




connect
ABILITY
AUSTRALIA

A Year Like Never Before

A celebration of our customers
for 2019/2020

COVID Edition



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.

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



Celebrating events is as important
to us as it is to our customers.

Congratulations Abby!

Welcome

From the Chair and CEO

Well what a year Australia and globally we all have just come through. Its not over yet.

During the 2019/20 financial year we have experienced some of the worst bush fires and highest temperature recorded, then we moved into our flood cycle wreaking more destruction on an already suffering country. Then after watching a virus spread from overseas to Australia we got to be familiar with a new word – COVID-19, we have seen nothing like it before.

COVID-19 impacted us in March and was in full swing by April. As a declared essential service we were able to stay open. A lot of “What to do” information started coming out from various government departments. In those early days the information was lacking, confusing and contradicted other critical information. Obtaining masks and hand sanitiser was an almost impossible and frustrating task.

We set about developing an action plan – initially to work offsite then to move back onsite. This was a long and complex document as there were so many variables and complexities to consider. Keep in mind, this was unprecedented territory and all the while being mindful of customer and staff safety with a virus that could have been devastating.

Our early learning was to meet weekly and push communications out each week to keep staff abreast of changes, and there were many. Our view was to follow public health orders, and not move away from this. Our communications always contained a meme and this proved popular with staff.

Our Community Disability Service was hardest hit with it all but ceasing operations. Families at that point were rightfully prudent in keeping their loved ones at home. After a while in-home support to families was provided to those who required it to lessen the burden they were going through. Our Supported Independent Living kept providing 24/7 care with a number of our displaced community staff working in our Supported Independent Living services.

Our Aged Care initially reduced service because families and customers were conservative, especially as the virus was most severe with the elderly.

Our staff came up with some innovative ways of support including online art and a messenger group to communicate and support each other.

Both offices were reduced to skeleton staff onsite, with corporate working from home to maintain payroll, HR and quality requirements as we were still required to function despite all that was occurring.

Only a month earlier we had transitioned over 200 staff from Hunter Valley Disability Services to ConnectAbility. This required an enormous amount of work and it was complexity at scale. It was successful due to great planning and communication to staff. I would like to thank all those Senior Leaders and staff involved in doubling the size of our organisation making it a complete success.

Leading up to and post transition of staff the senior leadership team had spent over 1500 hours in development and testing of our new end-to-end software in order for payroll, incident management and rostering to occur. Concurrent with this, we transferred from our old finance and payroll system to a new system. This has been a two year project with a major ramp up to ensure smooth payroll and documentation transfer.

There is no doubt in my mind this has been the busiest and most complex year in the history of our organisation.

We had initially decided to run a staff survey post transfer then along came a pandemic! We debated whether or not to run the survey, but we really wanted to know what our staff were thinking. It's important to us to consider staff views especially during these unprecedented times. So here are some of the results:

- 95% of staff are satisfied with their job
- 90% of staff agreed with supporting our customers through COVID-19
- 87% of staff said teamwork was effective during COVID-19
- 85% of staff were satisfied with the clear and timely COVID-19 communication.

Despite taking a large financial loss due to COVID-19, we ended the year in a great financial position. This will help to buffer us from future recurrences of COVID.

Another proud statistic is that we have recorded zero customers and zero staff positive for COVID. That is an extraordinary effort for customers and staff who have had to consistently follow guidelines. Well done everyone for keeping each other safe.

So how did we manage to get through this year? With unyielding, professional and dedicated staff who rose to the occasion in the most trying of times. What a great culture we enjoy here!

To the front line staff – thank you, you add value to our customers and make a difference to them, their families and to the community every day.

To all our Team Leaders, Support Coordinators, Case Managers, Counsellors, Admin and reception staff – our engine room, thank you.

To the Senior leadership team, a sincere thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to duty. I would like to thank the Board for their support, professionalism and humour in order to get through our biggest year.

To our corporate and community supporters – you support us to keep going everyday by prioritising, donating and valuing the work we do – thank you.

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

FINANCIAL RESULTS 2019/2020

For our full 2019/2020 Audited Statements please go to the ConnectAbility website link below.

www.connectabilityaus.org.au



Kathy dressed up for RU OK Day. It brought a smile to many a face as she asked if we were ok.



The residents from Cessnock thought COVID-19 was a great time to look at a project. Over several weeks they worked really hard and Nathan was very pleased with himself, and the outcome achieved with the help of his assistants, Kristy and Mathew.

This skill building exercise instilled confidence and pride in the commitment to see this project through to completion.

Look at the beautiful bird box for the garden!

What a Year it has Been

Who would have known at the start of July 2019 that within six months our country would be inundated with disasters. We were already deep in drought and our farmers were suffering.

By Christmas the Hunter was on water restrictions and many of us were using buckets in the shower to collect water for our gardens with some country towns close to the Hunter in danger of running out completely.

By late January, and into February, we were watching the horrific fire storms engulfing property and taking lives. Our fantastic RFS and brigades worked around the clock for days on end to save as much as they could. Images of koalas being pulled out of the fire-front touched us all. Some of the biggest donation drives ever held raised millions for people and animals affected. Before the images of the fires had left our minds floods ravaged some areas and then came COVID-19...

It started with a warning that there was a highly contagious flu-like virus circulating in some countries. ConnectAbility activated our Pandemic Plan and prepared. By February it was here. By March a Pandemic had been declared and restrictions to everyday life commenced.

What happened next for ConnectAbility?

We continued to support our customers. There were some customers whom their families decided to keep at home due to specific vulnerabilities. This meant the redeployment of a small number of Community Disability staff to our Supported Independent Living Homes.

As per our Pandemic Action Plans, we continued to increase the protections for customers and staff as per Government guidelines. This included limiting the number of staff and customers across office and customer sites. We increased cleaning, and staff wiped down touchpoints frequently. We checked our levels of personal protection equipment and sourced hand sanitizer from the Newcastle Distillery. We became very familiar with social distancing. Then what happened?

Communication was ramped up to ensure staff knew they were being kept safe and supported. Records were kept of staff and customers who went for testing or self isolated.

Our staff demonstrated what we already knew - that we have the best, most committed and innovative staff. They make our organisation one of excellence, and provide our customers with fantastic outcomes and goal achievement on a daily basis - despite being in a pandemic.

As some customers couldn't come to ConnectAbility, or be in the community for supports - we went to them. Our staff supported customers from home and engaged them in goal achieving through different daily activities. We had customers learning to cook different types of food to provide something new for their families, who appreciated the beautiful smells of cooking and tastes that appeared on their tables.

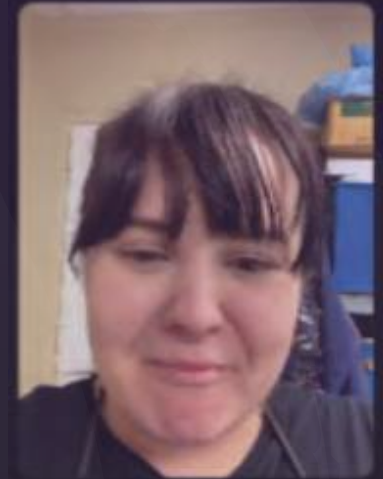
Some customers who were feeling isolated and missing their art classes were overjoyed when art teacher (and herself an artist), Susan Porteous developed an online Art Program. Susan dropped materials off in tubs at front doors and organised logins for customers / families. Feedback was really positive as this provided continuity of supports and a connection for our customers. It may be something we are able to continue post-pandemic.

Our Supported Independent Living House staff generously welcomed redeployed staff and also the community staff who were able to offer in-home activities. These planned, and also incidental activities such as a walk outside or visit to the neighbour's horses gave customers structure and a positive outcome to their days.

Our Aged Care team continued to monitor and support customers, often checking with some that were particularly vulnerable.

Then... just as we began to return to some normality, COVID returned, this time closer to home. Luckily we were still operating within our Pandemic Plans.

While we hope to one day be free from COVID, the outcomes achieved by staff and customers, and the kindness and selflessness shown have made us truly thankful to be a part of ConnectAbility.





Adapting During COVID-19



What has changed in supports during COVID-19, and what are the specific implications?

My supports with Mackenzie changed to FaceTime video calls from my home to hers. I would call Mackenzie 2 hours a day every Monday and Friday afternoon during isolation and do craft activities with her over the camera. Some days we coloured in, other days I painted things for her and everyday we shared stories about our day, our dogs, songs and movies. We'd had a few dance parties even. We often spoke about all the exciting things we could do and see once day program returned and restrictions were lifted. A few supports consisted of me dropping these activities into Mackenzie's mailbox then returning home to jump on camera and do the same activities from home so we were able to practice safe social distancing but still maintain interaction and support. We had matching colouring books and textas and we even had matching tote bags in which we also coloured in.

What has been done to combat the changes under COVID-19?

Many things have been done through ConnectAbility to combat COVID. Very strict and appropriate social distancing was put into place for all our customers and staff. Being able to assist customers from the comfort of our own homes was a major change during COVID letting us still maintain a good level of interaction and support for our customers using FaceTime and Zoom calls which was wonderful.

What positives have come from the specific changes in supports?

Positives that have come from this was knowing that there are so many other ways to support our customers without having that one-on-one in the community, and having access to every single public venue there is, we were able to find new and exciting ways to interact and maintain these relationships, and still be able to help with skill building and getting creative thanks to technology.

Another positive for myself was that I was still able to work and ensure that I too was kept safe and at home, some days myself and Mackenzie would be chatting over the phone in our dressing gowns all rugged up!! Who doesn't want that? Though unfortunately many people in the world did not have that option of still being able to work and have support so I would consider myself to be very fortunate.



COVID-19

What did I do as a Worker?

COVID-19 guidelines directly impacted Disability Support services and everyone had to make important changes to services for the safety and wellbeing of all stakeholders. These changes included ceasing all group support, and we provided a more individualised support. The hours of support and the number of days had to be rearranged in consultation with all involved in the life of the customer we supported. No center-based activities could be offered during the COVID-19 lockdown.

COVID-19 has meant we needed to be more stringent with hygiene practices. We are using hand sanitizer - a lot! Minimising contact between customers and support workers. Temperature is taken upon supporting customers. Questioning customers, parents, or guardians about their community contact. Encouraging social distancing and washing of hands frequently. One-on-one support has enabled support workers to build closer relationships.

Support workers can cater and focus on the customer's specific goals. The customers have demonstrated an increased level of engagement, communication and are very responsive to the sessions.

Nickie has been enjoying cultural cooking lessons, exercise routines including access to a family pet which has motivated her to be more active and reduce her overall body weight. She improved her fitness and mental wellbeing as well as discovering her local community surroundings during walking tours with her support worker, and bike rides both at home and in the local area. These opportunities helped improve her confidence when meeting people and having to communicate with various members of the community. With direct supervision Nickie has enjoyed personalised craft sessions making relevant and useful crafts that include birthday cards, diamond dots and a mosaic glass lamp.

These new skills and confidence prove that resourcefulness can overcome anything - even being in lockdown.



Transfer of HVDS to ConnectAbility

The transfer is complete
Welcome to our new customers, families and staff



Back in 2017 ConnectAbility welcomed accommodation services in the form of HVDS homes. This was the transfer of the Ageing Disability and Home Care houses to the not-for-profit sector. ConnectAbility along with consortium partners Finding Yellow and Ability Options were successful in their tender, and the staff and customers transferred under a purpose created business – Hunter Valley Disability Services.

The intent of the consortium was to always devolve individual houses, along with the customers and staff who supported them to the individual partner organisations. We used the time between accepting the service and devolving them to the partner organisations to put processes in place for the long term success of the businesses. We were lucky to have a dedicated and committed staff group who assisted us while maintaining continuity of supports to the customers they knew so well. There were some minor hiccups along the way but with consultation and the communal passion to make the best life for customers any issues were soon overcome.

On 19 February 2020, the formal transfer occurred with ConnectAbility taking over IT, payroll and customer administration activities for homes allocated under ConnectAbility. We are excited to be able to continue to support people achieve goals and gain independent lives with appropriate supports.

In the future we will continue to grow this part of our business as we know there are many more people across the Hunter and Central Coast looking for accommodation that meets their individual needs. Housing options potential customers may like include apartment living, townhouse or villa, alone or with house mates, or in a concierge model. We look forward to helping people choose what suits them the best. With builders on board possibilities are endless.

ConnectAbility would love to speak to anyone who may like to discuss accommodation. Our Supported Independent Living Team together have many years experience in working with potential customers, families and other important people in someone's life to make sure the right housing option is achieved.

Wellbeing Starts Here

COVID Connections

Dane is an artist. He has a studio where his fantastic art works are created. During COVID, Dane was able to maintain his community connections via Zoom, like many of us. Dane also faced the same challenges – prior to a video call he cleaned and tidied his studio, and made sure the art he placed on the walls looked great in the background.



New Friends – New Opportunities

Stuart has found new friends and new opportunities by attending day activities through our Warabrook centre. Living in one of ConnectAbility's Supported Independent Living homes Stuart was first able to access additional supports during the day from community staff going to his home to look at activities and goals while we were all staying home at the peak of the COVID outbreak.

ConnectAbility did not stop supporting our customers and looked at ways we could still engage in safe way. Stuart then started attending Warabrook following the easing of restrictions. He is now accessing more community places and loves bowling, tennis and being out and about making new friends. It is often the little things in life that give us all the best experiences. He has recently starred in a [video](#) where he wanted to express what he felt as a customer of ConnectAbility.



Who am I?

One of the main complaints we hear from the people we support across our Senior Solutions business area is how they seem to become invisible and overlooked as a person as they age. That the community ceases to see WHO they are anymore.

Despite being older they still have so much to give and a wealth of experiences behind them that can inform, change and lead to better communities. Here is one person's story:

I was born in Picton NSW on 8/2/1932

Lived on a farm at Tahmoor for 7 years during the war

Educated at Tahmoor Primary then went to Picton High School

Studied business at Metropolitan Business College in Sydney

Worked as a stenographer at Maldon Cement Works

Later became secretary to a Qantas pioneer captain and met many celebrities

Married my husband, Alan, in Picton and moved to Grafton for his first teaching appointment

We bought our first home and had 2 children - Ross and Kay

After 7 happy years, we moved to Charlestown so Alan could work at Merewether High

Spent my next years bringing up my children and taking part in school activities

Took up the hobby of copper enamelling, teaching this art and having many exhibitions

I managed a hairdressing salon for my daughter Kay while she completed her apprenticeship

After a trip to New Zealand, I completed a TAFE course in floral art - enjoying exhibitions, shows and weddings

I now belong to a quilting group and the View Club

I still love living in my own home thanks to the wonderful support of Janine and ConnectAbility.

Who am I? - I am Audrey Schuemaker





Jesmond Supporting our Community

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.

On Wednesday and Friday afternoons, with the support of 2nd Bite (Coles Kotara), Food Bank, Oz Harvest and Sanitarium, they have been able to provide fresh fruit, vegetables, bread and other staple foods to members of the community in need. In one month alone over 185 individuals, couples and families have gone to Jesmond to access the food program.

Kikki Tagaroulis, the centre manager, said COVID has had a part to play in people needing that little bit of extra support. Kikki and her team are keen to ensure no one goes without.





Active Ageing on the Central Coast

Supporting Active Ageing and Wellness on the Central Coast

ConnectAbility are lucky to have the resources of Jenelyn, the Sector Support Development Officer, who is located within our Central Coast office. Jenelyn has been able to facilitate, and collaborate with other organisations, to promote wellness and active ageing within the community especially for those with culturally diverse backgrounds.

Activities included educational sessions, social groups and exercise classes.

Some of the organisations such as the Multicultural Social Group Northern Settlement, Bateau Bay and MAP on the Central Coast have been supportive and pleased to be able to utilise the spaces in our Erina office to promote wellness

CALD Community Consultation Active Ageing, Wellness and Reablement

Jenelyn is involved in the consultation process. The findings of these consultations can broadly benefit CHSP services as they integrate wellness and reablement approaches in their practices. The target participants are older people and carers from CALD background who currently access CHSP services.





Active Ageing on the Central Coast

Spanish Group



Schools in – protection and advocacy session



Exercise can be more fun with friends





Staying Connected Zoom Art

The Art Program via Zoom

The Connected Wellbeing Program, Zoom Art has shown that a bit of positivity can be of great benefit in a difficult time.

This program was initiated in response to the closure of activities in the ConnectAbility program area at Warabrook, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the Arts Facilitator of the Thursday and Friday art programs, I realised that there wasn't very much time to organise an alternative program because the NSW Government announcement for the first lockdown was quite swift. It was clear that to be able to maintain some of the art program, I would be required to 'think outside of the square', and this became 'deliver an art program from a box!' The Art Program at ConnectAbility, in the program area is run with a group dynamic of face-to-face teaching, so adapting a program to be delivered online had its challenges.

I chose Zoom as the digital platform because of the superbly easy user interface. The program operates by sending an email link that can be opened to reveal a face to face meeting on the computer.

The first recipient of the program was Dane Tobias. Earlier in the week, we moved Dane's entire working studio from Newcastle Arts Space back home onto his veranda. Dane and I trialed Zoom to see if it would work and it was really exiting when we realised how well we could communicate.

At the outset of the program I delivered 'Zoom Art' boxes to verandas of participants homes, these boxes held activities, paper and art materials. The activities were centred around drawing so a basic drawing and watercolour kit was provided. At this point we were all in the first lockdown and Eckersleys Art Store delivered materials to me at my home and I made up the boxes.

My thinking around providing this opportunity for participants who had been in the Thursday and Friday Art Program at ConnectAbility was that: being in lockdown in self isolation, did not need to preclude a participant from accessing an art activity for their mental health and well-being.

There were five participants who had this wonderful opportunity, and they took on the challenge admirably with great enthusiasm. The computer was no barrier to their learning experience, in fact the art sessions were focused on practical skills, and have maintained their fine motor skills and hand eye coordination. They also had a joyful experience communicating online as they could see me and themselves as well. From April, May and June there were 60 Zoom Art classes and five extremely happy participants. The art works that they have made whilst doing Zoom Art online are truly astounding and they should be congratulated for their efforts and their persistence.

I also would like to comment that the Operations Manager, Scott Harvey and all of the Team leaders, who supported this program and made it possible.

The Zoom Art program has contributed to a change in programming that is flexible, sustainable and can work to provide a safe alternative that fulfills a participant's need to feel engaged with regular and familiar activity that promotes happiness, positive mental health and well-being.





Our Choir in Action

Our Choir started small - a few of our senior solutions customers gathering to share a love of music, singing and friendship.

They have grown as a choir and now enjoy learning new songs and providing entertainment to others. They have performed for people living in residential aged care and for friends who gathered for a Christmas celebration.

They are led by Kiani, our Choir teacher, who is also a musician, performing in local theatre. As a singer herself, she loves to share her passion for song with others.

Music is an important way to enhance wellbeing and to connect with others. Also, when other skills diminish due to age or illness, the art of singing may change but it is often still present for people. It also helps memory retention as you keep your brain active learning new songs and staying brain active.

We welcome new members to our Choir and would love to hear from any potential Choristers.





Jesmond Ready to Welcome

Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre was hard hit by COVID. They were forced to cease many support services to the community in order to keep everyone safe. The team, led by Manager Kikki Tagaroulis, did not stop planning and preparing for the reintroduction of hall hire, counselling and supporting their community during this time.

The food bank and some limited services were able to commence recently but other groups are yet to return.

While closed there have been a couple of projects completed at the centre to refresh and beautify it ahead of a full opening.

The kitchen area has had a makeover, adding more cupboards and a better layout.

This will provide hall hirers with a cleaner and more updated area to work in. There is also more space to safely store items for food bank distribution.

The community garden has been well tendered by a staunch group of volunteers and is not only attractive to look at but providing fresh vegetables.

Kikki has also been meeting with funding bodies to determine the priorities for the future to meet community needs for the area. There is a renewed focus on early intervention and supporting young children and families that will help strengthen the community as a whole.

Kikki is looking forward to welcoming everyone back very soon.



The Community

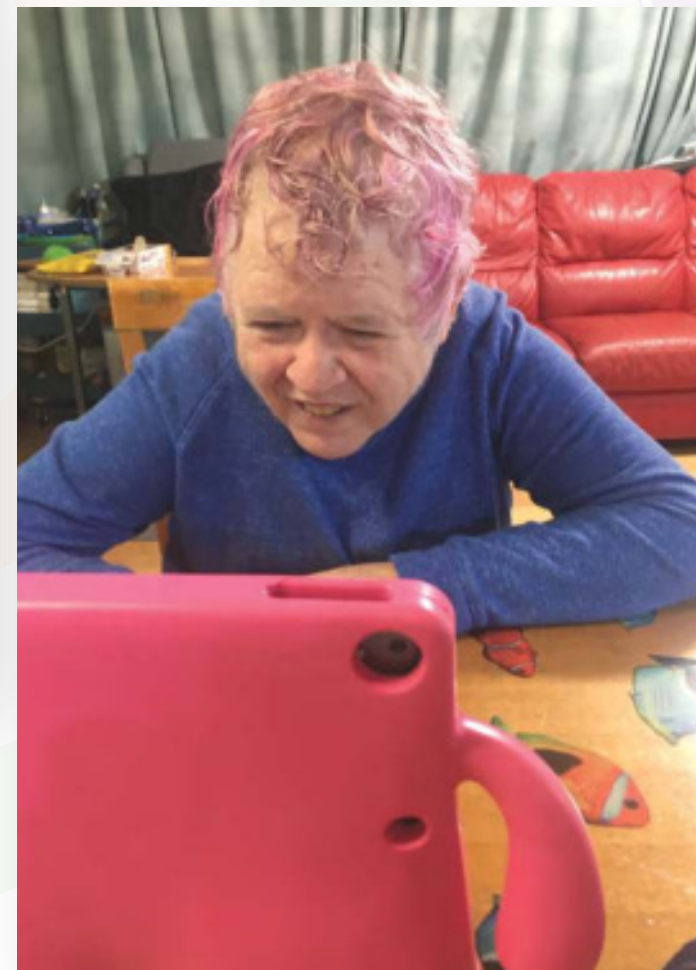


Keeping in Touch

When you are used to seeing your family regularly, it can be hard when you cannot. During COVID-19 some families were unable to visit their family members living in our Supported Independent Living homes.

ConnectAbility had recently purchased Surface Gos for each house to allow staff to continue to complete administration tasks close to customers who may be unwell or in need of direct staff support. The staff of our Cahill Home decided to use their Surface Go for a different purpose – helping families stay in touch.

Online catch ups were booked in, and both our customers and their families loved the opportunity to beat social isolation and loneliness through technology. It may not be quite the same as seeing each other in person and getting a hug but during COVID, Kerrie and her family appreciated the thoughtfulness of the staff for keeping everyone together.



Coordination of Supports equals Achieving your Goals

The National Disability Scheme (NDIS) was introduced to improve opportunities for people with a disability to meet their goals, and help them become more independent as 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 (eg. 1 hour per week) supports to strengthen a person's ability to connect with informal, mainstream and funded support, and to increase capacity to maintain support relationships, resolve service delivery issues, and participate independently in managing their NDIS supports and plans.

Support Coordination

This level assists to strengthen abilities to connect to, and coordinate informal, mainstream and funded support in a complex service delivery environment. This includes resolving points of crisis, developing capacity and resilience in a person's

support networks and coordinating supports from a range of service providers who may be required to help meet those needs and goals e.g. behaviour support; speech therapy; occupational therapy; physiotherapy.

Specialist Support Coordination

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

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

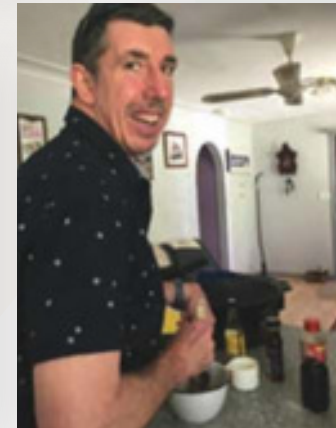
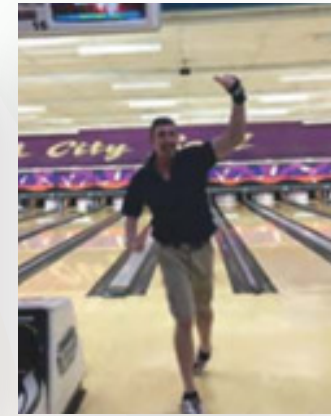
ConnectAbility has three Coordinators of Support available to assist people to link services to goals.

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

- + living independently
- + linking them with external services
- + supporting people through change in circumstances
- + skill and capacity building
- + sourcing and engaging allied health professionals
- + assisting with a change in service provider

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

Supporting on the Central Coast



Opportunities and Achievement

The Central Coast continues to be an area of growth for ConnectAbility, built on the foundation of the organisation's values and the vision of creating fulfilling opportunities for people and communities through our passion. It has been a tumultuous 12 months for the Disability Sector, with the commencement of the Disability Royal Commission, recommendations from the Tune Review into the NDIS Scheme, and the outbreak of COVID-19. While the Royal Commission and Tune Review were welcomed, I can assertively say that COVID-19 was not. Although the negative impacts of the pandemic on all our lives will forever be remembered, the response of our customers and staff in the face of this adversity has been truly humbling.

Many of our services have been able to continue during COVID-19, though with adjustments to ensure that social distancing and proper hygiene practices were maintained. One-on-one community support remains a popular service on the Central Coast, with ConnectAbility's Direct Support Workers assisting customers with activities of their choice. These supports include companionship, developing living skills and encouraging our customers to pursue their interests.

At times, our Direct Support Workers can suggest different activities or options for our customers, especially if they are not sure what they would like to do that day.

Our Direct Support Workers accompany customers to medical appointments, shopping, as well as participating in recreational activities including ten pin bowling, going to the gym, swimming, fishing, lunch at a social venue or simply going to the park for a walk, or to sit and watch the whales migrate from many of the Central Coast's vantage points. Our community support programs are tailored to each of our customers and can be as busy or as laid back as our customers choose. ConnectAbility additionally maintains pool cars for our Direct Support Workers to use if our customers request them.

Another service that is valued by our customers and the Central Coast community is our support coordination program. Our Coordinator of Support staff assist our customers with all aspects of the NDIS, helping to navigate the NDIS process

including review meetings, managing customer service budgets, liaising with other service providers and allied health professionals. Coordinator of Support staff ultimately provide a holistic service to our customers to ensure that their NDIS package is maximised to their full advantage.

ConnectAbility on the Central Coast offers a customer centred aged care service which assists our aging population to participate in the community and to feel socially included. This section of our business organises Direct Support Workers to provide companionship, either within the customer's home or while accessing the community. Direct Support Workers also assist with tasks such as shopping, helping to pay bills, attending appointments and other activities requested by our customers.

ConnectAbility also provides Supported Independent Living (SIL) throughout the Hunter, Central Coast and parts of Sydney. SIL provides supervision of daily tasks in a shared living environment, with a focus on developing the skills of each of our customers to live as independently as possible. Staff provide guidance, role modelling and assisting with house related tasks. Our staff also run weekly meetings with our customers living in SIL to organise a menu and shopping lists, following meal-time management plans and assisting our customers with medications. ConnectAbility Australia are looking at growing this service throughout the Central Coast region over the next 12 months.

We are also looking at growing our concierge model of supported living where people are living a more independent life eg in apartments and are able to use a provider who is onsite to provide emergency or unusual supports when their usual provider is not there.

ConnectAbility is set for another exciting year as we continue to establish our presence on the Central Coast. Key objectives are to focus on providing person centred services to our customers, ensuring services are flexible, innovative and meet best practice; increase our engagement with the community by raising ConnectAbility's profile; and to provide the support and structure required for staff to effectively support our customers and each other.

Maddie Our International Student

It started as an email we originally thought was a spam email. Maddie lived in Canada – was she really wanting to come to Australia to complete work placement hours? – was Maddie a real person? Well it turns out that it was yes and yes.

Maddie wanted to finish her Social Welfare degree with a placement in Australia. Maddie arrived in Australia and commenced working with us.

Jillian Woollard took Maddie under her wing, organising her work schedule and learning outcomes. She also filled an 'Australian mum' role making sure Maddie was ok living so far from family and friends. It was the first time Maddie had seen surf or a beach.

She worked across all areas of the business adding skills and experiences plus learning a bit of 'Aussie' along the way. She celebrated her 21st birthday with us and tried some traditional foods – Vegemite is an acquired taste apparently.

Our customers loved her fun and friendliness and looked forward to seeing her everyday.

She met new friends outside of work and got to see a bit of the country. She did plan to stay longer and apply to work as she travelled but along came COVID-19 and she realised she needed to go home. Her university had closed, and borders were shutting.

She was a joy to have, provided a fresh set of eyes and experience to ConnectAbility, and we wish her the best for her career and life. The experience for ConnectAbility was so positive we look forward to being contacted again to offer another international student a unique experience.



Supporting my Mobility

What to do when you are socially distancing

Customer Alma has been doing her walking exercises up and down the driveway of her home during COVID. This supports her continuing mobility, and it helps her to get up and walk during the middle of the day. Normally Alma would attend our weekly exercise group but as this is not possible at the moment we are improvising!

The walking is also being done in conjunction with physio exercises that our Support Workers do with Alma twice a week and the weekly physio home visit.

This service contributes to Alma's continued Wellness and Reablement.

Congratulations to Alma and her team for looking at alternate options to keep moving.





A Community in Action **Golf Day 2020**

On the 13th March 2020 the fourth annual ConnectAbility Golf Day dawned at Charlestown Golf Club. This year we chose to include another charity – REACH Homeless Services – to join us as a beneficiary for the day. REACH provide supports to those at risk or who are homeless in the Hunter. Their supports are particularly needed over the weekend when traditional support options are closed.

Players from local and Sydney based business joined us to see who could beat ConnectAbility CEO David Carey from being the “top” player. Apparently not the hardest task David believes. Kerry Houghton stepped up once again to manage the golfing parts of the day. He is a driving force in ensuring the success of the event and assisting ConnectAbility in hosting such a fun and successful event. One of our partner disability organisations Finding Yellow attended to show their support for ConnectAbility. True collaboration and cooperation within the sector on display. We again had fantastic support for the hole sponsorship and the 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.

We were also fortunate to be able to offer the opportunity to win a caravan on the day. Jay from Newcastle Caravans & RVs put a van up for anyone who could achieve a hole in one on a specific hole. Unfortunately no luck – maybe next year though.

Our major sponsors were back again so special thanks to:

Major Sponsor – Mick O’Shea and his team from Unity Kitchens
Drink Cart Sponsor 1 – Jock Whyte and his team at Newcastle Office Interiors
Drink Cart Sponsor 2 – Trent Salkeld from Somerset Meats
Kerry Houghton – Jim’s Carpet Cleaning
Jay – Newcastle Caravans & RVs

Without their generosity the golf day would not go ahead.

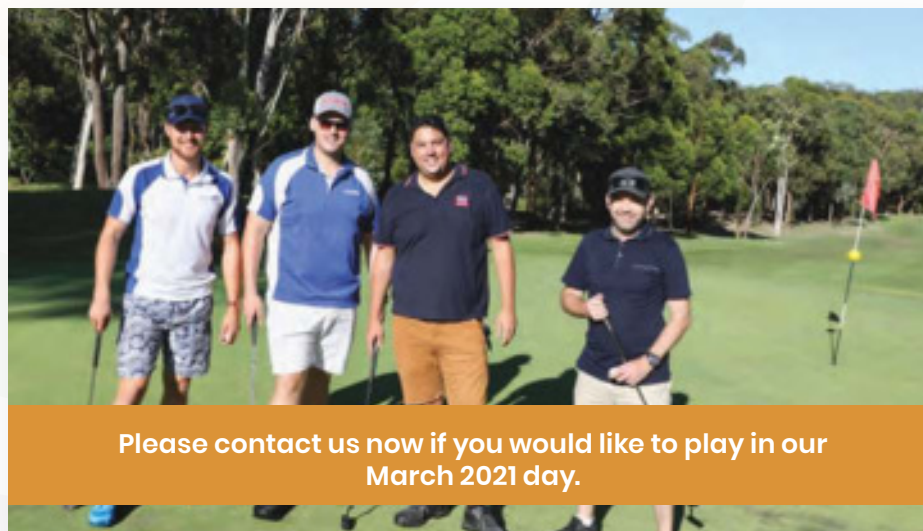
Many of the teams that played had a connection to either ConnectAbility, to someone living with a disability, or to REACH and their services. Players felt it was an opportunity to make a difference while also connecting with other local businesses.

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. New programs and projects will only now be possible by the generosity of the individuals and organisations who attended. REACH can now provide additional meals and supports to vulnerable people.

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

This year was different in that only five days later we were all in lockdown due to COVID-19. Our golf day was one of the last functions held for people to enjoy and not socially distance. We are hopeful for an event in 2021.



Please contact us now if you would like to play in our
March 2021 day.







What makes a Good Day?

Friends!

Sometimes it is what seems like an unlikely friendship, but supporting someone when they need it is what Meredith of our Senior Solutions team does best. She is passionate about building relationships with her customers so that they get to enjoy their lives and continue to do the things that are important to them.

Adrian is not well at the moment and has a level 4 Home Care Package. He says he is having more bad days than good at the moment.

Meredith sees Adrian for a Respite visit and has come to learn about what makes him smile.

Meredith shares their story with us

Adrian loves music and loves getting outside.

Adrian is one of my customers, I am the person who visits for Respite care. He tells me he has some down days but when I show up it puts a smile on his face.

Adrian loves music, he showed me some of his musical instruments. He said he wished he knew how to play them again.

We visit Bunnings a lot as this is his happy place. I arrived there the other day and as soon as I walked in his face lit up. He then said to me he always looks forward to my visits with him, he also said that I am his 'Little Ray of Sunshine'. This made my heart melt to think I have this kind of an impact on someone, and how much he enjoys my company, and how doing just small things together can give him so much pleasure. This is why I get up every day and do what I do. I love my job. – Meredith

Our team in Senior Solutions work with people to help them regain skills, maintain friends and community connections, and connect with the things people love the most. Sometimes it is the simple things that mean the most – like a trip to Bunnings.

Age does not need to be about isolation or lost abilities. It can be about connections and learning new things. We encourage reenablement and keeping both mind and body active.

Most importantly it is about relationships – learning about and caring about the people we support enables us to make sure people live the lives that are important to them.

Thanks to Adrian and Meredith for sharing their story.

From Adrian's wife, Teresa

Adrian has been associated with ConnectAbility Australia for a number of years, firstly through the Friendship Club at Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre where he enjoyed singing along with the various artists who come to entertain the group and after lunch winning chocolates at bingo.

Then he joined the ConnectAbility choir on a Monday morning. He now enjoys in-home respite on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Melissa, or Meredith, take him for his daily cappuccino and a drive. Bunnings is a favourite place, as is the Botanic Gardens at Heatherbrae where once he was a volunteer when the Gardens were established in the 1980's. He remembers working on erecting the gates at the entrance of the Gardens.

So what does this do for me, it allows time to catch up with friends and make personal appointments, sleep and have what I refer to as brain down time, eg. just do nothing, or listen to calming music (Tony O'Connor's CD of Dreams and Discoveries is a good one). I can just be there in the moment, and you will be surprised how in that quiet time you can work out ways to handle a difficult situation, and as a full time carer I can have plenty of them.

A big thank you to all ConnectAbility Australia staff who have been there for Adrian over the years.



Our Board Good Governance



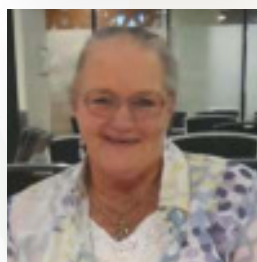
Nathan Franks Chair

Nathan joined the Board 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.



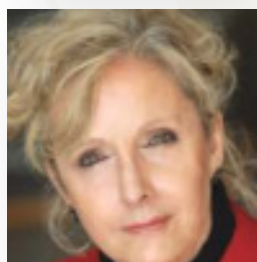
Bernie Garrett Deputy Chair

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 Board 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. Having day-to-day experiences in supporting her son and dealing with other providers, allied health and government services gives Joan a real time experience of disability life. 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 of the Newcastle Business Club and becoming a board member of ConnectAbility provides her with an opportunity to donate back to the community.



David Hubbard

David is the founding director of CINCH Finance & Operations, NonProfit Business Transformation Specialists. David has been involved with ConnectAbility as a consultant since 2015 and has presented alongside David Carey at a number of NDIS conferences assisting other NDIS providers learn from the ConnectAbility experience with transition to the NDIS.



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 working 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 joined ConnectAbility's Board this year. Craig describes his strengths as being highly driven, self-motivated and highly resourceful with a proven ability to develop and manage high value relationships and projects, guiding teams through organisational change, and engaging successfully with stakeholders at all levels. He believes in implementing and delivering business strategies that improve productivity, profitability and customer service. Craig holds a Bachelor of Economics (Majors in Economics, Psychology and Industrial Relations) from the University of Newcastle and Marketing Principles Program via the University of Sydney. Craig has held senior positions within large corporations, and also consulted utilising his strengths in bringing about cultural change that focuses on customer outcomes. Craig sees an opportunity to utilise his business background, and people and culture expertise to support ConnectAbility as the organisation grows to ensure that staff, customers and all stakeholders are part of a quality organisation.

ConnectAbility Supporting the Community



As a not-for-profit organisation being able to give back to the community that supports us is something we are proud to be a part of, hence ConnectAbility's continued sponsorship and involvement with Surfest.

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 WSLQS6000 level.

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

Surfest, like ConnectAbility, is also about developing the potential of the participants and assisting them reach their goals and ambitions.

Our customers enjoy the opportunity to get out each February and be involved. It is an opportunity to meet these fantastic role models and get involved in the activities on the beach.

Our 'allocated surfer' is keenly followed and everyone loves to get an autograph. It is also an opportunity to break down social barriers, see the benefits of sport on your health and learn about perseverance when trying to achieve your goals.

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 2021 if COVID allows.



Spotlight on the Fun Stuff...

336%



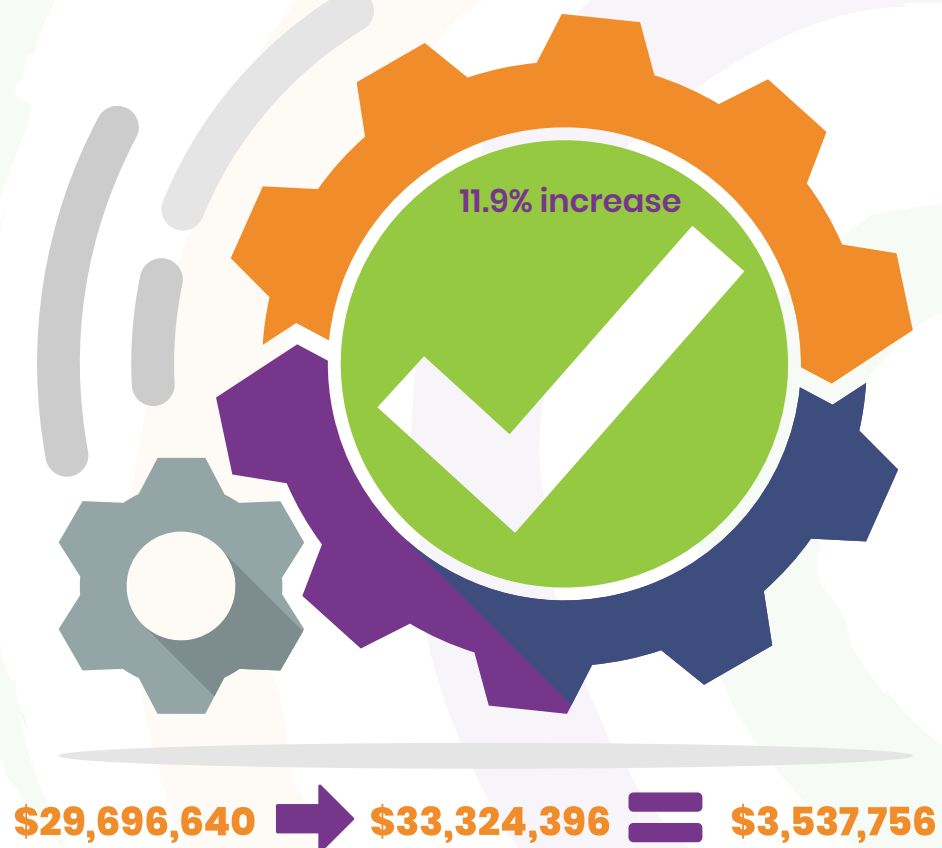
Profit for FY19/20 was up
336% on FY18/19

Happy Staff

Take a look at how many
staff have worked here
for an extended period

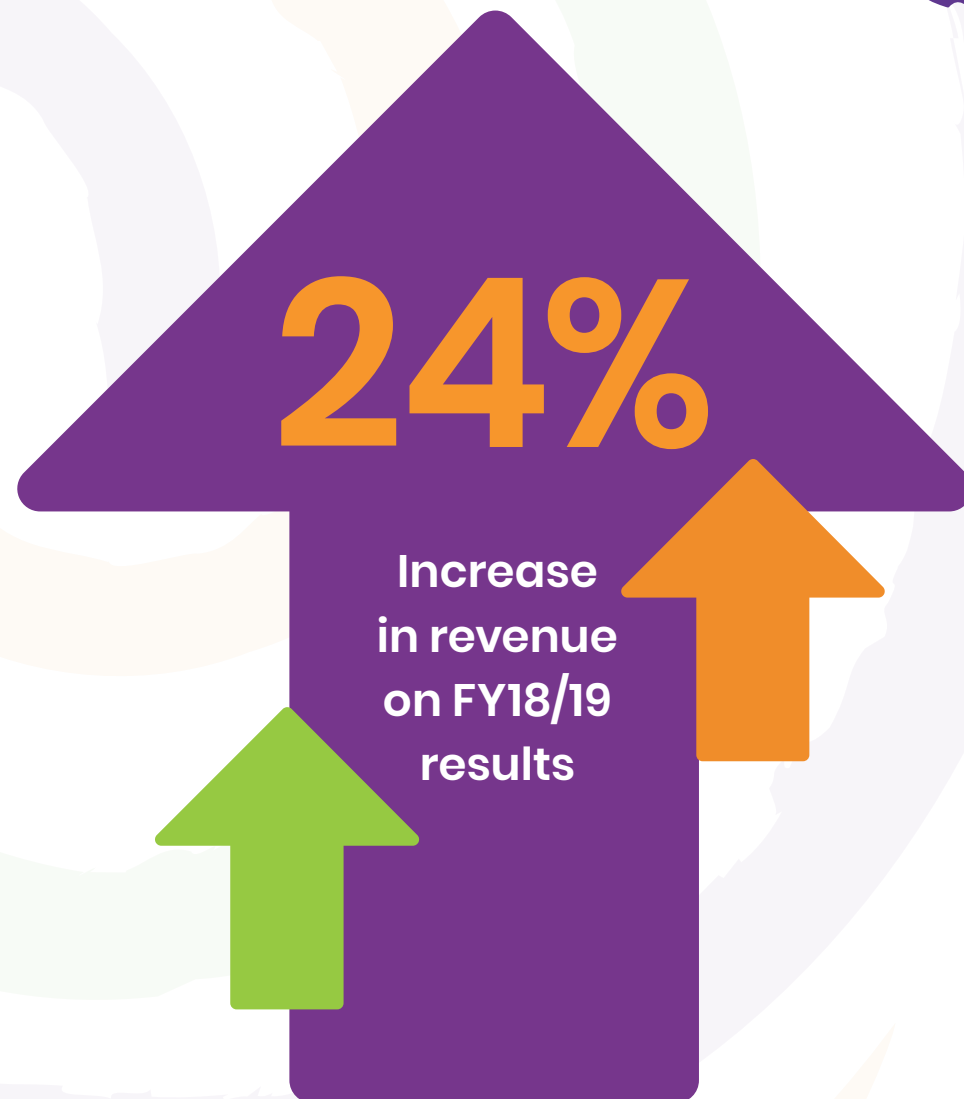


Operating Expenses



Highlights from ConnectAbility's Financial Report 2019/2020

For more detailed information go to www.connectabilityaus.com/resources



Our Senior Management

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 the services they receive, and how and when they receive those services.

ConnectAbility continues 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 cohesion and inclusion in the community which builds stronger communities. Services cannot be delivered without a cohesive team, from the committee of management to staff, volunteers, managers and office staff. Many thanks for your commitment to providing these much needed services to the community.

Brenda Gledhil Senior Leader Supported Independent Living (SIL)

I must admit to feeling nervous about transitioning from the public sector to the not-for-profit sector. I had been in the Accommodation and Respite realm for 32 years, starting as a DSW and working my way up the ladder to Manager.

I had taken a secondment in 2016 to work on a joint project with St Vincent De Paul Society and FACS to get a feel for life outside the protected boundaries of the Public Service and learnt a lot from this experience. The past few years have been interesting and since shaking off the confines of HVDS I have had the passion I have for supporting customers and staff reignited. It is a privilege to work with an inspiring group of Leaders and staff who are committed to making a difference to the people we support.

The position I hold can be demanding and stressful but I know if I need to debrief, get a second opinion or have a laugh there will always be someone around who will take the time to listen and lend support. It is empowering to work in an environment that makes you feel included, valued and trusted which is what I have found since joining the team.

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 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.”

Brendan McMahon Senior Leader Community Disability Central Coast

Brendan commenced with ConnectAbility in January 2020, taking on the position of Senior Leader, Central Coast. With over 14 years of senior leadership experience in state and national disability, and not-for-profit organisations, Brendan joined ConnectAbility with proven experience in successfully leading teams through change, developing a high performing culture, and ensuring financial sustainability and growth. Supported with a Master of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Applied Science, Brendan has extensive knowledge of the NDIS and implementing service delivery options under this scheme to enhance customer satisfaction

“What attracted me to ConnectAbility is the organisation’s purpose of empowering aspirations. I feel that everybody has the right to live the life they choose, regardless of their physical and cognitive ability.

Working in the disability sector is extremely challenging, however it is also intrinsically rewarding. I’m fortunate to have an amazing team working beside me as we collaborate together to assist customers to live the best life possible.”

Brendan is responsible for the operations of the Central Coast, overseeing the Disability Community Support program, Support Coordination, group and centre based programs and supported accommodation.

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 with over 16 years experience working in a variety of roles within the Aged Care sector from Support Worker, Case Manager, as well as 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.

Kathryn and her team have been closely watching the Royal Commission so they can quickly implement any recommendations.

Leigh Tull
Chief Financial Officer

Leigh has a Bachelor of Commerce and is a CPA. With over 20 years experience in large corporate and NFP organisations Leigh is well equipped to ensure the viability and growth of the organisation.

Leigh though, sees her objective somewhat differently:

"My role is not just about planning, monitoring and being strategic about the finances of the organisation but about the impact of those decisions on the people we support" holds Leigh.

"Being able to see an impact for an individual through the work that you do is extremely rewarding... It is also a challenging, and therefore, interesting environment to work within, no day is the same which gives you variety. As changes to funding, policy or rates are implemented by the NDIA or Dept of Health and Ageing it provides a constant need to look for additional savings or project potential opportunity."

Donna Vallette
Quality and Compliance Senior Leader

Donna sees quality and compliance as a cornerstone of ensuring people have a voice and get the services expected. She has a strong Quality Assurance background with a Diploma of Quality Management and is focussed on Integrated Risk and Compliance, Leadership and Quality Management.

Donna said by working for ConnectAbility "I can use my skills and expertise to build processes into an organisation that support the choices and quality lives of the people we support."

Helga Smit
Senior Leader Business and Engagement

Helga is an accomplished and proactive Senior Leader with a strong humanistic and quality orientation. Over 20 years of varied international experience in Strategy, Operations and HR across For-profit and For-Purpose (NFP) sectors that provides valuable perspective to executive teams and boards, cultivating a sense of partnerships across the organisation, and setting the focus and strategies for best possible business results in a customer-centric manner. Balancing a drive for growth with fiscal responsibility and emphasis on corporate governance whilst empowering employees and local community.

Helga has an Honours Bachelor in Industrial Sociology, Cert IV in Training and Assessment, Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management, Diploma in Quality Auditing with a NDIS focus, and is also a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Helga started her career in South Africa in HR & Training and then moved to the United Arab Emirates to continue in this field for various international organisations before settling in Australia. She has lead major community sector projects with a strong focus on people with disabilities.

The attraction for Helga is that she can bring her "vast international commercial experience to operate on business principles in a sector which delivers solutions to people needing a hand up, and the ability to make a difference is such a big reward. I count myself blessed to be a part of the change we want to see in the world."

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."

Working to Strengthen the Sector

Supporting Each Other

At ConnectAbility we believe that by sharing any learning and expertise from our experiences we can strengthen the sector as a whole and thereby influence better outcomes for all people with a disability.

Care Norfolk

When CEO of Care Norfolk, (yes, located on Norfolk Island) Liat Baddock contacted the CEO of ConnectAbility, David Carey to discuss the sharing of information and processes related to the NDIS, David saw it as an opportunity to support another organisation be strong and viable under the NDIS to better support their customers.

Despite being a plane flight away David and Liat exchanged information, ideas and opportunities learning the strengths of each organisation.

Care Norfolk provide similar support services to ConnectAbility.

Liat reported that following the partnership Care Norfolk had received positive feedback from their recent NDIS Audit. A great outcome for them and their customers.

David and Liat continue to stay in touch as sharing the uniqueness of each organisation has built a better system for all.

Liat sent a photo of a recent team building day in the newly started community garden at Government House, which sits in the World Heritage Area (KAVA). The stone walls in the photo are convict build.



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?

Unity Kitchens

Mick O'Shea and his team at Unity Kitchens have provided customers with options and opportunities due to Mick's commitment to having a positive impact in the communities he works within.

Unity Kitchens provide beautiful and practical kitchen solutions, and then directs some of the profits back to organisations such as ConnectAbility. Mick has been the major sponsor of ConnectAbility's Charity Golf Day since its inception and supports us whenever he can.

Our accessible kitchen at Warabrook is courtesy of Mick and his team. Having continued support allows ConnectAbility to plan for new projects that assists the goals and dreams held by the customers we support.



Dynamic Business Technologies (DBT)

The team at Dynamic Business Technologies have become an important part of the ConnectAbility family. As ConnectAbility continues to grow and look at opportunities to support people in different ways, technology plays a large and important part.

When COVID hit this year DBT were quick to offer solutions such as upgrades to our technology that allowed more people to work safely at home. They have provided education to staff and been on hand to make any changes smooth and uneventful.

Their work has ensured continuity of supports for our customers and a more productive staff group. They have also assisted our customers connect and learn more about the world and their communities.

ConnectAbility utilise the skills and expertise from the DBT team to keep us at the forefront of customer support.



Ambassador Locksmiths
Bernie Garrett
BNI Chapters
Newcastle Callaghan College students and teachers
Cinch Financial Service
Colin Law
Commonwealth Bank - Stephen Manning and Danielle McCosker
Concept BSG
ConnectAbility Board
DABS Plumbing
Design Bug & the team at Swell Magazine
DFK Crosbie
Dynamic Business Technologies
Electrical Trades Union
Ethos Health
Farrelly Construction Services
Finding Yellow
Go with the Flow Air Conditioning
Here to There Transport
Hunter Arts Network
Hunter Residences, Stockton, Management and staff
Jayes Travel - Michelle Barker
Jezweb team
Jim's Carpet Cleaning - Kerry Houghton
Juice Plus
Kathryn Charlesworth
Kent Woodcock Creative Solutions - Kent Woodcock
Leslie Potter

Linda Miller
Michael Cain
Monika Sewell
Nathan Finney
Newcastle Community Arts Centre
Newcastle City Council
Newcastle Office Interiors
Newcastle Toyota
Newcastle University - The Forum Gym
NSW Communities, Sport and Recreation
NUVO Communications
Powell Electrical - Andrew Powell
Queens Wharf Hotel
REACH Homeless Services
Rob Prosser - Videographer
Rob Reed
Ross Gleghorn - AA Kilns
PRD & Safehands Property Management
Somerset Meats
Smallman Security
Smilelabs - Lib Fallon
Sue McKinnon
Superior Pest Management
Titan Graphics
Transcend Health
Unity Kitchens - Mick O'Shea and his team
WHO Printing Newcastle
YCM Photography - Yvonne Mullane

**We would love your support
Please think of us when choosing to
donate to a charity or leave a bequest.**

**Your generosity will make sure people with
a disability get to live**

THEIR BEST LIFE

Continue to make a difference in your community

All our customers, families, community and corporates who support us each and every day.

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**

For the longest time I knew I wanted to be a teacher because I truly believe I was put earth side to be a lifelong learner whilst giving all my heart and energy into developing young minds to become the best possible self. So, when I became a support worker in 2018 I just thought it would be another job, one where I would make a difference but it wouldn't really be my end game. But boy I was wrong (and in the best possible way). I have learnt more than I could have possibly have dreamt of because of my customers.

They have taught me so much about life and how to live it even through the adversities, turning adversities into opportunities to have a fulfilling life. I have grown because of my customers. I have gained the ability to be patient, I have become an active listener, I am the voice for the voiceless, eyes for the visionless, strength when there is vulnerability and most of all I am the rainbow breaking through the clouds of loneliness and despair.

Through all this serendipity* that I decided I would merge my love of education with my love of disability and hopefully enrol into a Master of Education focusing on Special Education. With this focus I'll be able to use the skills and attributes my customers have allowed me to develop and flourish as a Special Education Teacher. Because without my customers I would never have found my true self and I will forever be in debt to everyone who took a chance on me.

**Serendipity means accidentally stumbling upon something truly wonderful, especially while looking for something entirely different."*



Holly with customer, Robyn (left)

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

Central Coast
4 Karalta Lane Erina NSW 2250
Phone: 02 4349 3700

contact@connectabilityaus.org.au
www.connectabilityaus.org.au

Additional copies of this report can be obtained from our
office, website or by contacting us by email, phone or post.

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

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. Customers reside throughout Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland, Central Coast, areas of Sydney 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.

Depending 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 2019/2020. 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.



By Alan