Senior Solutions aged care customers. IPADS can provide inclusion for individuals through assisting them to maintain contact with family, friends and the community.

Some seniors have never touched a computer or IPAD but will be able to learn to facetime or access facebook, search the internet and watch programs using the IPads. Family can also know their parent or friend is safe by checking in on them.

ConnectAbility will provide education to both the supporting staff and the customers so that they can effectively utilise the IPADS. We have also organised tech support through our ICT provider Dynamic Business Technologies for troubleshooting.





# Maroba Aged Care and ConnectAbility

## A Great Partnership and Fantastic Outcomes

Our art partnership with Maroba continues to grow and strengthen providing fantastic outcomes for the residents of Maroba Aged Care Facility.

Each week ConnectAbility visit the site to teach art to interested residents. This is more than just painting a picture. It provides residents with a way to connect with each other, their families and community. Many memories are shared in a joyful and supportive environment. New skills are learnt and old skills re visited. Family members have joined in with their parents to share the experience and learn their own histories.

The program helps people adjust to a new environment and makes people feel valued. Please view the QR code embedded where Viv Allanson, CEO of Maroba and Aged Care icon talks directly about the benefits of art to the residents and families of Maroba.

We feel privileged to be trusted to share the skills of our art program with our friends at Maroba. All the staff at Maroba have been welcoming and supportive of ConnectAbility being a part of their team. It proves their commitment to delivering award winning aged care services that focus on the individual through thinking laterally about how to provide an inclusive community



See the story on facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/connectabilityaustralia/videos/1005045986301282/>

Scan QR code to go to link





# Coordination of Supports Equals Achieving Your Goals

The National Disability Scheme (NDIS) was introduced to improve opportunities for people with a disability to meet their goals and help them become more independent and active members of the community.

One area of opportunity for people is when they have coordination of supports within their NDIS Plans.

ConnectAbility Australia is registered through the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to provide Coordination of Support – "Assistance to strengthen participant's abilities to coordinate and implement supports and participate more fully in the community."

Coordination of Support can include initial assistance with linking people to the right providers to meet their needs, assist to find appropriate service providers, coordinate a range of supports both funded and mainstream and build on informal supports, resolving points of crisis, parenting training and developing connections important to people in their community.

## **The NDIA has a three-tiered approach to funded coordination of support**

### **Support Connection**

Supports are time limited (e.g. 1 hour per week) supports to strengthen people's ability to connect with informal, mainstream and funded support, and to increase capacity to maintain support relationships, resolve service delivery issues, and participate independently in managing their NDIS supports and plans.

### **Support Coordination**

This level assists to strengthen abilities to connect to and coordinate informal, mainstream and funded support in a complex service delivery environment. This includes resolving points of crisis, developing capacity and resilience in a person's support networks and coordinating supports from a range of service providers who may be required to help

meet those needs and goals e.g. behaviour support; speech therapy; occupational therapy; physiotherapy.

### **Specialist Support Coordination**

The highest tier of support set within a therapeutic framework, necessitated by specific high level risk in a person's situation. This support is time limited and focuses on addressing high risk/complex barriers and reducing complexity in the support environment, while assisting people to connect with appropriate supports and services.

Coordination of Support will only be provided by ConnectAbility for time-limited periods as negotiated with each person and their NDIA planner.

ConnectAbility has three Coordinators of Support available to assist people to link services to goals.

Over the past year the Coordinators of support have assisted people to achieve their goals. Some of these have included:

- Living independently
- Linking them with external services
- Supporting people through change in circumstances
- Skill and capacity building
- Sourcing and engaging allied health professionals
- Assisting with a change in service provider

Each member of the team is committed to seeing individuals gain skills, achieve goals and build their capacity to lead lives as independently as they choose.



# Our Stories

## How They Shape Us

### Maintaining my independence

Norma Aldrich is a vibrant and independent lady.

Norma is 92 years of age. She has been a very independent lady her whole life. Norma raised her family in the home she is living in now. She had a son and two daughters. Her husband was a boilermaker and built their home himself. Norma looked after the home, the family and the maintenance of the home, garden and yard. Norma even painted the entire outside of her home by herself every 4 years. In retirement years, Norma and her husband enjoyed many trips away throughout Australia and overseas, travelling by bus to all different locations as they both did not drive.

Norma commenced having supports provided by ConnectAbility in June of 2011 at our Friday Friendship Group at the Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre. In 2015 after having an operation on her leg it was recommended from the hospital that Norma commence with the HCP program. Norma was at first not so keen on having some-one come and assist with household tasks she had always done herself.

She now credits that support with ensuring that she stays in the family home safely while still maintaining the life she wants to live.

The Home Care Package provides domestic assistance, transport, socialisation from our Friday Friendship Group, the payment of her Vital Call in case of emergency, and assistance to keep Norma's much loved lawns and gardens maintained.

Norma likes to go out, she would like to continue to be as active as she can for as long as possible. Norma enjoys outings with friends, she attends the Probus Group at Wallsend once per month, she plays cards on a Thursday and Saturday, walks for 45 minutes each morning and enjoys being in her garden. As Norma's family live out of town, Norma and her family are very thankful for the services in place, to assist Norma to remain living in her own home and to maintain her independence for as long as possible.

Our Senior Solutions Case Managers are in touch with Norma on a regular basis to check that she is still happy with the services provided and that her needs have not changed.

Norma remains fiercely independent and ConnectAbility respect and work with the choices Norma makes around service provision.

ConnectAbility aim to work with customers in relation to what services are required, when they are delivered and seek feedback so that improvements can be made when appropriate.

Norma is an advocate for other seniors who are struggling to keep up with the daily tasks. Her advice is to accept that support when offered to continue to have quality and community in your life by removing mundane tasks.

We are thankful to Norma for providing her story to inspire others that life is for living and a small amount of assistance can make sure you can maintain the life you want!



### See the story on facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/connectabilityaustralia/videos/1366592623478393/>

Scan QR code to go to link





# Supporting the Community

Patrick is a volunteer worker for Westpac. For well over two years Patrick has been dedicating his Friday mornings to complete volunteer work for Westpac.

As part of his volunteering Patrick has been attending the Westpac Broadmeadow base to wash the Westpac vehicles. When the new base opened at Pelican Patrick was quick to put his hand up to assist there as well.

In addition to the vehicles Patrick has also been tasked with washing the green tractor used to pull the Westpac chopper in and out of the shed which he was very proud to do.

Patrick now works at both sites week about. Over the years that he has been volunteering Patrick has formed strong relationships with many of the Westpac Rescue employees and is considered to be a very valuable member of the Westpac community.

**WELL DONE Patrick.**

**ConnectAbility are proud of your commitment to supporting your community.**

# Creativity No Boundaries

## JESMOND PROVIDES A SPACE FOR CREATIVITY

Manager Bridget Noonan is keen to have a variety of activities and programs run from Jesmond that enable participation and inclusion for all members of the community.

A Youth hip hop group has been established with local Syrian teens creating great multi-lingual tracks guided by a youth arts worker. The music is extraordinary. They wrote and recorded their own songs and put together a choreographed dance to the music.





# A Community in Action

## Golf Day 2018

On the 2nd March 2018 the annual ConnectAbility Golf Day dawned at Charlestown Golf Club. The excited talk was around toppling Kerry Houghton from Jims Carpet Cleaning and a long term supporter from the top of the golf ladder.

Nearly 100 players moved out onto the course ready to take on the mantle as champion and to also win the prize for craziest photo.

We had fantastic support for the hole sponsorship and yet again novelty events tested even the best players. Luckily they were well fortified by a good and hearty breakfast and with the promise of a great bbq lunch.

**Our major sponsors were back again so special thanks to:**

Major sponsor - Mick O'Shea and his team from Unity Kitchens

Drink Cart Sponsor - Jock Whyte and his team at Newcastle Office Interiors

Without their generosity the golf day would not go ahead.

It was noted that many of the teams not only played golf but conducted business as they moved around the course with alliances formed between teams. Some of the teams may have provided a certain amount of entertainment to others as the day progressed.

Upon course completion many stayed to network and celebrate achievements from the day. This included a pool competition where additional funds raised came to ConnectAbility amid much shouting and attempts to distract each other from making a shot.

The success of the golf day raised much needed funds to enable ConnectAbility to provide supports to more people with a disability living in the Hunter. For many of the people ConnectAbility support there is a need for additional resources to help them achieve the goals we take for granted. This could include understanding how to catch public transport or to build job skills so that they can undertake work.

The support of the businesses and individuals that came to play golf and support ConnectAbility directly make an impact upon the achievements of others.

**Our next Golf Day is 15 March 2019 - call us if you are interested**



# Our Board

## **Nathan Franks** Chair

Nathan joined the CoM in 2015 to support ConnectAbility through sharing his ICT skills. He has expertise in cloud computing, information technology and managed services, Nathan is constantly seeking new ways to bring the future of ICT to ConnectAbility. Nathan has a strong commitment to the community and has been integral in developing strategic measures to allow advances in the way that ConnectAbility works as an organisation.

## **Bernie Garrett** Deputy Chair

Bernie Garrett has over 25 years of corporate leadership and sales management roles in Australia and 10 years working and living in China. Today, Bernie focuses on developing professional teams through his leadership principles and making a difference in their business and personal lives. His vision is to develop organisations, team and individuals to reach their full potential through his Sales and Leadership programs, along with his motivational talks to develop their true potential.

## **Scott Brooks** Treasurer

Scott Brooks is currently a Partner with Maxim and has over 15 years of experience in the accounting and financial services industries, including 7 years working in London. With family using similar service organisations within NSW, Scott is a keen supporter of the industry and committed to ensuring ConnectAbility continues to provide valuable services to the local community.

## **Joan Gatt**

Joan joined the CoM in November 2008 and is a customer representative. Joan has a adult son with a disability and volunteers with the service to assist in his support. Joan is an active member of the Jewells school community, assisting with student banking and other activities. Joan's advice and support is vital in ensuring customer and family needs are at the forefront of our supports.

## **Kate Grob**

Kate's early career was spent in banking, small business administration and management. This background has provided her with a strong commercial acumen and a sound understanding of the challenges facing small business. Kate has spent the last 22 years in recruitment working as a consultant for National and International companies in the local recruitment market. She has a Diploma in Management, is an active committee member with the Newcastle Business Club and becoming a board member of ConnectAbility provides her with an opportunity to donate back to the community.

## **Luke Sessions**

Luke is the principal of Sessions Legal and an experienced property and commercial lawyer. He established Sessions Legal was in 2013 after working for more than 10 years as a lawyer in local and national law firms. Luke enjoys being a lawyer and works in an environment where you are able to help people achieve their goals. A desire to help people and contribute to the wider community is the reason Luke jumped at the chance to join the ConnectAbility Board.

## **Holly Martin**

Holly Martin's retired from the Board in 2018 as her professional career has grown and other commitments took her away more often. We are grateful for the time Holly was able to support ConnectAbility and the skills and knowledge she was able to share with the Management team that helped us build a stronger organisation.

## **Anna Bailey**

Anna Bailey retired from the Board in 2018 following a change in her role at Hall & Wilcox Law. Her knowledge and experience provided opportunities for ConnectAbility to build a strong Governance Framework following our change to a Company Limited by Guarantee. We thank Anna for all her contributions.

# ConnectAbility Supporting the Community

ConnectAbility again joined other local businesses in sponsoring Surfest 2018.

Colin Law from the Commonwealth Bank had the original idea of crowdfunding the Surfest women's event with the Newcastle and Hunter business community showing its support for the Surfest Women's Pro by crowd funding the event to a WSLQS6000 level.

Surfest has for three generations placed Newcastle on the national and international stage. The crowd funding initiative is just another part of that rich history of this iconic event. It brings the community together and raises the awareness of the womens event.

ConnectAbility love the opportunity of being included as sponsors as it allows our customers to be more directly involved in the community and the event. Customers lined the beach to watch the surfers and join in the activities on offer. Some of the goals for our customers include being active members of their communities and Surfest is a way to support them achieving their goal.



We are thankful that Colin Law sees past our meagre budgets and looks at our bigger picture.

We also received promotion at the event as part of the initiative and attendance at promotional activities. This unique to Newcastle initiative allows ConnectAbility to be the supporter rather than the supported.

We look forward to participating again in 2019.





# Developing Skills - Creating Communities

Downer at Cardiff is a unique workplace. They provide maintenance and support to our rail infrastructure meaning that there is heavy machinery on site requiring strict WH&S processes. They also value the community in which they live and work. Downer became involved with ConnectAbility in a simple way—they invited a group of customers to visit the site.

Following the success of this visit they approached ConnectAbility around having some of our customers provide grounds maintenance.

The idea was to give a group of customers an opportunity to learn work skills that might allow them to one day achieve a goal of working independently. The team visited the site, looked at any potential risks and purchased equipment using funds donated to the organisation from our generous supporters. Downer also assisted in providing a ride on mower. The team completed induction and thought they were ready to go. Not quite—Downer provided them with uniforms with their name and the Downer and ConnectAbility Logos.

Each week during the warmer months and less frequently in winter the team visit the site and maintain the grounds. They were able to assist in getting new garden beds together for the official opening of the new premises and tackling areas that had not been used for some time, cutting away weeds and trimming overgrown vines and hedges. This has been life changing for the individuals who work on the project.

The Downer staff see our crew as part of their extended team sharing lunch hours and talking to the crew as they move about the site. General Manager for Downer, Gavin Foster, reported that the morale of the Downer employees has increased due to the pride they have in the site because of its improved appearance and their interactions with our crew. Gavin said it is important to him and all the Downer team that they feel, as a workforce, that they can contribute as a company to improving the lives of other members of the community through adding value.

The outcomes for the members of the crew have surpassed the original expectation of developing work skills. The members have learnt to work as a team and take responsibility for themselves and each other. They understand work safety and have developed a good work ethic.

Skills have been developed in maintaining and working with the equipment and they take pride in a job well done. Additionally they now have a work story to share with family and friends that has lead to greater self esteem and wellbeing. Their attitude has become “can do” around different areas of their lives and they feel a part of the workforce at Downer. Having a uniform and sharing the spaces makes them a part of something bigger than ConnectAbility.

ConnectAbility are very proud of their achievements and grateful to all at Downer for investing in the crew.



**See the story on facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/connectabilityaustralia/videos/541051136323821/>

**Scan QR code to go to link**





*Our craft group came up with doorstops that are functional and attractive to keep ConnectAbility doors open*

# Our Senior Management Team

## **David Carey** CEO

Over the past 20 years I have been involved in the community services sector. I first became involved when I moved from nursing into managing a supported employment service for people with a disability. This was my first exposure to working with people with a disability and a life changing appreciation of what hurdles had to be overcome in order for those with a disability to be accepted as equals in Australian society.

I have worked in aged care as part of a team who commissioned a new 90 bed facility. I set up a state wide out of home care service working with children and foster carers to provide safe and nurturing environments for children to grow up in. Most of my time has been in disabilities and working towards improving access and the quality of services for participants and families. For those in this area of work including me, it's about making a positive difference in people's lives, that's why we choose to work in this sector. Merging with Connected Communities has allowed us to broaden our services in; aged care, children, family and adolescents counselling, multi-cultural services and a community hub.

With the advent of the National Disability Insurance Scheme a greater focus has been placed on participants and families to truly individualise services they receive and how and when they receive those services. ConnectAbility has worked closely with families and participants through the NDIS trial period to ensure continuity of service through each transition. Services cannot be delivered without a cohesive team, from the committee of management, to staff, volunteers, managers and office staff and many thanks for your commitment to providing these much needed services to the community.

## **Scott Harvey** Operations Manager

Scott has been with ConnectAbility for over 20 years. Scott has worked across many roles with ConnectAbility and was appointed as Operations Manager in 2010. Scott has overseen the successful transition of ConnectAbility to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and ensured the continued growth of the services diversification in service delivery and development.

### **Scott said of his role**

Our primary focus still continues to be to create opportunities for people to achieve their dreams, goals and identify further aspirations as their independence, confidence and control grows.

Our roles continue to be challenged by the changing sector and marketplace and it is motivating to come to work every day to see the hard work, dedication and value being added by our frontline staff, management team and operational staff support in the light of constant change contributing to making ConnectAbility sustainable and continuing to be seen as a provider of choice within the disability sector.

## **Bridget Noonan** Manager & Community Development worker

Bridget Noonan has been the Manager of Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre for 6 years and has worked in the community development field for 14 years. She has a social science degree and a Certificate 4 in Frontline Management.

### **Bridget provided the following insights into her role**

At Jesmond we are lucky to have a team of dedicated and skilled workers who respond to the varied community members who come into our centre on a daily basis. Our team support many people from the Western part of Newcastle with services that address the full gamut of early intervention community based needs that local people present with. We have a particular focus on the wellbeing of children and adolescents and are known in the sector for running innovative arts programs for disadvantaged or at risk children and adolescents.

## **Kathryn Watts** Manager Community Aged Care

Kathryn commenced with ConnectAbility in November 2016 with the scope to build and develop the Aged Care division of the organisation. Kathryn has a Bachelor of Health, Ageing and Community Services, Diploma of Management and Cert IV in Mental Health and over 16 years' experience working in a variety of roles within the Aged Care sector from Support Worker, Case Manager, and then moving into Management and Senior Management positions.

With the Ageing population high on the Government's agenda there has been and will continue to be many changes to the Aged Care system. Advising our customers on a daily basis on what is available and how to access services is a key component of our day to day practice.

# Valuing Education

Learning can be fun

## Belinda's story

At ConnectAbility we value learning new skills and achieving goals and dreams.

Belinda has a love of animals and wants to work with them to help them have a great life.

To help her move towards her goal Belinda recently completed a Certificate of Participation in Outreach Animal Care 2018 at Hunter TAFE NSW.

This is a great achievement and Belinda has been involved in basic animal handling, food handling and preparation and gained a basic understanding of animal behaviours. Belinda now volunteers as an assistant grooming attendant.



## Chris's story

Congratulations Chris, another customer who has achieved an education goal this financial year. Chris completed his cert 111 in Sound Production and Technology. A fantastic effort and he is now planning to complete his cert 1v.



# We Support ConnectAbility

**Why are supporters so important to ConnectAbility, what outcomes are achieved through their involvement and, why should you become involved?**

## Woolies Warabrook

ConnectAbility like to offer our customers as many experiences as possible and to be able to participate in community activities. One of the things many people enjoy is a “disco” where they can gather with other people with a disability for an enjoyable day of music, dance, friends and food.

Woolworths Warabrook has been instrumental in ensuring these days continue by donating sausages and bread for the “Sausage Sizzle” at the discos this year. This donation has meant costs for individuals have been kept to a minimum and more people have been able to be accommodated. A big thank you for their community involvement and making sure that people with a disability get to share a great experience.



## Newcastle Office Interiors (NOI)

Newcastle Office Interiors (Building innovative workspaces) won the tender to build our new spaces at Warabrook for we are very thankful as the outcomes has surpassed expectation.

Normally, following completion of a job the builders would have left site to commence other projects across the Hunter. Not Jock and his team at NOI. They have kept in contact with ConnectAbility and continue to be available to assist us with mundane maintenance tasks or new building issues which crop up. This might be changing a door, fixing some plaster work or advising on space issues. This is often done as a donation from the company. Having this support has meant that our time can be focused on supporting customers—not building works. They have become part of the ConnectAbility family and understand the challenges of working on site at Warabrook and have taken the time to get to know many of the customers—especially those that love to see what is being completed. Not only have they produced a beautiful building specially designed for us but have made a lasting relationship with many of our customers and their support has had a huge impact on how we are able to support customers and families.



# *We Support ConnectAbility*

Ambassador Locksmiths

Bernie Garrett

BNI Chapters Newcastle

Callaghan College students and teachers

Commonwealth Bank—Colin Law and Danielle McCosker

Concept BSG

ConnectAbility Committee of Management

Debra Morgan

Dynamic Business Technologies

Electrical Trades Union

Ethos Health

Go with the Flow Air Conditioning

Hunter Arts Network

Cromwell Cleaning P/L

Helen Dunkerley—Ceramic teacher

Hunter Residences, Stockton, Management and staff

Jenny Kimbley—kaleidaskin

Jezweb team

Kane from Blue Toro Mobile Mechanics

Kathryn Charlesworth

Kent Woodcock, Kent Woodcock Creative Solutions

Kerry Houghton - Jim's Carpet Cleaning

Leslie Potter

Linda Miller

Markey Insurance

Maroba Aged Care—Residents, staff and families

Monika Sewell

Newcastle Community Arts Centre

Newcastle City Council

Newcastle Office Interiors

Newcastle University—Forum Gym

NSW Communities, Sport and Recreation

Powell Electrical— Andrew Powell

DABS Plumbing

Rob Prosser

Ross Gleghorn from AA kilns

Smallman Security

Sue McKinnon

Southern Cross Austereo—NXFM & KOFM

Superior Pest Management

The Forum

Titan Graphics

Unity Building Solutions—Mick O'Shea

Yvonne Mullane—YCM Photography

Wheelchair Rugby League NSW

WHO Printing Newcastle

# ConnectAbility in the Community

## Return and Earn

ConnectAbility customer Adrian is always involved in what is going on in his community.

He and his support workers saw an opportunity for him to be able to be more involved through the Government's Return and Earn program. Flyers were delivered to the businesses around ConnectAbility letting them know that we would be happy to recycle the bottles and cans that were filling their recycling bins following staff meals.

Adrian now takes these items to our local Return and Earn Centre and carefully puts each item through. Funds then go to ConnectAbility for use in activities for customers.

Not only does it stop our landfills being inundated with recyclable material but assists ConnectAbility in being able to offer additional activities and resources to the people we support. Adrian does a fantastic job and loves to interact with the generous businesses that leave their materials with us—especially the team at Aecom Warabrook.





# Jesmond - Into The Future

## Meeting Community Needs

The spaces at Jesmond are multi functional and on any given day a visit to the centre showcases the multicultural background of the area. Manager Bridget Noonan continues to look at how the centre can support individuals and groups and be an important hub for all community members.

During school holidays young people access sports or fun activities promoting health and fitness outcomes.

Jesmond continues to provide Adolescent and Family counselling supporting young individuals and their families through a variety of personal traumas and issues. This service often has referrals made by schools and other health professionals. The outcomes have supported the young people to include strategies and has lifted self esteem and given leadership skills.

Jesmond is also a hub for the community activities. A Harmony festival was held in April this year where different cultural groups were represented and showcased food, dancing and dress.

The centre also provides classes and activities that assist people of all ages learn new skills especially those who have recently settled in Australia. English and computer classes to assist people access job opportunities through writing resumes and updating computer skills.

A volunteer from the University of Newcastle has been on hand to support people to find a work placement.

Our onsite playgroup continues to support the healthy development of the next generation and gives mums the chance to have adult conversations and share stories and the challenges of parenting while playing with their children.

The hall has been hired for a variety of functions from birthday parties to our regular Friday Friendship Group. It is a space that connects to an outdoor playground and is often used by families looking for a large space to get together.



# Thank You - Hannah

## Work Experience - Learning What Makes an Organisation Tick

Hannah has been volunteering with ConnectAbility over the past year learning work place skills to add to her resume. A delightful young lady who has been a pleasure to have as part of the team.

She has even been cheery when we delegated a huge amount of scanning that needed to be completed - not a favourite task!

We have been thankful to have her with us and look forward to supporting her to further her career in the future

**A big thank you from ConnectAbility**

### Support Us - Together we can achieve anything!

If you are an individual or business and would like to make a real difference for people living in our community please call our reception and talk to Margaret on 4962 1000 to discuss the many ways you may be able to assist. This could be through direct supports, volunteering, staff giving or sharing your skills, passions and expertise.

**We would love to hear from you!!**



# About ConnectAbility

ConnectAbility Australia was founded in 1992 by a group of community members and families to meet the needs of people with significant disabilities to provide opportunities to access community based resources, facilities and services. In 2015, a decision was made to diversify and grow the organisation to provide supports and opportunities to other groups within the community and a merger between ConnectAbility and Jesmond Connected Communities was completed. In 2017 ConnectAbility were successful, along with their consortium partners in securing the tender for transfer of government accommodation services to the not for profit sector in addition to the homes ConnectAbility have and plan to bring on board during 2018.

We now provide a broad range of personalised supports to older community members, children and young people and people with disabilities. ConnectAbility participants reside throughout Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland and other Lower Hunter local government areas.

Our approach is personal, flexible and centred on the person. Whether you are attending one of our Friendship Groups as an older person, a playgroup, community education sessions, or are a person with a disability looking to achieve goals and dreams ConnectAbility will work with you and, should you choose, those closest to you to ensure you achieve your goals.

Dependent on your requirements, ConnectAbility can assist people with in-home personal care and domestic assistance, shopping and meal preparation, assistance with medication management, social supports and respite

care both in-home and in the community. We look at creating meaningful relationships and true inclusion for people within the community. There are a number of community education and support opportunities offered such as language classes, vacation programs for school children, and youth and family counselling.

Whether you are looking to live independently, undertake further education and training, volunteer work or recreational activities using local facilities such as libraries, parks, gyms, shopping centres and other recreational venues ConnectAbility can work with individuals to address any barriers that exist for people being able to achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations.

We actively seek community and corporate supports and partners to further enhance opportunities and outcomes.

ConnectAbility Australia is a not for profit incorporated association, and is registered as a gift deductible recipient with tax charity concessions. We are governed by a Board consisting of volunteer community and consumer representatives. This report reviews our activities and operations for 2017/2018. Many of our supporters have had input into the information in the report and have allowed their photos to be used and we are grateful for their contributions. It is also a celebration of the achievements of the individuals and families who use our services and we thank all of them for allowing us to use their photos and share their stories in this report. Additional copies of this report can be obtained from our office, website or by contacting us by e-mail, phone or post.

# Farewells

**We remember those we lost  
but still hold in our hearts.**

**We hope that the families continue  
to think of ConnectAbility  
as part of their family.**

## Contact Us

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*We are very appreciative of all of the help and support that we receive throughout the year from individuals, families, corporate and community supporters*