



# 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.



# ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

# WELCOME

## From the Chair and CEO

**W**elcome to the ConnectAbility Annual Report of 2016—2017 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.

This year has seen an enormous amount of growth and change for ConnectAbility. After a three year trial and one year of full scale roll out our disability services became 100% transitioned to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This is an historic moment in the life of ConnectAbility as for nearly 25 years we delivered disability support through Ageing Disability and Homecare in NSW. It is no mean feat to achieve this under a very different operating environment with an extreme amount of challenges to change and adjust to during the trial and full scale roll out. I would like to thank our staff and management team for staying true to our mission, nimble and resilient as we headed into the unknown.

Homecare has gone through radical change with Consumer Directed Care (CDC) being introduced in late February, with similar principles to NDIS in that it is person centred. To this end ConnectAbility applied for and received accreditation to provide Homecare. As we support a number of older customers this will enable us to continue to do this through Homecare community support model.

Our leadership training program has been rolled out to frontline staff through the development of online learning modules through our association with Foundation Leadership. The modules of; Leadership, Customer Service and Communication will be a vital part of on boarding new staff and refreshing current staff learning in a customer centred environment.

After 22 years of providing a needle exchange program at our Neighbourhood centre this community service was closed with a view to aligning our funded program to early intervention in the children's support space. A successful "Through My Eyes" photography course was run by The Jesmond Neighbourhood centre staff and I was delighted to present the certificates and photographs to the young ladies involved in the course. Presenting at the Newcastle Art Gallery was a fitting venue for

presentation night.

Our Art program continues to evolve with our professional art services being provided to a number of Aged Care facilities in and around Newcastle. I attended a number of Art exhibition openings by our most talented participant. With most of the paintings on offer being sold that night in a standing room only facility. I would like to thank TAFE for their involvement in the "Shoe Box" story project. Some very entertaining short animation stories were put together by our participants and TAFE partners. I had the pleasure of a joint presentation with Maroba at the annual Regional Australian Aged Services Association on our art program working with dementia residents, which has had great outcomes.

This year we commenced two inaugural major fundraisers – Wine and Dine for Disability and our Golf Day Fundraiser. Both were a resounding success and I would personally like to thank the generosity of our corporate partners in raising much needed funds and having some serious fun while doing so.

This year ConnectAbility supported the women's Surfest along with 84 other crowd funded business. It was great to see women's surfing take its rightful place in Newcastle and part of the world surfing tour event. Our customers got to meet world surfing legends up close and it was the talk of ConnectAbility for weeks.

ConnectAbility's search for a new home came to fruition with signing a ten year lease with the ETU for their facilities at 26 Warabrook Boulevard, Warabrook. This gives us three times the space as we had and allows for further capacity to grow and implement new programs and activities.

If moving is not bad enough we also needed to build a new customer area within the building.

With thanks to Newcastle Office Interiors we were able to build an area twice the size of our previous space and in a short time frame. We are rightly proud of the results and being able to provide a generous modern space for our growing customer group.

I would like to acknowledge the passing of Frank Bates our long term Committee of Management member and passionate supporter of ConnectAbility since its earliest days. To his wife Mary and family we extend our gratitude for Frank's involvement in our service over the years and to the broader community. Frank's generous donation to our service will be put to great use in the years to come.

ConnectAbility supported a number of other providers to assist them to transition to the NDIS. Providers both big and small from Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.

ConnectAbility is well along the process to change its legal status from an incorporated association to a Company limited by guarantee. NSW Department of Fair Trading has approved our request and we are now waiting on a response from ASIC. By being a company limited by guarantee means we can operate outside of the NSW borders.

This year I was re-elected by the NSW members of our peak body – National Disability Services to serve another three year term representing our members to the National Disability Insurance Agency. This year I served on the Newcastle Business club committee and in that capacity was able to bring the Honourable Minister for Disabilities – Ray Williams to the March luncheon to speak on the NDIS rollout and impact on the Hunter.

I would like to thank the staff, volunteers and managers of ConnectAbility for their support in the past year with a special thank you to the Committee of Management for supporting our vision in the coming years for ConnectAbility.

As Chair and CEO we would like to thank the members of the Committee of Management and the members of the various sub committees who so generously give their time, expertise and support to the organisation.

In addition to attending Committee meetings members have attended events and provided professional support to individuals and the organisation.

As always we wish to thank the management and staff of Departments of Social Services, Aged Care Programs, Family and Community Services, and Family and Community Services, Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) for their support and assistance during the year. Their contributions and dedication to assisting providers such as ConnectAbility allow us to remain focused on achieving positive customer

outcomes.

We also thank the Management and staff of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). They are delivering positive outcomes for our customers and families and working with us to maximise opportunities.

Most of all we would like to thank our customers, families, stakeholders, supporters and partners who place in us their faith and trust that we will support strengths, maintain and develop independence, showcase and enhance the abilities of those we support, keep community contacts alive and make dreams realities. It is with joy that we celebrate the significant achievements of those we support and look forward to joining you and your families in the adventures of the year ahead.

Nathan Franks, Chair Committee of Management and David Carey, CEO

## FINANCIAL RESULTS 2016/2017

For our full 2016/2017 Audited Statements and Treasurers Report please go to the ConnectAbility website and click on the Resources tab.

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



Scan with a QR reader on your smartphone to view video





46 Hudson Street



18 MuRRAY St Reet H AMilton







# FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS ...











# CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

**C**onnectAbility began in 1992 when a group of families, each with an adult child who had significant disabilities found that there were few options for their children to connect and be part of the local community.

At the time their thoughts were about being able to get out of the house and do simple community activities. They could not achieve their dream on their own and applied for a grant and looked for support. The grant was approved and Newcastle University came on board. Professor Frank Bates was appointed to our Committee of Management and stayed there until he retired due to ill health—more about Frank and his generous legacy later.

In the beginning there were 10 people looking to our 4 staff for support. We still have some of those staff and customers at ConnectAbility today proving we are meeting individual needs and community expectations. Our name at the time was Newcastle and Hunter Community Access.

Our first premises was a small house located at 18 Murray Street Hamilton and at the time seemed more than enough to operate both a customer space and administration area. Soon though we needed to move....

Our next premises was in King street opposite Marketown but again ConnectAbility continued to grow and we were soon looking for larger premises.

Our then Chair of our Committee of Management, Laurel Lambert and the ConnectAbility staff came across Hudson Street in Hamilton. Two adjoining factory units with 10 parking spaces. The owners assisted in fitting out the buildings and the art group made changes to the bare walls. This was when we made the decision to change our name to ConnectAbility to better reflect the services we offered and our commitment to inclusion. TAFE students assisted in the development of our logo.

For the next 10 years this was home to the growing number of customers and staff. In 2017 we were supporting over 400 people with a staff of 150. The walls were closing in. Despite having what was thought of as a huge area when people first came to

ConnectAbility in 2007 it had become apparent that there were flaws in the premises.

The carpark had become more and more congested and dangerous as vehicles tried to maneuver in the tight shared carpark. ConnectAbility customers and other community members needed to watch for the vehicles reversing or turning as they moved into the different buildings. We could not fit our fleet into the carpark meaning they were parked on the street causing further congestion in the area. Staff had difficulty finding parking.

Inside the spaces caused escalating behaviour as during peak times of attendance the noise and proximity of other people caused increased stress levels and anxiety. The spaces to retreat too were already occupied. The kitchen area had been fitted with an accessible kitchen from funds raised through Dine Out For Disability supported by the Newcastle and Hunter Australian Hotels Association (AHA). Unfortunately classes had to be scheduled for when there were less people in the building as it was the only place for others to gather to eat or undertake activities. We needed an alternate kitchen/dining configuration.

The garage had already been converted to an art space but despite the air-conditioning and ceiling installation the space could only accommodate a small number of budding artists at any time. The kiln could not be turned on as it needed appropriate housing and wheelchairs needed to be placed in certain positions so others could move around the room.

WiFi was problematic due to the building configuration and leaks meant that water often dripped through the ceiling in both buildings.

We needed to move. So the search began, and our criteria was fixed which made it a complex and almost year long search. We needed;

- Everything on one level for disability supports —or the space for a lift
- Close to train/bus as possible
- Larger spaces for our customers with park accessible



# OF GROWTH WITH CONNECTABILITY

- Safer spaces
- Off-street parking for the fleet and visitors
- Affordable rent
- As close as possible to Newcastle



Many properties were viewed and discounted. We originally viewed the Warabrook property early in the search but were advised soon after viewing that the owners had already found tenants. When we were contacted by the Electrical Trade Union (ETU) to say that their original tenant had pulled out and were we still interested it was a quick—yes we were. Negotiations done, contracts signed and builders engaged we commenced on the biggest project ConnectAbility has ever undertaken.

The customer space is a whopping 860sqm of space broken up to provide separate areas for people to learn new skills, enjoy activities or to find quieter spaces.

- The rooms are bigger,
- The flooring hardwearing
- Circulation space is larger
- Toilets are bigger and more accessible for customers and the staff that may need to assist them
- Carpark is safer and public transport is close

To future proof the building for future growth we have installed a structural ceiling. This means that should we need additional space in the years to come we can build upstairs. There is space for additional stairs and for a lift. The colours are brighter and we have some future green space coming. There is even a home for the kiln.

Our first day of support saw a bbq and cake being shared and people enjoying our new home.

A formal opening and celebration of our 25 years will be held early in the New Year so that our customers and staff from our newest business area can join us.

We have already welcomed Aged Care and Community supports into ConnectAbility through the merger with Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre. This has allowed us the privilege of supporting many different groups of people at Jesmond who take part in child and family activities, counselling, educational and recreational programs. We hope to be able to redevelop the building with the assistance from Newcastle City Council so that we can host more activities to meet the increasing need of the community.

Jesmond has a large population of people who have settled in the area from overseas and have challenges relating to learning a new language and gaining skills to allow them to find work and meet new friends so that they can develop community relationships and feel included members of the community. With the Governments focus on children the redevelopment will assist us to provide additional activities in an appropriate setting.

The Aged Care Team is now operating from our new premises at Warabrook meaning that we can assist in the growth of providing more people aged over 65 the ability to stay independent and in their own homes. Providing domestic assistance, in home respite and support to get to appointments and shopping allows people the dignity and choice of choosing how they want to live their lives as they age and their needs change. In 2017 many older people no longer have family close by to help them and ConnectAbility are proud to be able to support them.

With our success in gaining accreditation to provide support for people assessed at needing all levels of care we have begun to see an increasing number of people looking for supports to avoid moving directly to residential aged care at this time in their lives. Some have increasing frailty or dementing diseases and ConnectAbility is now able to ensure that they can stay at home.



## WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM FRIENDS



The transfer of ADHC services is a monumental change to how residential services are provided for many people and their families. ConnectAbility has worked closely with ADHC to ensure a smooth transition for everyone. While we know that there will be challenges ahead we are looking forward to the opportunity of building new relationships.

Photos - Left: the team from Unity Building Solutions who completed our kitchens

Below: Alvaro Lopez and Brandon Sheppard from Newcastle Office interiors and the team from Advanced Warehouse Structures. They got us off the ground.

On 1 December 2017 we will welcome residents, families and staff from the transfer of ADHC group homes to the not for profit sector. This came about as a result of a joint tender with Ability Options, ConnectAbility and Finding Yellow who formed a consortium - Hunter Valley Disability Services. The success will mean that ConnectAbility can provide support in the homes of people with a disability and provide new and different opportunities for people to be a part of their communities.







**Garner Excavations** came to fix a sewer problem.

They saw we needed a cleared space behind the building for a future greenspace and donated their time and equipment to seeing the job completed.

A generous show of community spirit. Thank you to Garner Excavations.











## WHO CAN -THE COMMONWEALTH BANK CAN

**G**one are the days where your Bank was a place you crept into to ask for a home loan.

The Commonwealth Bank Newcastle is committed to providing outcomes for their communities. In 2016 Colin Law, *Executive Manager Business Banking SME* identified that ConnectAbility could use some assistance to raise funds to support and enhance programs and projects. He understood that additional funds would ensure the people who come to ConnectAbility are able to achieve their goals and dreams.

The Commonwealth Bank have 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.

**Wine and Dine for Disability** was born.

The concept was to engage the support of the corporate sector. The idea was to create lasting relationships rather than a one off event.

Colin and his team organised for four of the top Hunter Chefs, wineries and TAFE to support an event where members of the public came together at 48 Watt Street to enjoy a night of extraordinary food and wine. All funds raised went directly to ConnectAbility.

Everyone who was asked to participate on the night were overwhelmingly supportive and enthusiastically took part.

The Commonwealth Bank Team provided a range of supports for the night including covering some costs and inviting guests to the night.

Wines were matched with the food and the TAFE Hospitality students capably provided front of house.

Over 100 members of the community attended the inaugural event in the newly established 48 Watt Street venue.

The evening was a huge success with over \$12,000.00 raised on the night.

From the funds raised ConnectAbility has been able to ensure our fleet was out on the road getting people into their communities.

ConnectAbility have also been able to update resources used in the programs and activities people undertake. This includes new sensory room items and equipment to learn new skills.

The night was so successful that the Commonwealth Bank agreed that the event will run again in 2017. This time it is anticipated that there will be more people looking to secure a ticket. All the chefs and winemakers are also 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.
- 48 Watt Street owners and staff
- TAFE Hospitality Students and Teachers
- Our 4 wonderful Chefs;

Andy Wright from the Cellar

Mark Hosie from Rustica

Chris Thornton from Restaurant Mason

Tom Robinson formally from Bacchus

- Winemakers;

Deiuliis Wines

Tullochs wines

- 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.

ConnectAbility would love to think that this could 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 2017 and beyond.









# BUILDING OUR COMMUNITIES - ADOLESCENT & FAMILY COUNSELLING

**T**he Adolescent & Family Counsellors Jenni and Lindy have been increasing their expertise in working with our most vulnerable clients, young people and families who have experienced significant trauma. This training has provided both counsellors with a fresh approach to working therapeutically with clients presenting with severe trauma from both childhood and later in life.

Specialised training over the past three years with international speakers in the field of Neurobiology and Complex Trauma included;

- Dr Dan Siegel – Interpersonal Neurobiology
- Dr Bethany Brand - Overcoming Trauma Related Shame & Self-Loathing
- Dr Janine Fisher, Assessing and Treating Complex Trauma
- Dr John Briere - Processing and Moving Beyond Complex Trauma
- Dr Susan Hart - Working with Complex Trauma & Disorganised Attachment in Children, Adults & Families

The counsellors are also currently completing further training in The Master Series in Treating Trauma.

Raising awareness of Domestic & Family Violence is an area that the counsellors are very passionate about and have trained in Responses to Children Affected by Family Violence and Implications for Parenting additional to running Safe Relationship groups at Jesmond and facilitation of the Love Bites program within local High Schools. The counsellors also facilitate the Cybersafety Group at Jesmond, teaching awareness online with young people aged 11 – 14 years.

The counselling program was pleased to be able to fund and co-facilitated the 'This Is Me' group, an 8 week program using photography as a vehicle to build awareness and resilience around self-esteem, positive body image and self-identity. Training in Body Esteem Education and Working with Diversity in Gender Identity & Expression was central in developing the program content. A number of the counsellor's clients attended this program and the final exhibition of the young people's photography was exhibited at The Newcastle Art Gallery.

Additionally recent facilitator training in Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (Youth DBT), teaching skills in self-regulation and reducing emotional dysregulation along with the above specialist training has resulted in many substantial positive outcomes for clients.

## Anxiety Support Group

The monthly Anxiety Support Group at Jesmond has exponentially grown in numbers over the past year. This is due to the identified increase in rates of Anxiety related Disorders and due to the groups positive reputation, with feedback from the NSW Mental Health Director, from group participants and carers. Enquiries about this group have come from as far as the USA seeking support for family members in NSW.





NEWCASTLE  
SAYS  
YES!



## SPORT - A WAY TO INCLUSION

**A** story from one of our families

Our children Tinevimbo and Germane arrived in Australia for the first time from Zimbabwe in December 2015. Though they travelled together with us, Jacob had been in Australia since July 2014. He came to pursue studies in social work at the University of Newcastle. When Germane and Tine (shortcut for Tinevimbo) came, they enrolled at Heaton Public School in year 1 and 4 respectively. Because we did not use English language that frequently in Zimbabwe, Germane and Tine found it hard to interact at school and in the community. Although the school supported them to overcome this challenge, we decided to join the Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre children's sports program that runs on Thursdays after school. There, they met friends and not only improved their English language use, but also their sporting skills. Germane developed interest in soccer and later joined a team at Jesmond Football Club. Although he is not yet competitive, Germane has gained valuable skills in the sport. Tinevimbo tried soccer at the Club, but the game was too fast for her. She enjoys gymnastics, art and cricket.

Our children have greatly improved their English language skills, and this has helped a lot in their learning and social interaction. We do not hesitate to recommend the Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre children's sports program to other families who have backgrounds similar to ours.

Jacob & Chiedza Mugumbate





# HARMONY DAY - UNITING A COMMUNITY

Harmony Day is a National Day celebrating multiculturalism promoting tolerance and belonging. Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre celebrates this day each year.

Manager Bridget Noonan said “Harmony Day is a great event that brings together the newest Australians with the established community. It promotes tolerance and acceptance and gives a richness of diversity to our community”



# COORDINATION OF SUPPORTS EQUALS ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS

**T**he 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 peoples 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 persons

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.

Kelly, Mel and Teneille love the challenge of looking for opportunities to match the right services with the need of the individual. They are able to assist with ensuring appointments are met, supports provided and specialised services sourced. This could be accommodation needs, transport, daily support activities or one off therapeutic requirements being made available.

This part of ConnectAbility's business is separated from the daily disability support environment to ensure people are able to get independent advice, choose the right provider of services for them and provide honest and open feedback.

There have already been successful linkages made through the coordination of supports leading to enhanced outcomes and better life choices for individuals.









# Kebabs

Chicken or Lamb

**\$10**



# Bolani

Beef or Vegetarian

**\$10**



# Haider Afghan Food



## Kebabs

## Bolani





# JESMOND-BUILDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

## A new country and a new business

Habiba Mehraban is a talented caterer and local resident in Jesmond who Jesmond has supported to set up a new business- Haider Afghan Food.

Habiba who has a history of cooking in restaurants in Afghanistan was motivated to start up a markets food stall and catering business. Habiba was supported by STARTTS to do her food handling certificate and she also undertook a small business short course for migrants run by Newcastle City Council.

Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre then supported Habiba in getting her business out there and known by the local community through marketing strategies , promotional materials and through providing opportunities for work.

Habiba's first food stall selling Kebab's and Bolani (similar to gozleme) was held at our Jesmond Harmony Day event in 2017. Habiba went great guns and sold out of food!

Jesmond has also hired Habiba to cater a number of other events and programs over the past year which has given her experience in quoting and estimating, communicating with the client and learning Australian portion sizes.

Supporting such a capable cook to make her way in the markets and catering world has been a pleasure and we look forward to seeing what Habiba does in the future with her food.

Australia is such a multicultural community where for many years we have embraced newcomers and the foods they bring with them.

This diversity has given us a richer culture and more opportunities.

Our newest settlers, many of them from Afghanistan or Syria will continue that tradition and we look forward to seeing Habiba succeed and achieve her goals.





## 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

It is not just ConnectAbility celebrating 25 years. We are lucky to also have staff who are still with the organisation and celebrating 25 years with ConnectAbility.

Michelle Tucker one of the first workers employed when the organisation commenced is still committed to ensuring outcomes are achieved for the people we support.

Michelle provided the following feedback on her career and why she has stayed with us for a quarter of a century.

***25 years with one organisation is amazing – what is it about ConnectAbility that has made you work for the organisation for that length of time***

When I first started at ConnectAbility the staff consisted of the Manager and two Support Workers. I think we had a total of 14 customers. Even back then the focus was on the people that we support, that hasn't changed. The ability of ConnectAbility to grow and still maintain the drive for positive outcomes for customers is something to be proud of. We have been lucky to have had supportive Management Committees and Service Manager's that have allowed growth without neglect of customers or staff. Staff have always been kept up to date on the direction of the service and encouraged to have input. This is a credit to ConnectAbility as large organisations sometimes neglect their ground staff.

The flexibility of being able to balance work and family life for me has made ConnectAbility a great place to work. It honestly doesn't feel like 25 years, every day at work is different and still enjoyable. Great colleagues and customers are the reason for this.

***ConnectAbility is growing and changing especially in 2017 as we commence accommodation – as a worker can you see both opportunities and challenges for staff***

How ConnectAbility has grown over the last 25 years is amazing. The dedication and hard work of both Management and staff has made it look easy, I'm sure it hasn't been at times. As we move forward it's exciting to think of the opportunities for both staff and customers. The addition of accommodation services will give staff another area in which they can show their skills and dedication.

***There have been many changes with how people with disabilities are supported over the years. What, for you have been the significant changes and what have you been glad to see gone***

The changes for people with a disability have been enormous. People who were silenced in the past have been given a voice. Previously people with a disability had to fit a particular service model in order to receive support. Now with the NDIS services have to adapt and change to meet customer needs and wants.

### ***Meeting expectations***

The fact that customers now have a say in how they are supported is great. As a worker, seeing a person with a disability achieve something that they didn't think was possible is the best reward. Community acceptance of people with a disability has definitely changed for the better. I'd like to think that ConnectAbility has played a role in this.

### ***What would you like to see in the future for people with disabilities***

One thing that I personally would like to see in the future is more choice for people with a disability on where and who they live with. For younger people to have the opportunity to move out of home if they wish and to have the support in place for them to succeed.

I thoroughly enjoy working at ConnectAbility. I enjoy spending time with both customers and colleagues. I can't say I'll be here in another 25 years, maybe 10 or 15 who knows. But I look forward to seeing what the next chapter ConnectAbility looks like.





# OUR STORIES - HOW THEY SHAPE US

## Building Long Lasting Relationships

ConnectAbility are proud of the relationships we build. It is through these relationships that we learn more about the individual and how we can help them achieve their goals and life choices. We celebrate those staff and community members who have supported individual customers which has led to better outcomes and a great working relationship.

Recently Jenny Kimbley from Kaleidaskin at Hamilton visited ConnectAbility to provide staff with free training on how to provide safe and enjoyable head and shoulder massage to people. It included how to assess peoples skin and any specific issues for an individual that could affect the outcome for the person. Jenny is undertaking a degree in Health Science - Dermal Therapy.

A great opportunity for staff to gain additional skills and for some of our customers to not only receive a massage but some thought they would give it a try and practised on staff.

A big thank you to Jenny from ConnectAbility.



## Hip Hop - Creating new music

A group of talented young people from CALD backgrounds recently commenced a Hip Hop workshop at Jesmond as part of our community engagement programs.

The group wrote and recorded their own songs and will also be putting together choreographed dance to the music. A great opportunity to provide younger people with activities that promote creativity, inclusion and skill enhancement—as well as just being good fun.



# A LEGACY - LIVE TO LEARN

## Professor Frank Bates

Frank was a much loved original Committee member and friend of ConnectAbility. He was instrumental in the commencement and growth of ConnectAbility to what it is today. Frank was known for his wit, calmness and for his enthusiasm for the work that we do. His law degrees and experiences, activities and the books that he wrote helped him support us for many years. He came to ConnectAbility as part of the establishment of the organisation.

Frank believed in life long learning and wanted to see everyone able to learn new skills. Along with his wife Mary, they continued to support learning until Frank sadly passed away from illness.

ConnectAbility were surprised and touched to find Frank had left ConnectAbility a bequest from his will. Knowing that we would soon be moving staff looked at what would be the best use of funds that would honour Professor Frank Bates and live up to his achievements in life.

We are establishing the **Professor Bates “Live to Learn”** program.

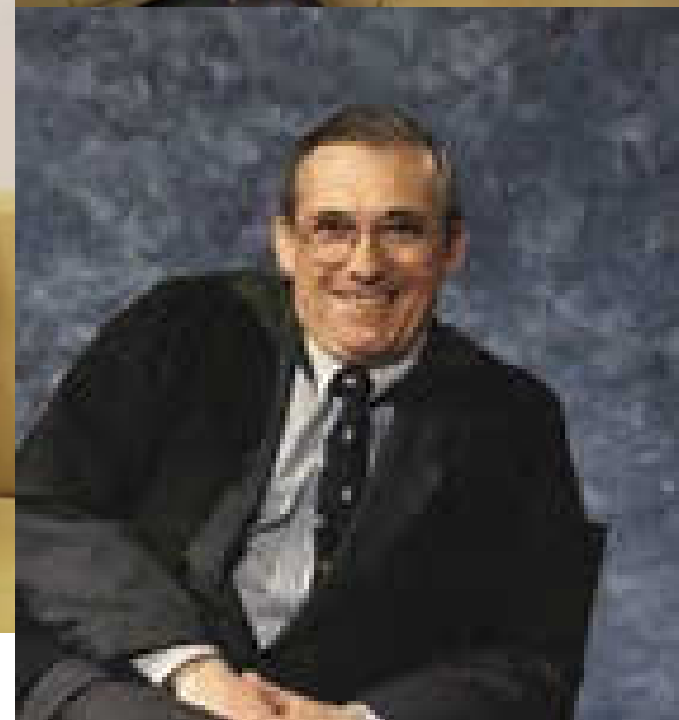
The people we support will benefit from the resources such as a smartboard, virtual reality systems and other learning tools. An example of use is the virtual reality system that allows people to shop and purchase grocery items, attend a concert or experience an underwater

world all in the safety of ConnectAbility.

The experiences can then be transferred to the real world and put into practice.

We think Frank would approve. More people learning additional skills and in a way that is fun and connects them to the community

Vale Frank.







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# A COMMUNITY IN ACTION - GOLF DAY 2017

**On the 10th March 2017** in the quiet of an early morning they came. Men and women armed with clubs to take on the challenge!

The challenge of a round of golf to support ConnectAbility that is. Arranged by some of the players ConnectAbility's first Golf Day emerged at Charlestown Golf Club. A special Thank You to Kerry Houghton from Jims Carpet Cleaning for all his assistance.

Nearly 100 players moved out onto the course full of enthusiasm for the quest to win prizes kindly donated by local businesses and to be the first ever champions.

Holes were sponsored and 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 buffet lunch.

The trivia questions at one of the holes proved challenging and saw many a player handicapped by where they needed to tee off from. The golf day not only supported ConnectAbility but was a great way for local businesses to connect.

Upon course completion many stayed to network and celebrate achievements from the day.

The Golf day raised much needed funds to enable ConnectAbility to provide supports to more people with a disability living in the Hunter.

People choose ConnectAbility to assist them to achieve their goals. These can be as simple as making some friends or as complex as learning enough skills to get a job and live independently. While funding is received to support individuals it is the "extras" in resources that ConnectAbility needs to find.

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 2 March 2018—call us if you are interested**





# OUR COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

## 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.

## Holly Martin

Holly Martin's professional career has spanned more than 13 years in in-house capacities as well as within consultancies. In 2012 she launched her own boutique consultancy, now called *The Marketing GP*.

She has a broad based range of experience, including in the NFP, aged care, information technology, engineering, industrial, professional services and manufacturing industries across both the public and private sectors. Holly is also the Publisher of local business news website, Hunter Headline.

## Anna Bailey

Anna Bailey is a Senior Associate Lawyer at Hall & Wilcox with over 10 years' experience in the legal industry including time spent in both the United Kingdom and Europe. Anna's experience extends to property law, commercial law and estate planning. She acts for some of the Hunters major institutions and private clients including the McCloy Group, Hunter Development Corporation and Port Stephens Council. Anna is also on the committee of the Newcastle Business Club.

## 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.

## David Bate - Retired at the 2016 AGM

David joined the CoM in 2010. Our thanks for sharing his leadership and commitment to ConnectAbility. His governance enabled ConnectAbility to assist others to achieve goals.

## Peter Coughlan - Retired at the 2016 AGM

Peter joined the CoM in 2011. His role as Treasurer left ConnectAbility in a strong position to take up new challenges. Our sincere thanks for his generosity to ConnectAbility.

# CONNECTABILITY SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

The Commonwealth Bank has supported sport wherever possible, it keeps people healthy and helps achieve dreams. It also unites our communities. In 2016 our local Commonwealth Bank met a need to keep funding alive for the Womens Pro surfing event.

Colin Law 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 WSL QS6000 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.

ConnectAbility support people to have inclusive lives in their communities doing what they love. We were invited to join other businesses in supporting Surfest 2017. This was a great opportunity for ConnectAbility and the people we support to directly participate in this community event. As a not for profit and registered charity many businesses would not have even asked us to be part of the crowdfunding initiative.

We are thankful that Colin Law sees past our meagre budgets and looks at our bigger picture. The small amount invested brought the achievement of goals and was a highlight for the people we support.

While ConnectAbility didn't have the "winning" surfer we think we did better. Everyone who attended had a great day. We had people down there nearly every day following the competition.

We also received promotion at the event as part of the initiative and attendance at promotional activities.

We look forward to participating again in 2018.





## SHARING OF WISDOM

On

Friday the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 members from the Tantrum

Youth Arts Group visited our Seniors at their Friday Friendship Club. Our customers and the team members participated in a workshop called “The Love Interviews” which ran for two hours from 10am – 12pm.

Tantrum is the leading professional youth arts company in the Hunter region. Tantrum develop new and innovative performing arts projects by facilitating collaborative partnerships within the community.

As part of the Grandparents Day 2017 funded by NSW Government Family and Community Services, Tantrum requested to visit the Friday Friendship Club to get to know the Seniors in the first instance and to then to ask two questions about love, and then the Senior’s had the same opportunity to ask questions of the younger person which lead into further discussions between both parties.

On this day our Senior’s were also celebrating Halloween and the Tantrum group were asked to join in the celebrations which all added to the day’s festivities. Some Staff, Volunteers and participants where dressed for the occasion and our Volunteers provided a lovely morning tea.

The workshop gave the Seniors the opportunity to contribute to the development of an original new play, and their words and wisdom may feature in Tantrum’s 2018 production.

The day recognised the contribution and knowledge of the elderly people in our community. Young people where engaged in robust conversation with the Seniors which fostered intergenerational learning and respect. Our Coordinator Kathy South reported that all those who participated in the Workshop and Halloween theme day thoroughly enjoyed the day and the time they all spent together.









# 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 5 years and has worked in the community development field for 13 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.



Pick our CEO David Carey who joined some of our customers as they celebrated Halloween



# VALUING SHARED MEMORIES

## Memories are Precious and should be acknowledged

### *A story from Elizabeth and Lissy*

At ConnectAbility there is a lot that we do as part of our work that involves more than just going to the park, participating in a social activity or supporting someone with shopping. A long time Connectability participant is the delightful Elizabeth from Port Stephens.

Her mother passed away two years ago and she is buried at the Kurri Kurri Cemetery. I asked her one day "if there was one thing she would really like to do what would that be". Elizabeth replied " To see the grave of my mother, father and two brothers"

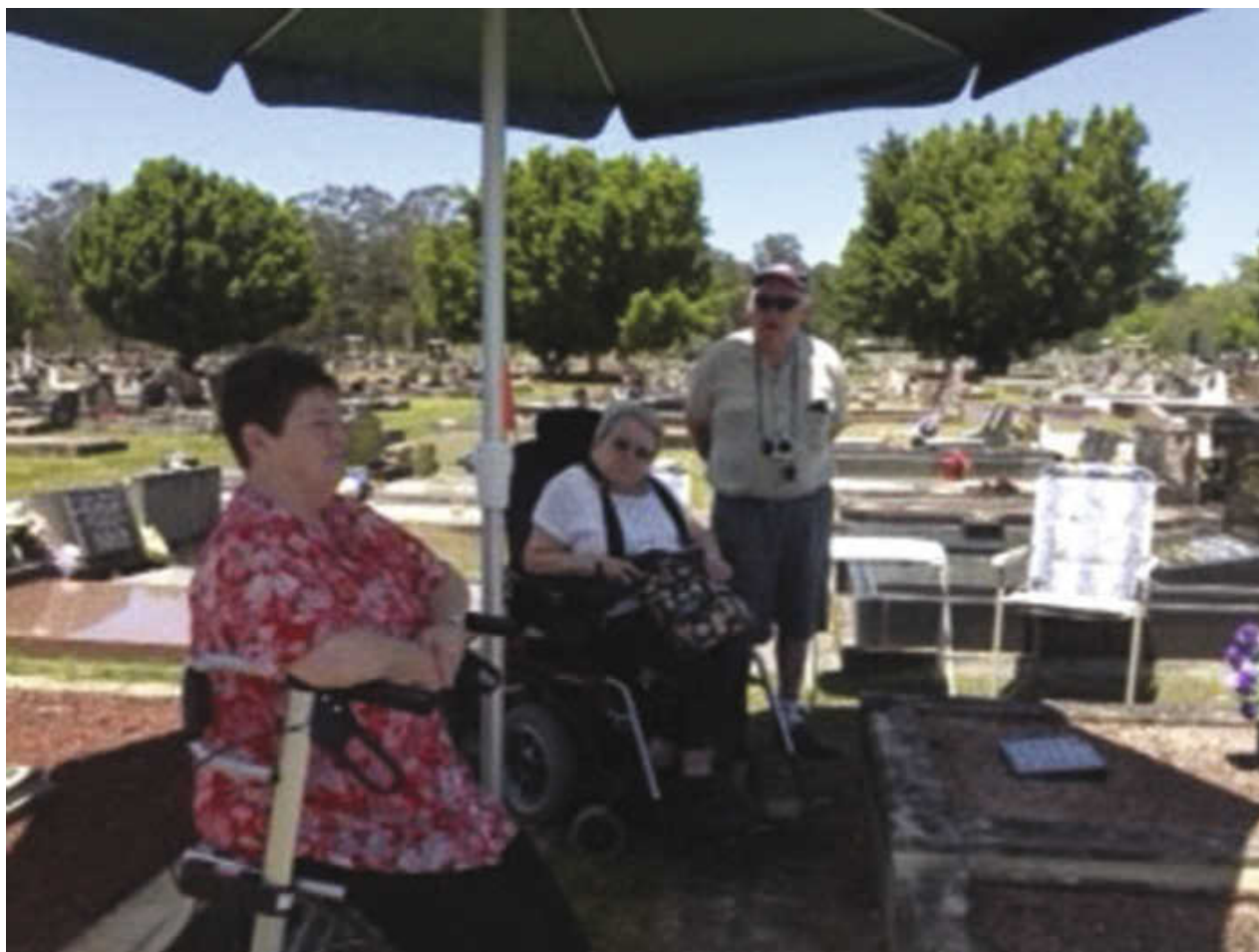
We all agreed that her request be fulfilled so at the end of last year her dream was realised. Her dear friends from Stanford Merthyr organised the cabana and chairs and were there to meet us when we arrived to keep her sun safe on her visit.

This trip meant a lot to Elizabeth and it gave her great peace of mind to see her families final resting place. The trip involved the pick up of a van on a Friday afternoon, the drive to Kurri and then returning the van on Sunday afternoon.

For most of us it is hard to comprehend the isolation of people in wheelchairs and when you realise the only way to get anywhere is in a wheelchair taxi where the cost would have been at least \$300 to \$400. if you live outside of the metropolitan areas.

Connectability is a wonderful supporter of people with a disability. Elizabeth is in the Active Ageing Program so is isolated by her disability, her age and her remote location at Fingal Bay.

It is my pleasure to support this wonderful woman. Lissy



# WE SUPPORT CONNECTABILITY

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

## **WHO Printing**

WHO Printing are well aware of the constraints ConnectAbility work within in relation to putting together printed materials. Each year they work with us to produce all the brochures, Annual reports or fact sheets that we utilise for our customers .

As part of their commitment to their community they also supply the materials and their skills and expertise at a discounted rate so that we can direct the savings into supporting our customers.

It is wonderful to have a corporate group committed to inclusion and equality within their community.



## **Thank you to Hunter Cleaning Group**

One of the most in demand toys this year were "fidget spinners". These sensory items become hot property across the state. ConnectAbility customers have had the pleasure of receiving them courtesy of Hunter Cleaning Group owner Fiona Morris. Fiona thought that the customers of ConnectAbility should be able to enjoy the same craze as the rest of the community and so donated a box full of the Fidget spinners in beautiful metallic colours. A great donation and very well received. Fiona understands that for many of the people supported by ConnectAbility there is little opportunity to purchase one themselves and wanted to see inclusion at a basic level for everyone. Thank you to Fiona and her team for supporting ConnectAbility. It is wonderful to see a business that acknowledges the importance of investing in their community.





# STORIES OF CONNECTABILITY IN THE COMMUNITY

## Mothers Day Flowers

The residents of **Maroba** Aged Care Facility who are part of ConnectAbility's Bright Stars Art program spent a beautiful morning creating these superb blooms for their Mothers Day display.

They looked wonderful decorating Maroba in the lead up to Mothers Day. A great job and I am sure brought back many memories of doing these at school for the Mothers Day stall.

Maroba and ConnectAbility continue to partner and develop new skills and regain lost ones through our Bright Stars Art Program.

Not only has it seen more families and community engagement within the facility but residents have found a hidden passion for art. This provides them with a non verbal way of connecting with their immediate surrounds and their past and future.

Maroba has been able to turn some of the works into cards they then sell as a fundraising activity . We thank the Management, Staff, families and especially the artists for allowing us to be a part of their lives through art.





Celebrating  
Change, Growth  
& Community





# JESMOND- INTO THE FUTURE

## Meeting Community Needs

Over the past 3 years it has become apparent that the Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre facilities are lacking in both size and design.

The corridors are narrow, meeting rooms small and not enough to meet need, and for specific cultural events there are not spaces for men and women to socialise separately.

Newcastle City Council inspected the premises and agreed that improvements would benefit the community but would need to look at available funds.

With the increase in refugee's and migrants settling in the Jesmond area over the past 4 years the centre has not been able to meet the demand for room hire from service providers or community members.

Most community members who live in the Jesmond area and use our centre are renters who live in apartments or small free standing houses. They require a larger public space to hold social, cultural and religious events.

The manager of our centre engaged with the local councillors and lobbied for resources to be spent on improving the building. The strategy was successful and a motion was passed unanimously.

We have also been speaking to Premiers and Cabinet about the opportunity to contribute funding to a facility that will provide long term benefits toward the successful

settlement of refugees and migrants. Discussions are underway about the design and cost of improvements but we hope to have some additional space in the next 2 years.

Improvements will mean that the additional requests for safe and appropriate spaces can be accommodated so that more activities can be held at Jesmond and meet the needs of a growing community.

Council discussed that they would appreciate seeing a concept from ConnectAbility on what we would like to see represented within a building at Jesmond.

Manager, Bridget Noonan has already had drawings prepared that, while not definitive plans can provide Council with options to commence the consultation process.

It is exciting to embark on the start of a new journey .





Advanced Warehouse Structures  
Aloojz and Margaret Novak  
Alistair Woodcock  
Ambassador Locksmiths  
Bernie Garrett  
BNI Chapters Newcastle  
Cardiff Toyota  
Charlestown Bowling Club  
Commonwealth Bank—Colin Law and Danielle McCosker  
Concept BSG  
ConnectAbility Committee of Management  
DFK Crosbie—Accountants & Business Advisors  
Disability Network Hunter  
Dynamic Business Technologies  
Electrical Trades Union—Paul Lister  
Ethos Health  
Garner Excavations  
Go with the Flow Air Conditioning  
Hunter Arts Network  
Hunter Cleaning Group  
Hunter Residences, Stockton, Management and staff  
Jenny Kimbley—kaleidaskin  
Kathryn Charlesworth  
Kent Woodcock, Kent Woodcock Creative Solutions  
Kerry Houghton - Jim's Carpet Cleaning  
Leslie Potter  
Linda Miller  
M&G Signs  
Markey Insurance  
NBN Television  
Newcastle Community Arts Centre  
Newcastle City Council

Newcastle Herald  
Newcastle Office Interiors—Jock Whyte, Brandon  
Sheppard and Alvaro Lopez  
Powell Electrical— Andrew Powell  
Ridgewell Plumbing  
Rob Prosser for our video and timelapse photography  
Smallman Security  
NSW Communities, Sport and Recreation

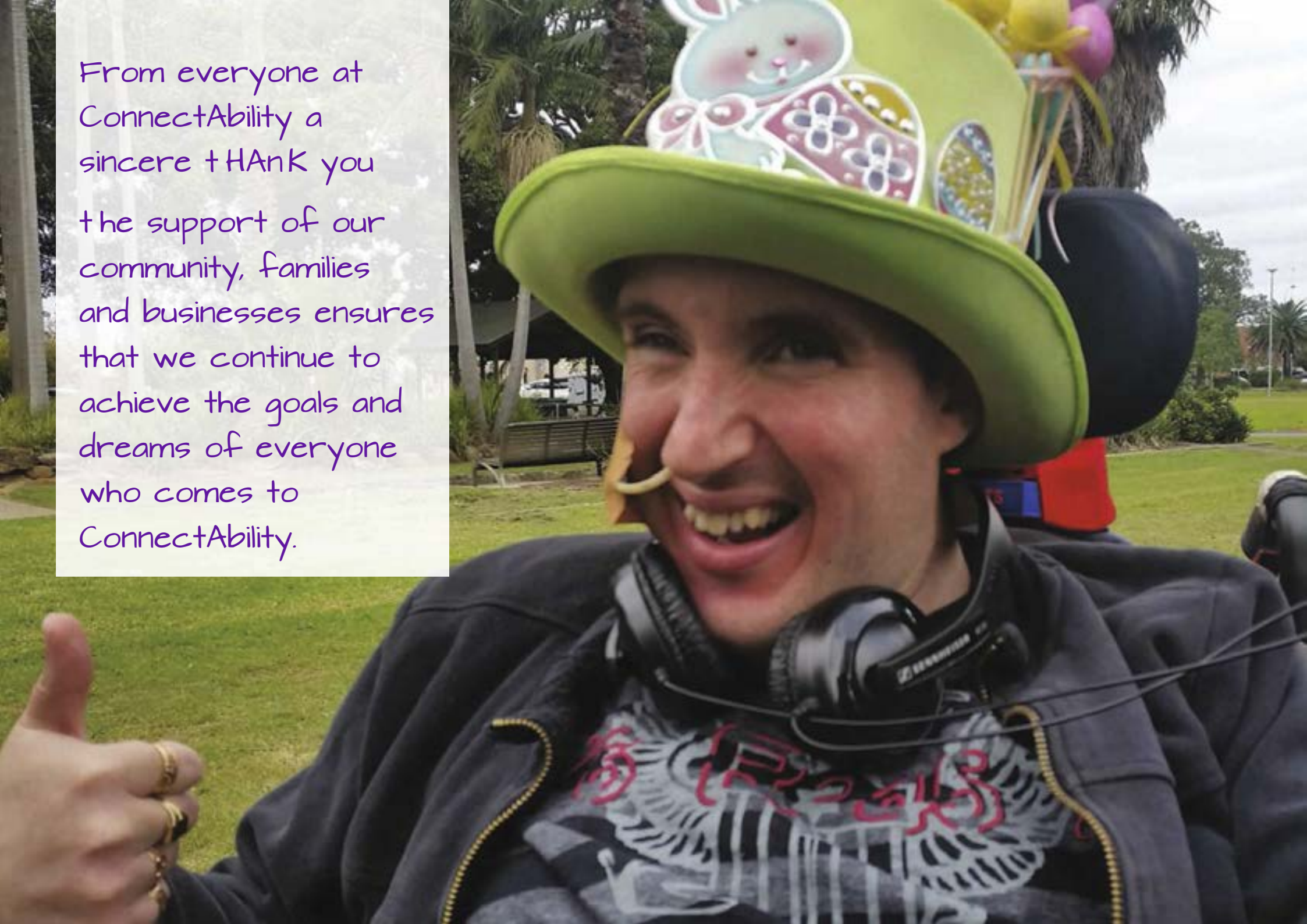
Southern Cross Austereo—NXFM & KOFM  
Sue McKinnon  
Superior Pest Management  
The Forum  
Unity Building Solutions—Mick O'Shea  
Yvonne Mullane—YCM Photography  
Wheelchair Rugby League NSW  
WHO Printing Newcastle

The 2016 Annual Hunter Arts Network Art Bazaar was a huge success for our Craft Group participants who hand made a collection of Christmas items for sale. The money earned from the sale of goods goes back to fund the activities of the program for the following year.

Thank you to all the staff and customers who were involved in making items and to Kim Roberts for organising and coordinating the event.



From everyone at  
ConnectAbility a  
sincere tHANK you  
the support of our  
community, families  
and businesses ensures  
that we continue to  
achieve the goals and  
dreams of everyone  
who comes to  
ConnectAbility.







# THANK YOU

## NICKIE

### EVERYONE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Nickie Potter loves to make sure everyone around her is “ok”

She is the first to check on any of her friends, or even the staff who may seem not their normal cheery selves. She also understands that it is important to give back to others.

This is why she volunteers with Lifeline in the Wallsend shop. Nickie loves helping stock the shelves and assisting people.

She was recently acknowledged for her efforts during Volunteer Week.

Everyone is very proud of this young lady who has volunteered over the last couple of years to make peoples lives brighter.

### **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!!**

## FAREWELLS

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

Rohan McKinnon

Joyce Goulding

Dulcie Jones

Tony Flinn (staff member)

## CONTACT US

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E-mail: [contact@connectabilityaus.org.au](mailto:contact@connectabilityaus.org.au)  
Web: [www.connectabilityaus.org.au](http://www.connectabilityaus.org.au)

## 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.

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 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 2016/2017. 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.



