



connect  
ABILITY

AUSTRALIA

**You Believe in Us,  
We Believe in You,  
And Together We**

**Achieve**

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A Celebration of Our Customers  
for 2018/2019

# 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.

**Johnno not only  
likes to fly he also  
loves to sail!**



# Welcome

## From the Chair and CEO

This year's theme for our annual report is **believe** and **achieve**. Human nature as it is in these days has a lot of pressure to achieve. The missing component of this is the belief. Whether you are young old, disabled, or abled, belief and more specifically self-belief are hard commodities to come by these days.

People seem to either have the ability for self-belief and we all look to those individuals to inspire or support us. Others struggle with self-belief and their capacity to hold self-belief over the long term.

What can self-belief give you? Strength of character, confidence, a yearn to learn, not being afraid. I'm sure the list would be longer.

How do we get self-belief? For some it seems to be in built we all know someone who seems to excel under pressure and get things done. For others it learning to change the wiring in our brains to work on themselves to be that person that has self-belief, once obtained is like a self-charging battery.

How can this be done for those we support that don't have the money or capacity to learn in the way most of us take for granted? Well in our service it's through our staff and the circle of family and friends in our customers lives.

Being with people you have built a trusting relationship with gives you that confidence. It supports a self-belief that allows you in a nurturing environment to take those steps, to repeat those steps, to grow in confidence over time into being that person you only dreamed of.

We should never underestimate the influence and ability of our staff to add value to each of our customers. The strength of our organisation is our staff and the day to day delivery of service at times is done in difficult circumstances.

This year ConnectAbility contributed over 250,000 hours of direct service delivery and made over 60,000 vehicle trips in and around our local communities in the Hunter and Central Coast to ensure our customers could gain access to everything we take for granted and to help them achieve their goals.

What is the end result in believing in our customers – they achieve, the impossible becomes the possible, the dream becomes the reality.

The senior leadership team has spent eight months working with our software company to deliver an end to end product that will set us up for many years to come. Driving efficiency's in reporting, giving lead indicators and allowing better oversight to governance. I would like to thank them for devoting two days every week to the project whilst still doing their full time job. One of my saying is you really only know a person under pressure. I know eight people who perform extremely well under pressure. I would like to thank them for their contribution to the future of this organisation.

We continue to grow in Supported Independent living, Homecare and community access in both the Hunter and Central Coast.

Our 4th year of Wine and Dine was another success with our major partners the Commonwealth Bank. 130 people had the pleasure of sampling food from the best Hunter chefs and vigneron. Around \$20,000 was raised to provide extra supports to our customers with a disability and in aged care that funding does not cover.

The NSW government has realigned the community builders funding into the early intervention space for children and young people. Accordingly we will need to realign our programs to become a focus on this high priority area.

I would like to mention two Royal commissions that are underway. The Aged Care royal commission has produced an interim report with many sensible recommendations. There are many horrible incidents that have occurred in aged care that should never have been. We all hope that lasting change can occur to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our elderly who have contributed so much to this country.



The disability royal commission is just underway and has a few years to run. It will be Australia's most expensive royal commission to date costing over ½ billion dollars. No doubt more wrong doing will be uncovered, more lessons will need to be permanently learnt and most importantly our most vulnerable will need their safety and wellbeing ensured.

I would like to thank the Board for their support, professionalism and humour in order to get through our biggest year.

ConnectAbility is heartened by the generosity of the community that supports us. From individual trades who prioritise us so we can continue to keep our doors open (who would have thought toilets could block so much) to large companies who work hard to understand our business so they can provide us with advice and expertise.

We want to express our gratitude to all the stakeholders who assist us to make a difference for everyone who comes to ConnectAbility.

In order to achieve you must believe

David Carey, CEO and Nathan Franks, Chair ConnectAbility Board

## Financial Results 2018/2019

For our full 2018/2019 Audited Statements please go to the ConnectAbility website and click on the Resources tab.

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





Adrian Currans is a customer of ConnectAbility Senior Solutions who discovered later on in life he was a up and coming artist. He has donated this picture to ConnectAbility to say thank you for all we do for him.



# Celebrating 30 years of Friendship

Jesmond Friendship Group has been servicing our senior citizens for 30 years. It is a place where new and old friendships have been created and reunited. A place to enjoy laughter and kindness, a place to be yourself and ease your worries. A place where strangers become Friends









# Jonh Christie—Artist

## “ MAKE EVERY DAY A GOLDEN DAY ”

Jonh's past hasn't been a breeze but his journey has been inspiring, magical and given Jonh the inspiration to be creative and show his beautiful talent through art. Jonh has been doing paintings for a long time however started taking it seriously about 4 years ago. His favourite things to paint are landscapes and acrylic/watercolour designs. Jonh enjoys taking his camera into nature and capturing photos then recreating them through paintings.

His biggest motivation is his own journey which makes him stronger each and every day.

In July Jonh had his artworks exhibited at Terrigal's Pocketbar. At first the night was organised for Jonh to show a "few" of his paintings however the organisers were that fond of Jonh that they dedicated the whole night to him and lets just say the Pocket Bar became the Jonh Bar! The event was called Through My Eyes which is also the title of Jonh's published book which contains his poetry and photography. This was a proud moment for Jonh, it gave Jonh the chance to share his story and art. He sold many paintings on the night, it was a great success. He also recently had some paintings exhibited at his art teacher's exhibition at The Entrance. Jonh speaks very highly of his art teacher and says she has been a big inspiration to him. Next year in Japan his art teacher will be displaying some of Jonh's paintings at an exhibition which Jonh is very excited about...move over Van Gogh! Jonh's other hobbies include photography, geography, meditation, poetry, playing with his dogs and going to the gym.... his efforts at the gym would put Arnold Schwarzenegger to shame!

Recently Jonh went horse riding, something he wasn't sure if he was able to do, once again he conquered.

Jonh's courage and enthusiasm to live life to the fullest is inspiring to us all. Thanks Jonh!!!

*Thanks to Megan Smyth who helped Jonh put this article together.*









# Supported Independent Living Star

## Our Supported Independent Living—the journey continues

As many are aware 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 continues as each organisation takes further operational control of specific areas of business.

As we move towards devolution in late 2019/early 2020 there have been many operational issues that have been completed or are underway. Consultation occurs with staff around the HVDS devolution and it is on track for staff to move towards their member organisations. Each group has had to consider ICT requirements, payroll and staffing. Along the way the commitment of the current HVDS staff has been obvious. Even when things have not gone to plan they keep ensuring that our customers receive the supports they expect. Some administration staff have already moved location and are operating from offices of Ability Options so that they are closer to their support networks.

Our families have come together at Warabrook for a “family forum”. We envisage that this will be a regular group of families who will self direct meetings and Agendas requiring ConnectAbility when information is required.

ConnectAbility in addition to the homes opened across the Hunter also acquired another home on the Central Coast when the Central Coast Disability Network (CCDN) was unable to continue and ConnectAbility was the successful tenderer.

Our Supported Independent Living homes have enriched ConnectAbility through getting to know the staff who work to support independence and people's choice of their best lives and of our customers who surprise and amaze us.

One such person was David who lives in one of the HVDS homes. When CEO David Carey was being interviewed for a piece on ABC TV on the NDIS David (customer and resident) was at the centre to lend a hand. He assisted the crew to set up and pack up and showed them some of the facilities of Warabrook. He was funny and had the ABC crew laughing and at ease. He did a fantastic job as an ambassador for the organisation.

We still have some vacancies in our homes if you or anyone you know is interested in continuing their path to independence. Vacancies are located across the Hunter. Please call our office for more information. 49621000

# A Song in Our Voice

## ConnectAbility Choir

What gives us joy, a voice and friendships in addition to a new or revived skill—A CHOIR!

For the last year a group of ConnectAbility customers has been gathering at Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre to hone their skills as a choir. Under tuition from Choir teacher Kiani the group have gone from strength even performing at Jesmond's Harmony day.

The Choir provides other benefits with the group having a purpose and increased wellbeing as they form new friendships and share a love of music.





# Wellbeing Starts Here

## Experience Counts

In November ConnectAbility Aged Care hosted Dementia Awareness training at Warabrook. The session was open to all interested organisations.

The trainer was able to demonstrate through the use of virtual reality the difficulties experienced by people affected by dementia. The group were overwhelmed by the experience and came away with a new set of skills and understanding.

As our population ages dementia is a disease that will touch many of our families and friends. As a provider of aged care supports being able to identify and appropriately support people is something ConnectAbility is passionate about. We will be looking to host additional sessions in the coming year.



## Volunteers – Unsung Heroes

Our aged care volunteers are an integral part of our team. They provide assistance to our customers to get them to appointments, shopping etc. They also spend time with people and develop relationships that enhance wellbeing.

It is great to be able to thank them at our volunteer Christmas function.







# 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 2019 we celebrated the fourth year of this unique event that harnesses the generosity of the business community.

Over 120 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 has become an annual event that they enjoy while supporting our cause and they also report on some key relationships that have been made between the guests.

Colin and his team organised for four of the top Hunter Chefs, IronBark Hill Brewhouse, 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 to date 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. We will be using funds from this years event to support the transport needs of our customers by keeping our fleet out and about. We will also be looking to provide additional Ipads so that customers can use them to learn skills such as cooking, reading and communicating.

The night was again so successful that the Commonwealth Bank agreed that the event will run again in 2020 and we thank the team from Head office in Sydney for attending this year to see how Wine and Dine brings our community together. 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—A fantastic venue**

**– Callaghan College Hospitality Students and Teachers**

## Our 4 wonderful Chefs:

- Andy Wright from *The Wood Restaurant*
- Paul Niddrie from *Flotilla*
- Chris Thornton from *Restaurant Mason*
- Nick Vivian from *Newy Burger Co*

## Beer & Winemakers:

- De Luliis Wines
- Peter Drayton Wines
- IronBark Hill Brewhouse
- Usher Tinkler Wines

## And also:

- Yvonne Mullane from *YCM Photography* who not only donated 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.
- Kent Woodcock for his design work
- Everyone who donated prizes and shared our invitation.

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 2020 and beyond.











## Jesmond-Supporting All Community Goals

Kikki Tagaroulis and her team at Jesmond have been busy over the last year trying to fit in as many programs and activities as they can to meet the growing need from the local community.

Jesmond is a hub for people who want to socialise, learn new skills or find advice and support. With our two family and adolescent counsellors working in collaboration with other organisations in the area the centre has taken on a new lease of life where challenges are overcome and people are finding new opportunities.

**A HUGE year and much more to come!**



In March Jesmond staff facilitated Harmony Day in partnership with other local service providers and at the end of the day many commented that it was the best Harmony Day ever held at the centre. We served over 322 sausages. Participants included members of the local police station and other agencies along with a jumping castle, face painting henna and a smoking ceremony by Uncle Bill.

Recently we were invited to attend a local school principal's meeting where the issues that are met by newly arrived migrants and refugees were discussed. Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre has now been registered as a safe haven for any persons confronted by discrimination or bullying.

Jesmond started Second Bite in October of this year in partnership with Coles Kotara where we pick up bread, fruit and vegetables and make it available at no cost for the members of the community. We now have families attending the centre each week. The local schools have advertised Second Bite and have welcomed this help for their families.

In October we ran our annual Youth Expo in partnership with other service providers and Jesmond Lions Club. We were lucky that the weather held out as rain had been predicted for the day. We had members from the NRL and Newcastle Jets run workshops in Heaton Park and both were met with extreme enthusiasm, with many of the boys trying rugby league for the first time reluctantly at first but then finding it enjoyable.

In 2020 we will be offering financial counselling on a monthly basis and we are now registered as a No Interest Loan provider. Our adolescent and Family Counsellors we have had numerous successful outcomes for our clients and families. This is relayed to us through positive feedback from both referring bodies such as CAMHS, local schools and other agencies as well as the families themselves.





# What Is On Your Bucket List?

## Lets fly away.....

Johnno had never been in a plane. Johnno's mother, Helen, contacted Connectability to investigate whether Connectability could assist in supporting Johnno to go on his first ever plane trip. Of course Connectability were thrilled to be able to assist in achieving this goal.

Helen sourced tickets to go on a one day adventure trip to Melbourne and so on Tuesday the 23rd of April 2019 they set off. Connectability staff member Peta agreed to share the adventure and support Johnno throughout his day. Connectability also ensured all his needs were able to be met including checking on changing facilities at Melbourne airport to care for Johnno's personal care needs.

Johnno, Helen and Peta boarded the plane at 5.45am at Newcastle airport and arrived in Melbourne soon after.

Particularly impressive was the airline's disability support structure. Johnno was assisted to transfer from his personal wheelchair to a smaller, skinnier wheelchair that was used to elevate him onto the plane and then providing him the ability to move within the plane to his seat. A quick transfer later and Johnno was in his chair and the airline provided a unique harness that went over Johnno's shoulders and was anchored on the floor to ensure Johnno's safety during the flight. He loved the whole experience.

One on the ground in Melbourne they caught an accessible taxi to the centre of Melbourne and then walked Melbourne's CBD, taking in the old building and Flinders' street station. Johnno loves history so really enjoyed looking at landmarks and great historical sights.

The group did try to get on a tram but, unfortunately, only 30 percent of trams are accessible and this couldn't be made to work within timeframes.

After arriving at the CBD there was lunch at the Emporium, shopping in Melbourne's famous alley ways and a visit to the Melbourne Aquarium where Johnno particularly enjoyed seeing the fairy penguins.

Next was the flight back which arrived at Newcastle at 7.30pm and the end of a truly wonderful, and life changing day for Johnno.

ConnectAbility are so thankful to be able to share in the joy achievement brings to our customers and families. We are so very lucky to be able to support them.



# What Does Coordination of Support Look Like at ConnecAbility?

*ConnecAbility assist our coordination of support customers and their families with a variety of activities and tasks all designed to link with services that achieve the goals articulated within their NDIS Plans.*

*We make contact with other providers, source information and services, and support people through their contact with the NDIS Team at reviews. The role is as varied as the people we support.*

*One of the achievements this year has been the success of having nursing care added to the Plan of a customer. This involved lengthy gathering of evidence to its necessity plus an appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. ConnecAbility also assisted this customer to transition into supported independent living.*

*ConnecAbility have also begun transitioning our customers who currently live in Stockton residences towards their new homes. The first person should move later this year.*

*There have also been success in gaining guardianship for customers who need assistance with managing aspects of their lives.*



# Coordination of Support 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 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

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

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 Artists in Action – Supporting Their Own Project

In November 2018 the ConnectAbility artists showcased their skills at the Hunter Arts Network Bazaar in Lambton Park. They spent many months hand building and firing large and small salad bowls for sale to the public. Some customers were also on hand on the day to support the sale of goods.

This project which is led by our Art Facilitator Susan Porteous and her band of volunteers who are a valued and welcome addition to the group helped make it a huge success.

All bowls were sold giving our artists funds that they can then utilise for the projects they choose.

Art is a great way to build skills, confidence and wellbeing for the artists. ConnectAbility encourages the artists to take control of their activities and develops projects unique to the individual to bring out the “artist” within.









# Our Stories – How They Shape Us

## True Inclusion—How a community came together

Jenny was attending the Lemon Tree Passage Bowling Club bingo on Thursdays with her support worker Ann. Jenny loved these days and was a keen player. Jenny was disappointed when her NDIS funding did not allow her to continue to attend.

Carol Wood, who lived not far from Jenny at Tanilba Bay heard that Jenny would no longer be attending and decided to do something to change Jenny's circumstances and so offered to collect her and take her back home. Following the ok from the significant people in Jenny's life the lifts started. It was meant to be a stop gap measure but continued despite Carol dealing with some health issues of her own.

Jenny soon found herself interacting with everyone she came into contact with and her bubbly personality soon had her assisting Lyn the bingo caller by handing out the winning vouchers to other players.—A most important role.

On Jenny's last day at bingo (Jenny was relocating to another area) Carol put on a beautiful afternoon tea including Jenny's favourite sponge cake and where all her community friends wished her well.

Having being embraced by her community and accepted by all who came into contact with her at Bingo had a profound impact on Jenny's wellbeing and feelings of value.

Jenny still rings Carol each week to catch up on news and to see how her friends are at bingo.

The NDIS talks about people with a disability finding their own place in the community supported not by disability providers but by new found friends who share the same passions and activities. Carol, Lyn and the team from Lemon Tree Passage Bowling Club Bingo have certainly made this a reality.





# And Include Us

## Meeting People

Megan who works out of the Erina Office was out and about with John last week. They got to meet Kirk Pengilly from INXS who took the time to have a quick chat with them. It made Jonn's day and "was the most famous person he has met" - said Jonn. A great reason to enjoy our communities



# Your Funds In Action

**Last** year ConnectAbility purchased a virtual reality system for our customers with some of the funds donated by our supporters. How has it worked ?....

We now have a “work” app that allows customers to try different vocations to get a taste of job roles.

Also we have had regular users Jessica and Olivia utilising the new virtual reality system to travel. Olivia and Jessica have been working on the unit twice a week and have enjoyed the programs that are already in use. One program allows the ladies to travel anywhere on the earth and fly, walk and explore the area. They can even fly over Warabrook or their own home. Other programs look at skill development in addition to fun activities.

The system has allowed people to have experiences that may be made difficult due to disability. A great result and thank you to all our supporters.







# Supporting Communities

## Jesmond provides a space for community

Community Development Coordinator Kikki Tagaroulis is keen to see the Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre utilised by the local community to encourage connected and included communities.

Kikki, on behalf of Newcastle City Council manages the hall hire at Jesmond where a variety of programs and community activities are undertaken.

Over the last year Kikki has seen playgroups, social clubs, local business meetings, support groups, exercise groups, and parties well supported by the amenities on offer.







# A Community In Action – Golf Day 2018

**On the 15th March 2019** the third annual ConnectAbility Golf Day dawned at Charlestown Golf Club. Players from local and Sydney based businesses joined us this year to see who could try and keep the Kerry Houghton team from taking top spot—always a task. Kerry is not only a good and serious golfer but someone dedicated to his community and making a difference for local people. He also does charity rides on his beloved motorcycle and supports other individuals who need assistance. He is a driving force in ensuring the success of the event taking care of putting teams together and adding scores at the end of the day plus giving us hints and tips of golfing generally. ConnectAbility CEO David Carey is particularly grateful for this advice as he is a player with “special” skills—needing to bring a bucket of balls as so many go missing. 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. The drinks cart was in high demand and led to a decrease in skill for some players.

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.

Many of the teams that played had a connection to either ConnectAbility or to someone living with a disability. Players felt it was an opportunity to make a difference while also connecting with other local businesses.

Upon course completion many stayed to network and celebrate achievements from the day. Players again showed their support through the raffles on offer and through generously sponsoring holes. A great way to get noticed on the course.

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. The Hunter has many opportunities for those that live here and

being able to participate in them can be difficult for those living with a disability. If you cannot understand the world you are living in you miss many things. ConnectAbility support people to learn, understand and be a part of their community. We support for example the development of numeracy and literacy skills. We use IPads for this exercise which need to be purchased by ConnectAbility and come from our fundraising activities. These skills allow people to shop, catch transport, read signs, books and notices.

While we take these skills for granted our customers celebrate being able to understand and utilise these skills. The support of the businesses and individuals that came to play golf and support ConnectAbility directly make an impact upon the achievements of others.

**Please contact us now if you would like to play in our March 2020 day.**















connect  
ABILITY  
AUSTRALIA

This service was officially opened by  
Lucy Wicks MP Federal member for Robertson  
27th June 2019  
Empowering people to achieve their goals,  
dreams and aspirations



## Erina – New Opportunities

In December 2018 ConnectAbility took over services in Erina to provide disability supports to customers previously supported by Central Coast Disability Network (CCDN).

The services were tendered out by the Administrators and ConnectAbility were successful.

From an organisational perspective this new venture provided us with an opportunity to provide supports on the Central Coast. From an individual point it ensured that the customers of CCDN continued to receive the same supports provided by the same staff as we were keen to engage the staff and customers going forward. The staff at Erina were fantastic in embracing the change and have continued to support customers achieve.

On the 27th June we formally opened the new office under the ConnectAbility name. Customers, families, Board members and staff came together to celebrate the occasion. Staff organised a great day of food, fun and activities. They were able to showcase some of the skills of customers to all who attended.

The community celebrated with us with staff from Family and Community Services, Local Government, and community businesses attending. Rebecca Horn took on the challenge as interim Operations Manager to work with staff, customers and families to bring in the changes necessary to meet the expectations and requirements of the NDIS and the community. We look forward in the 2019/2020 financial year to seeing more customers join ConnectAbility and achieve their own goals.

















# Our Board–Good Governance

## 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.

## 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 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.

## Craig Osborne

Craig is the newest member of ConnectAbility's Board joining this year. Commencing his career as a Management trainee at BHP Newcastle whilst obtaining a degree in Economics, Psychology and IR Craig moved to Sydney during the downturn in the Steelworks during the 1980's. Joining BHP Central Industrial Relations Craig then held HR and IR roles with PepsiCo and the ABC before joining up and coming software development company Micropay in the 1990's. Working in product development and sales of payroll and HR systems Craig held a number of roles including Sales Manager in Victoria and National Operations Manager. Following the purchase of Micropay in the early 2000's by a international Software Company Craig moved into the role of Managing Director covering both domestic and international operations. A few years back Craig returned to Newcastle looking to use his business experience in roles embracing a "social conscience". He joined Mission Providence a joint venture with Mission Australia as Operations Manager for Northern NSW working on the Job Active Federal Government employment contract supporting clients find work in the mainstream and disability space. Craig is excited to bring his commercial and government contract experience to work with the team at ConnectAbility Australia as it grows and provides ongoing support to its clients.

## Scott Brooks

Scott Brooks retired from the Board in 2019 following a change in his role at Maxim. His knowledge and experience in the financial sector provided ConnectAbility with a strong financial base that allowed our growth and diversification. His support will be remembered and valued for years to come.



# ConnectAbility Supporting The Community



ConnectAbility again joined other local businesses in sponsoring Surfest 2019.

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. Surfest, like ConnectAbility is also about developing the potential of the participants and assisting them reach their goals and ambitions. It provides our community with positive female role models that demonstrate how achievement can be a journey.

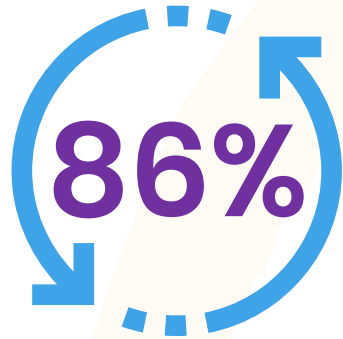


ConnectAbility love the opportunity of being included as sponsors as it allows our customers to be more directly involved in the community and the event. Customers lined the beach to watch the surfers and join in the activities on offer. Some of the goals for our customers include being active members of their communities and Surfest is a way to support them achieving their goal. It also encourages the development of new water skills for those who may have been nervous about being in the water.

We are pleased to be able to be a part of this great event. We also received promotion at the event as part of the initiative and attendance at promotional activities.

We look forward to participating again in 2020.

# Spotlight On The Fun Stuff



Increase in Turnover on  
fin Year 17/18 results

## Revenue Results Due to Growth

The increase in revenue from \$15.9M in FY17/18 to \$29.8M was due to a full year of trading with Hunter Valley Disability Services. Also included is the acquisition of Central Coast Disability Network in Dec 18, along with new Supported Independent Living opportunities



## Net asset Position

On the back of a much improved net profit in this financial year, the net asset position has improved dramatically. This improvement is expected to increase as ConnectAbility continue to grow revenue and control expenditure



Profit achieved in  
2019 was \$939K

## Investment Pays Off!

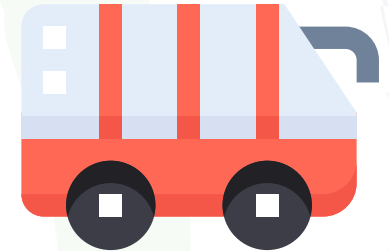
After investing heavily over the last 2 years, ConnectAbility are now seeing the financial benefits from this investment. To date, we have invested over \$500,000 in our customer facilities and have also focused our finances on transition of Supported Independent Living from government to nongovernment providers. This has translated into a steady profit in FY18/19, which has offset this high level on investment in prior years.





Provided **144,824** hours  
of support to our customers

Over **210,000** kilometres  
travelled for Day Programs



ConnectAbility currently employ nearly 300 staff (excluding HVDS staff) to support the achievement of the goals of our customers. Of these staff members **58** of them have been employed by ConnectAbility for over 5 years

#HVDS SIL	59
Aged Care	19
Community Disability	217
<hr/>	
Grand Total	295

# Staff employed by ConnectAbility working in HVDS Supported Independent Living houses

# Our Senior Management Team

## David Carey, CEO

Over the past 20 years I have been involved in the community services sector. 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 continue to work closely with families and customers to ensure goals are met. ConnectAbility also continues to move towards consumer driven care for our aged care services so that older people also achieve well being and goals in life. Goals may be to stay in their own home, maintain independence or to recoup after an illness. We also continue to support the community as a whole offering a variety of programs and activities through Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre. Services support cohesions and inclusion in the community building stronger communities. 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, Senior Leader Community Disability and Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre

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.

At Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre 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 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. We hire our facility to local community members and groups which helps make a more cohesive environment bringing together people from across the area.

## Adele Cashion, Senior Leader People and Culture

I have experienced many iterations of my field of work starting with Personnel Supervisor, Human Resources and now People and Culture. Something that hasn't changed is that organisations need people, working together towards the same goal to succeed. I have been involved in the Community Services Sector since the year 2000 and in no other sector is it more important than for its people to share the same values. I have been with ConnectAbility for 2 years (including time working with HVDS) because I find that the people I work with do share the same values and a genuine intention to put our customers first. Being a not for profit, we do more with less but always know we are helping our staff to help our customers. I am proud to work for ConnectAbility and for the services we provide. We can be excited for our future.

## Kathryn Watts, Senior Leader 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.

## Rebecca Horn, Senior Leader Community Disability Central coast

Rebecca has been working within ConnectAbility as Team Leader before taking on the Central Coast role in December 2018.

Rebecca said

"My initial goal was to ensure that customers, families and staff continued to be supported to achieve following the transition to ConnectAbility." This was an exciting opportunity for ConnectAbility to provide more people with supports that meet their unique needs.



# R U OK Erina – Looking After Each Other

We had a wonderful get together at the central coast office for R U OK day. Lots of nice food provided by the Filipino group. Lots of laughs and some singing as well.

Everyone certainly was OK



# Working Towards My Future

## A Skill for life

### Hannah – Planning for a future career

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

### Hannah and Floristry

At the end of 2018 Hannah became the proud recipient of her new NDIS plan. As part of Hannah's plan it was identified that one of Hannah's goals was to increase her community inclusion.

Hannah engaged Connectability to assist in facilitating this goal and it was identified that Hannah would love to go to TAFE and complete a course.

Hannah chose a course that particularly interested her, floristry.

With her family's support Hannah was able to apply for the course and was successful in being included in the 2019 class at Kurri Kurri TAFE one day a week on a Monday for certificate 2 in Floristry.

Connectability was then engaged to match Hannah up with an appropriate support worker to assist Hannah to get to the TAFE, navigate her way around the TAFE, be supported during classes to assist with positive engagement and inclusion and with the TAFE assignments.

Connectability support staff member Kerrie Delaney was matched with Hannah and worked with Hannah to achieve these goals.

It was first envisioned that Kerrie would need to support Hannah for at least 10 weeks of the course. However, due to the positive support that Kerrie was able to provide and Hannah's hard work at engaging with the class and the teacher, supports were phased out in under half that time.

On one occasion Kerrie was in a position to support Hannah to visit the Sydney floristry markets. This meant the day started at 3am in the morning for Kerrie and Hannah, however they had a great, productive day with the TAFE class visiting two markets in the Sydney area.

Hannah is now engaging completely independently in the TAFE course and is now looking forward to applying to Certificate 3 in floristry next year.





# We Support ConnectAbility

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

## Jezweb

ConnectAbility need to keep up options to engage with, inform, and provide an avenue of communication with all our ConnectAbility family and stakeholders. We also want to keep our staffing at an appropriate level so our administration costs are minimised. Jezweb, a local website and social media provider have stepped in to support us. They provide skill, expertise and advice that keeps our communications fresh and focused on our customers. They have engaged with us to ensure they know who we are and what we need and speak to us regularly. They understand our budget limitations and work with us to provide cost effective options. Skills are shared at no cost and they have provided training for staff to save us money. They are a great partner.



## DABS Plumbing

Anthony and Donna Green own DABS Plumbing. They moved to Newcastle from Sydney just over a year ago and have cemented themselves in the community. For both Anthony and Donna it is important that they give back to the community. Now ConnectAbility has many instances of “plumbing emergencies” It is always surprising what can end up around an S bend. Anthony has prioritised ConnectAbility so that we get an immediate response to an issue. This allows us to keep operating as without water or sewer we would need to close. Anthony also does not charge us a call out fee so our plumbing bills are cheaper. He has also recently donated our new laundry sink and installed it. This level of support means we can direct more of our funds to customer supports rather than an organisational need. He is also an “old fashioned” plumber—if it can be fixed rather than replaced he can do that. His involvement has meant that we can concentrate on our customers—a great outcome. Our customers know him by name and are often interested in what he is doing which Anthony is glad to share.

Allied Pickfords  
Ambassador Locksmiths  
Bernie Garrett  
BNI Chapters Newcastle  
Callaghan College students and teachers  
Commonwealth Bank—Colin Law and Danielle McCosker  
Concept BSG  
ConnectAbility Board  
DABS Plumbing  
Design Bug & the team at Swell Magazine  
Dynamic Business Technologies  
Electrical Trades Union  
Ethos Health  
Go with the Flow Air Conditioning  
Hunter Arts Network  
Cromwell Cleaning P/L  
Hunter Residences, Stockton, Management and staff  
Jayes Travel—Michelle Barker  
Jenny Kimbley—Kaleidaskin Clinic  
Jezweb team  
Kathryn Charlesworth  
Kent Woodcock, Kent Woodcock Creative Solutions  
Kerry Houghton – Jim's Carpet Cleaning  
Leslie Potter  
Lib Fallon—Smilelabs  
Linda Miller  
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  
Ross Gleghorn from AA kilns  
Smallman Security  
Sue McKinnon  
Superior Pest Management  
The Forum  
Titan Graphics  
Unity Building Solutions  
Yvonne Mullane—YCM Photography  
WHO Printing Newcastle

**We would love your support—Please think of us when looking for a charity to donate to or leave a bequest. Your generosity will make sure people with a disability get to live the “THEIR BEST LIFE”**

**Call our office today**

**In November a group of staff, family, friends and supporters took the freeway to Sydney to not only shop till we dropped but to raise funds for ConnectAbility. A great day was had with bargains galore**





A man wearing a colorful, multi-colored hard hat, sunglasses, a black t-shirt with a graphic, and light blue shorts stands in front of a large, olive-drab military aircraft. The aircraft has "14070" on its side and "14070" on a sign in front of it. The man is smiling and waving. The background is a museum setting with other aircraft and informational displays.

From everyone at ConnectAbility a sincere

**THANK YOU**

The support of our community, families and businesses ensures that we continue to achieve our goals and be active members of the community

# Thank You To All Our Staff Who Ensure Our Customers Are The Most Important People at 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!!**



## 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

26 Warabrook Boulevard  
Warabrook NSW 2304  
PO Box 545 Mayfield NSW 2304  
Phone: (02) 4962 1000  
Fax: (02) 4017 0086  
4 Karalta Lane  
Erina NSW 2250  
Phone: (02) 4349 3700

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. Since then ConnectAbility have grown to include in home aged care supports, disability accommodation and community services (through Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre).

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, Central Coast 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 company limited by guarantee, 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 2018/2019. 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.

We would welcome any feedback about this report or about any aspect of our operations.

