

mission focused market driven

AbilityOptions



ANNUAL REPORT
2015



'One Trusted Source - Many Options'



ABILITY OPTIONS WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THIS LAND, THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THE ABORIGINAL ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE. ABILITY OPTIONS RESPECT THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS, ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES.

ABOUT US

Ability Options are a not for profit organisation providing a wide range of services to people living and working in NSW, focusing on independence, empowerment, meaningful lifestyles and valued roles within community. We advocate for all people to be respected as citizens with unique skills, gifts and personal strengths to contribute. Ability Options are committed to a person-centred approach to service delivery, emphasising the individual's rights and opportunity for choice and self-determination.

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HISTORY

1976–1980

Established 1976 as the Association for the Assistance and Accommodation of Intellectually and Socially Handicapped Persons (AAISH).

Incorporated as a registered charity in a joint venture with Rotary Club of Guildford and The New South Wales Health Commission.

Initial purpose was to deinstitutionalise people with intellectual disabilities at Rydalmere Hospital and support them to live in the community by providing multi-tenant hostels.

Two community living groups initially:

- Pindari Hostel in Merrylands (6 tenants)
- Kyewong in Harris Park (8 tenants).

Supported by a community educator and a community nurse.

Began to expand and develop services beyond community housing to include the ongoing development of the individual.

1980–1990

Number of Employees: 51

Services provided: Advocacy, Farm Services, Accommodation, Supported Employment/Day Program

Geographical footprint: Blacktown LGA, Hills LGA, Parramatta LGA

People supported: 66

Growth in annual turnover to: \$1,450,000

1990–2000

Growth in annual turnover to: \$2,800,000

Growth in annual turnover to: \$5,715,000

2000–2010

2010–2015

Number of Employees: 710

Services provided: Accommodation & Supported Living, Case Management, Clinical Services, Community Access, Employment – jobactive, Employment – DES, NDIS services including Early Intervention and Therapies, Individually Funded Services, Out of School Hours Care for Teenagers with Disability, Transition to Work

Ability Options opened in Charlestown in 2013 to coincide with the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in the Hunter region.

175 NDIS participants were supported by Ability Options in the NDIS trial site by end FY 2014-15.

Geographical footprint: NSW wide

People supported: 8,000+

Growth in annual turnover to: \$31,200,000

CHAIR'S REPORT

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to work with Ability Options in this new and very challenging operational environment. Having spent many years working with Royal Blind Society, it is personally rewarding for me to again be involved in the disability sector, especially in these times of positive change driven by the recently announced rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Ability Options services have evolved in recent years and now extend beyond the disability sector, meeting the needs of people from the broader community. This evolution began with our VTEC employment services for Aboriginal Australians which have since been complemented by the Commonwealth Government jobactive employment program in which we were successful across the northern Sydney region and NSW Central Coast from July 2015.

Our new subcontracting arrangement with Olympus Solutions represents an exciting next step in Ability Options continued expansion, marking our move into mainstream employment for the first time.

Earlier this year we integrated the services of Newcastle Temporary Care within our Hunter operation, a great example of how we can partner with other organisations to expand both our service offering and our geographical reach and ensure that great services are maintained for locals, by employees who know their needs.

Initiatives such as these are in line with Ability Options broad mission statement – we strive to be fully inclusive, supporting all people who need assistance to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Our CEO Fred Van Steel and the Senior Leadership Team have led the way in proactively driving change to put this ethos into practice. Their passion and diligence has provided a strong example

of real leadership in action, helping inspire others and encouraging us all to go the extra mile on behalf of the people and families we support. As a result, Ability Options has built a strong reputation as a trusted service provider - we can all be justly proud of the commitment and dedication of our employees.

At Ability Options, we recognise that we will succeed as an organisation only if individuals choose us as their service provider. We are competing with significant private sector providers with very deep financial pockets and a willingness to take greater risks than we should ever contemplate. We have to be nimble, quick-acting and highly strategic while being true to our values as a not for profit, community-based organisation.

I'm very grateful to my fellow Board members who not only have warmly welcomed me, but also for their sustained commitment to Ability Options, in some cases over many years. They have all contributed their considerable experience and knowledge well beyond the call of duty.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our former Chair, Stephen Goode, for his substantial contribution to Ability Options. I recently had the honour of presenting Stephen with a lifetime membership award at a staff gathering with Board and management present. Stephen has served Ability Options in various roles, including Chief Executive Officer and Director as well as Chair and he has performed all these with passion and dedication.

Next year, 2016 will be the 40th anniversary of Ability Options. It is sure to be an exciting time for us and I look forward to tackling the challenges that lie ahead.

Jon Isaacs



Jon Isaacs BA [Hons]; FAICD
Chair

Jon brings to Ability Options over thirty years' senior executive and governance experience across private, public and not for profit organisations, including a successful career in the NSW Public Service and nine years as CEO of Royal Blind Society (now Vision Australia).

Since its inception in 2003 he has chaired the \$1.2 billion NSW Government/private sector joint venture development at Rouse Hill Regional Centre in north west Sydney and currently chairs four Government Audit Committees. He has been an Executive Coach and Mentor with Stephenson Mansell Group for over 17 years and is a Trustee of the Walter and Eliza Hall Trust.

Jon was elected Chair of Ability Options at the Annual General Meeting in October 2014.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



Fred JP Van Steel

Chief Executive Officer

Tertiary and postgraduate qualifications in finance, economics, marketing, business administration and management, as well as a number of instructor qualifications in the leisure and commercial maritime industries in Australia and the UK.

Fred joined Ability Options as CEO in August 2013 after holding positions as shareholder, managing director, CEO and executive management in finance and administration, operations, production, sales and marketing, IT and technology, and research and development, in disability, manufacturing, logistics and fast moving customer service organisations.

Fred also has experience with private equity firms on assignments with boards and CEOs working on strategy, restructures, recovery and market expansion throughout Australasia. At Ability Options, he is committed to establishing platforms for future innovation, ensuring that the organisation's focus is on proactively driving change, so we are always relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the people who use our services.

The financial year ended June 30 2015 has been one of evolution and expansion for Ability Options. There have been two main focuses – the ongoing success and growth of our services in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) trial site in the Hunter and expansion of our Employment division.

From our office in Charlestown in the Hunter we were providing services to 175 NDIS participants by the end of the financial year, with many of these people new to funding. We have worked hard to innovate our service delivery, ensuring we provide choice and individualised supports that fit within the NDIS paradigm.

We also integrated with Newcastle Temporary Care enabling us to further expand our Hunter region NDIS services to now include family respite and support.

As always, our focus remains centred on the individuals we serve and support – giving them choice and control and empowering them to fulfil their aspirations and goals.

Given the synergies between this approach and the laudable objectives of the NDIS, we are in the enviable position of being able to drive change proactively, staying ahead of the curve. We know this approach will be a great strength as the NDIS progressively rolls out to full implementation by 2018.

In December 2014 we helped establish and became founder members of Olympus Solutions, a national consortium made up of employment service providers and complementary organisations. After much hard work and patience, Olympus Solutions successfully tendered for jobactive which replaces Job Services Australia (JSA). The jobactive contract, which commenced July 1 2015, represents significant growth in our Employment provision and a move into mainstream employment.

Our Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTEC) service, providing

employment opportunities for indigenous Australians launched in the Macarthur and Illawarra regions in July 2014. This program provides support and delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Program placements have grown strongly since inception and we are contracted to place 220 people in employment by the end of 2015.

In last year's annual report I outlined the changes driven by the NDIS in evolving the disability sector towards a more person centred service model. Given the need to have sufficient infrastructure to support such a model, Ability Options put forward a three year Strategic Plan of Safeguard, Strengthen and Shape (S³).

Having successfully delivered the first phase of organisational-wide structural, cultural and financial change as set out for the period, we have since complemented the original S³ with a concurrent organisational structure strategy of Speed, Scale and Security.

The existing S³ plan remains on course but has been revisited and refreshed with the above additional 3S objectives to ensure we deliver innovative, customised, measurable outcome solutions for people using our services across multiple markets, geographical regions and individualised market segments. Management's delivery of our strategic plan has therefore evolved to include a focus upon this progressive concept.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Senior Leadership Team for their dedication and ongoing commitment to our organisational goals. It is only through their diligent efforts and the hard work of all our employees that Ability Options continues to advance to be ever better equipped in supporting people in their efforts to live fulfilling lives and achieve their aspirations.

Fred JP Van Steel

STRATEGIC PLAN EVOLUTION

2014

S³ OBJECTIVES

SAFEGUARD – to reduce risk and achieve compliance

STRENGTHEN – to deliver on our mission of supporting and empowering

SHAPE – our position as a leading service provider

2015

3S ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

SPEED – allocate necessary and suitable resources in a fluid and timely manner

SCALE – focus on what really matters to the people who use our services, with the right portfolio of strategic initiatives

SECURITY – detect the most important opportunities and threats early enough to proactively evolve to meet the needs of the changing delivery environment



PATRON'S MESSAGE



Trevor R Parmenter AM
Patron

Professor Emeritus, Sydney Medical School; Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, and Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney; and Adjunct Professor in the School of Rural Medicine at the University of New England.

Over the last year we at Ability Options have continued to build our reputation as a leading provider of support to people with disability across a wide variety of initiatives.

I had the pleasure during the year to visit the purpose planned and built facilities for older residents at Marayong. I was deeply impressed with the warm and friendly atmosphere that greeted me. My conversations with some of the people there told me they were enjoying a high quality of life in this new stage of their lives. Much credit goes to the dedicated employees who are supporting these people as they find new and positive ways of enjoying life in their older years.

Credit is also due to the Board of Directors and the Senior Leadership Team for their continuing efforts in planning for the transition to the "brave new world" of the full roll out of the NDIS. This process has been assisted significantly by the experiences gained from the work in the Hunter region trial site.

I believe the greatest challenge for the organisation and employees will be the move from a "service-centred" to an "outcomes-centred" approach, which has been explicit in the way services have been funded over the last several decades. The self-determination philosophy implicit in the NDIS will gradually impact upon the way Ability Options positions itself in an increasingly competitive market. People with disability will have the option of choosing a provider whom they judge as capable of giving them the support they need and wish for. Of course, financial aspects will also be a major driver for both parties.

During the year I had the opportunity to be present at the launch of Olympus Solutions and was subsequently invited to join its Circle of Influence.

The Employment division is to be congratulated for its sterling performance over the past year, and for the achievement of high Star Ratings for its several programs.

In the context of my earlier comments on outcomes, I trust that the Commonwealth Government's desire to establish a National Disability Employment Framework, the aim of which is to 'improve what we are doing to lead to better employment outcomes for people with disability', will lead to more valid employment outcome measures for people with disability. I trust the Framework will also place a greater emphasis upon training and follow-up support, especially for those with intellectual and other cognitive/mental health impairments. The principle of person-centred planning, intrinsic to the NDIS, should help to facilitate a better approach to outcomes.

One of the strengths of Ability Options work in the employment area over many years has been our commitment to sustainable employment and not just responding to processes simply to meet the Government's short term benchmarks of success.

The excellent results across the whole organisation, documented in this Annual Report, are testimony to the leadership of the Senior Leadership Team and the indefatigable employees, who are at the heart of the various support systems. The results are also evidence of a vibrant and responsive organisation which continues to echo the principles and values of its founder, the late Greg McIntyre, and is well placed to meet the challenges of the new disability support landscape.

Trevor R. Parmenter AM



2014-15 HIGHLIGHTS

- Community & Lifestyles received a \$75,000 Community Building Partnership Grant from the NSW Government to build a kitchen and sensory experience room in our Seven Hills site. With this and other renovations in place, in 2015-16 we plan to create an exciting, improved skills activity community hub plus a youth-based activity hub.
- In July 2014 After School/Vacation Care received a \$2500 grant from Goulburn Workers Club and Goulburn Soldiers Club, enabling us to install a sensory garden which provides touch, taste, smell and sight experiences for people attending our centre.
- VTEC services began in July 2014 in the Macarthur and Illawarra regions, providing a new style of service support and delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- In August 2014 our new Wholesale Nursery site in Redlands Bay, Queensland commenced operations and was selling its first product by October. Both the NSW and QLD nurseries have undergone a makeover including expansion of outside growing areas and investment in machinery to allow for higher production levels and seeding facilities.
- Connecting Health established a Transdisciplinary team enabling us to offer a greater diversification of services to the people we support. The new team includes an occupational therapist, a speech therapist for the Hunter region, a physical therapist and dietician, all of whom are working together to provide integrated services.
- In November we were provisionally accepted onto the Lifetime Care and Support (LTCS) Panel to provide attendant care services to participants within the LTCS scheme (full accreditation is expected to be complete by November 2015). In line with this, we appointed our first attendant care consultant in April.
- We won a tender to deliver disability management services following the Government's decision to open the disability employment market to competition and tender out services formerly delivered by Government provider, CRS Australia. Service delivery commenced just prior to Christmas 2014.
- FY 2014-15 has seen the highest number of participants in the Transition To Work program since its inception and our team has worked diligently to create a range of tailored work experiences which allow participants to try different career possibilities.
- We continued to grow our investment in the NDIS trial site in the Hunter, expanding into Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and preparing for the arrival of NDIS in Maitland.
- In May 2015 we expanded our Hunter region services to include respite for young people through the integration of Newcastle Temporary Care, a community-based not for profit service.



STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Last year the Senior Leadership Team and the Board established seven overarching outcomes for the organisation which aligned with the Vision and Mission of Ability Options. These are illustrated above, along with the additional goal of diversified sustainable growth. These eight objectives combined, represent the Ability Options Strategic Plan for FY 2015 – 2018.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Jon Isaacs BA [Hons]; FAICD
Chair

Jon brings to Ability Options significant experience in strategic planning and governance across private, public and not for profit organisations, including a successful career in the NSW Public Service and nine years as the CEO of the Royal Blind Society. Since its inception in 2003 he has chaired the \$1.2 billion NSW Government/private sector joint venture development at Rouse Hill in north west Sydney and currently chairs five NSW Government Audit Committees.

He has coached and mentored CEOs and senior executives from a wide range of organisations in sectors such as finance, legal, FMCG, construction/development, education, retail, regulation, human services and health.

Jon was elected Chair at the Annual General Meeting held in October 2014.



Pearl Forrester CPA; MBA;
BEcon; GradDipCompSci; GAICD
Deputy Chair

Pearl is a finance executive with experience in the not for profit human services sector, with roles over the last 10 years in Aged Care and Disability organisations. Pearl worked primarily in ASX-listed service oriented companies for over 20 years prior to moving into not for profit, mission-focused organisations to combine life and career goals. Pearl is a former regional Board member for a large aged care provider and is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Trustees of Catholic Aged Care Sydney.



David R Bamford, OAM
Non-Executive Director

David joined the Board in 2006 and has a wealth of community and corporate experience. Before retiring, David was a senior manager with NRMA, working with the company for 31 years. A Rotary member for 39 years, David is a former president of the Rotary Club of Blacktown City and has been recognised as a Paul Harris Fellow.

David is Honorary Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Blacktown Traffic Offenders Program and a member of numerous local community and safety committees. In 2009, David received a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to Rotary International and the community of Blacktown.



Michael Maxwell GradDip
AdEd (VET); MSocSci; GAICD
Non-Executive Director

Michael joined the Board in 2014. He has combined an extensive career in the social and community services sector with post-graduate qualifications in Adult Education and Social Science to work with disadvantaged communities in developing training and employment projects that have opened doorways of opportunity for those to whom they are so often closed. At the core of Michael's work has been a passion and ability to create programs that promote social and financial inclusion and by which individuals who face complex and compound factors of social disadvantage are supported to live to their full potential in a safe, secure and appropriate environments.

Michael has worked with a range of social service organisations and is currently Principal at Social Traction and lectures at several tertiary institutions.



Mark Clough BAppSc; DipEd;
DipAppFin; FFin; MAICD
Non-Executive Director

Mark is an accomplished investment, financial services and property professional, with extensive senior experience with firms such as AXA, Deutsche Bank, Challenger, ANZ and Lend Lease. Parallel with his career have been representative and advisory roles in the not for profit sector for government, sporting bodies, schools, community housing associations and scouts.

He has consistent personal and professional goals of problem solving, creating value and driving growth, innovation, sustainability and efficiency for projects and businesses within the context of social purpose and mission.



Trena Blair BA (Ed); BEd;
GradDipMgt; MAICD
Non-Executive Director

Trena brings to the Ability Options Board significant experience in strategy, leadership, marketing, cultural development and diversity. She is an accomplished international (Australian and USA) senior executive with 20 years experience working for ASX and NYSE listed organisations in Financial Services, Education, Travel and Telecommunications industries. Trena is focused on creating successful strategies to drive business transformation.

Trena combines her corporate career with her passion for supporting non-profit organisations through volunteer work in the arts, education, welfare and diversity communities. She has worked with several Boards including EPOCH USA (End Physical Punishment for Children); Athena Collaborative Group USA (Supporting young women in Financial Services); AFTA (Australian Federation of Travel Agents); and inART (bespoke international art tours). Trena is also a volunteer educator at Sydney Story Factory and The Metropolitan Museum (New York).



Richard Mossie BCom; FCPA
Non-Executive Director
and Treasurer

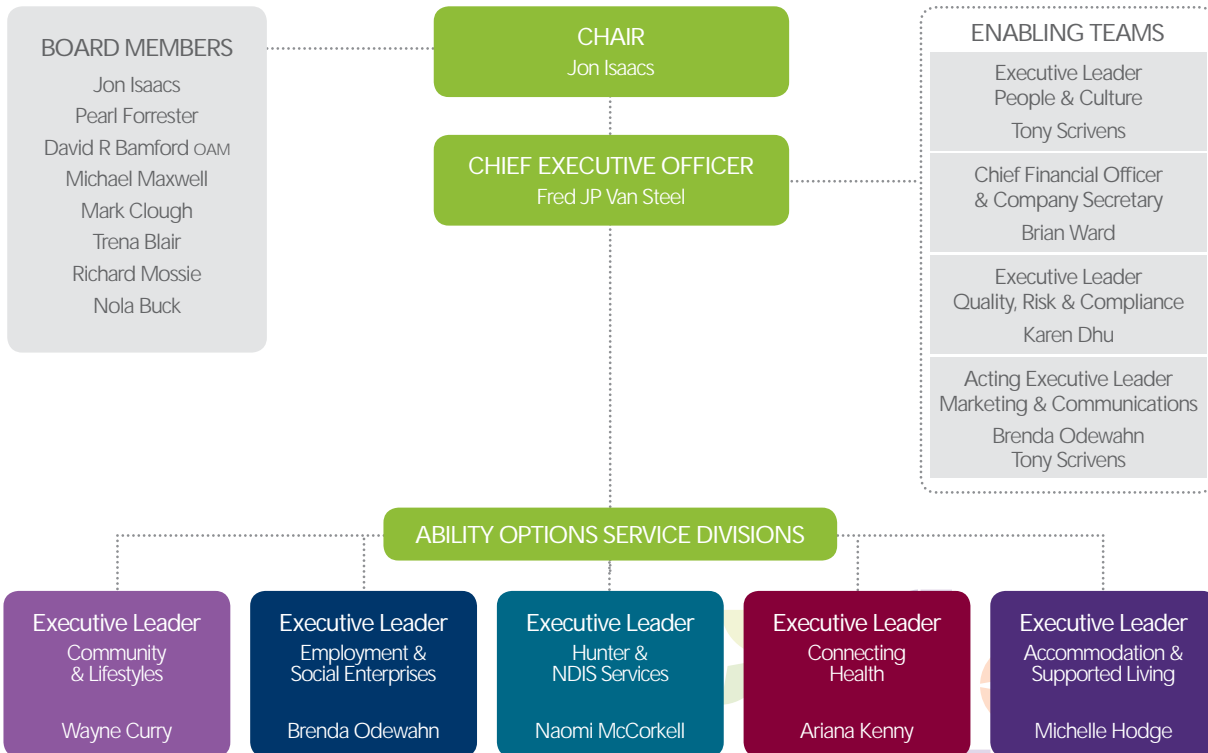
Richard joined the Ability Options Board in December 2000. He has extensive experience working in senior management and finance for a number of high profiles organisations, including as Chief Internal Auditor with Coca-Cola Amatil Ltd before he retired in 1999. Richard has also served as Treasurer for the Oatlands Golf Club, a role he retired from in 2008 after many years of service. As a Director and Treasurer of Ability Options, Richard is committed to using his knowledge and expertise to enhance services for people with disability.



Nola Buck
Non-Executive Director

Nola has been a Board member since September 2002. Nola's commitment to the independence, worth and dignity of the service users of Ability Options was ignited when she supported them at their monthly client meetings. Nola has been an advocate for people with disability for over twenty years and is a life member of both the Polio NSW Inc. and People with Disability Australia Incorporated. Having contracted poliomyelitis as an infant, Nola has a life-long experience of disability. Nola is married with four adult children and lives in western Sydney.

OUR STRUCTURE



COMMITTEES

AUDIT & RISK

Richard Mossie (Chair), David Bamford, Michael Maxwell

Responsibilities:

- monitoring organisational-wide risk management
- internal audit process
- external audit
- legislative/regulatory compliance.
- acknowledging contributions.

MARKETING & FUNDRAISING

Trena Blair (Chair), Mark Clough, David Bamford

Responsibilities:

- not for profit marketplace differentiation
- person centred focus
- fundraising as applied to enhancing experience for people using our services
- community engagement
- management of volunteer efforts, welcoming and acknowledging contributions.

NURSERY IMPLEMENTATION

Michael Maxwell (Chair), Richard Mossie, Trena Blair

Responsibilities:

- management and monitoring of the successful implementation of the Queensland nursery expansion
- ensuring long-term viability
- financial risk management and minimisation.
- acknowledging contributions.

SERVICE & QUALITY

Michael Maxwell (Chair), Nola Buck, Pearl Forrester

Responsibilities:

- culture focused on empowering the individual
- employee quality and development
- experience of people using our services.

FINANCE (PROJECTS)

Pearl Forrester (Chair), Mark Clough, Nola Buck

Responsibilities:

- getting the most out of our capital given our not-for-profit status
- asset management
- budget/forecast cycle
- finance policy.

REMUNERATION & NOMINATION

Jon Isaacs (Chair), Pearl Forrester, Richard Mossie

Responsibilities:

- Board and Senior Leadership Team succession
- CEO and Senior Leadership Team remuneration
- remuneration policy.

To strengthen our governance, effectively manage risk and compliance and to ensure transparent reporting, six committees were established in 2014-15. Each committee reports to the Board and is comprised of non-executive directors.



GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Department of
Ageing, Disability
and Home Care
(ADHC)

\$19,100,000

NSW Department
of Family and
Community
Services (FACS)
FACS and ADHC - DOCS

\$275,000

National
Disability
Insurance
Scheme (NDIS)

\$830,000

Department of
Education, Employment
and Workplace
Relations (DEEWR)
now known as Department
of Social Services (DSS)

\$9,300,000



Ability Options is contracted to deliver a range of services on behalf of the Federal and NSW Governments. Funds are allocated to specific programs and service targets. Expenditure of funds is monitored in accordance with contractual obligations and outcomes as stated on the program contract or service details outlined by the funding body.

ABILITY AWARENESS DAY 2014

Ability Awareness Day was held at Castle Hill RSL in August 2014, 200+ people attended made up of participants, families, support workers and employees.

Tommy Hershell, our ambassador and Triple M broadcaster was once again MC of the event. He led the entertainment for the day and brought his own energy and enthusiasm to the occasion.

Special guests included South Sydney legend Mario Fenech and Australia's Got Talent grand finalist and paralympian Paul Nunnari ('the other Superman'). Mario and Paul's joint message was "Believe in yourself, aim your sights high to achieve your dreams, as nothing is impossible".

'Ability's Got Talent' was the theme of the performances with 12 participants taking part, doubling the number from the previous year, expressing their talents through musical instruments, singing and dance. Attendees came from all across the range of Ability Options programs.

Hills Shire Council as part of their Community Access Program provided a grant of \$1000 and as part of ClubGrants for The Hills LGA, we were granted a further \$1150 towards the venue hire. Busways provided transport between Penrith and Castle Hill at no cost, the NRL One Community program provided Special Guest Mario Fenech for no fee, and one of our talented employees, Cherie Raffan provided Auslan interpretation.

Songs performed ranged from old time classics Hank Williams and Elvis to music from Michael Jackson presented in a flash mob style dance routine.















SERVICES

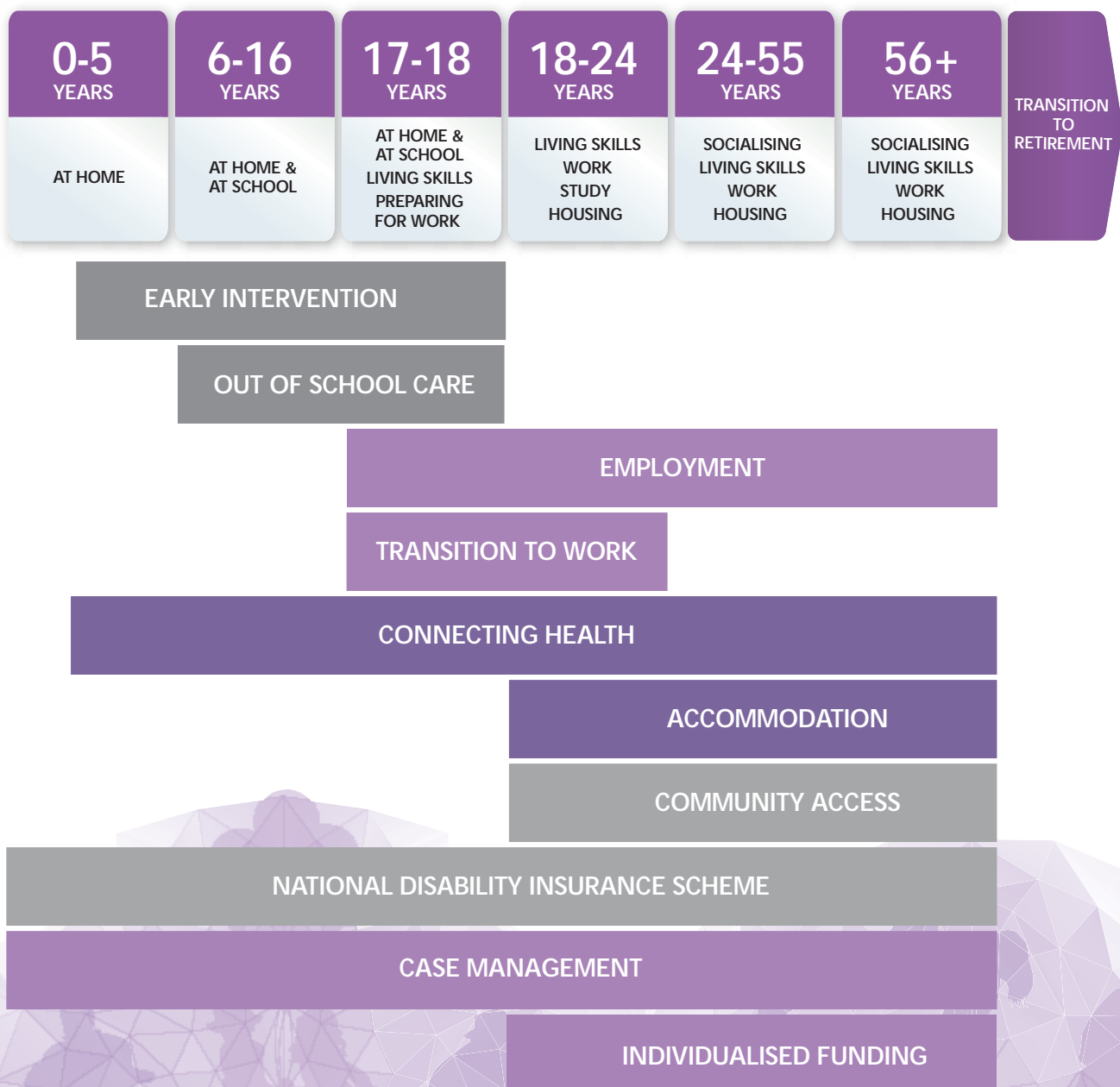
SERVICES SNAPSHOT

 <p>TRANSITION TO WORK</p> <p>Two year program that assists school leavers with disability to successfully transition into the workforce, vocational education/training tertiary education.</p>	 <p>DES</p> <p>A hands-on specialist service assisting people with disability, injury or long-term health condition into work.</p>	 <p>JOBACTIVE</p> <p>We match the right people to the right jobs, delivering sustainable employment across nine sites in Sydney and the Central Coast.</p>	 <p>VTEC</p> <p>Our Vocational Training & Employment Centres connect Indigenous Australian job seekers with skills, qualifications, training and access to guaranteed jobs across Sydney.</p>
 <p>NDIS</p> <p>Providing support to participants in the NDIS Hunter trial site and now Nepean Blue Mountains for 0-18. Working with people to turn NDIS plans into action. Transition planning is in place for the full NSW rollout by 2018.</p>	 <p>ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORTED LIVING</p> <p>Accommodation and supported living choices for people with disability. Includes 24 hour group homes, leaving care support, emergency respite in north west Sydney and independent living in the Central Coast and Hunter regions.</p>	 <p>WHOLESALE NURSERY</p> <p>We run two not for profit nurseries that increase training and employment opportunities for people with disability. We grow hundreds of varieties of annuals, perennials and hedge lines for major retailers including Masters.</p>	 <p>INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING</p> <p>Partnering with individuals and their families to ensure the people we work with are the drivers of change.</p>
 <p>SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION</p> <p>A wide selection of activities and skills for life programs, support and training to assist people to learn new skills as well as make new friends.</p>	 <p>CASE MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Support for people with disability to live independently, and to stay connected to the local community.</p>	 <p>DROP IN SUPPORT</p> <p>Offers assistance with everyday tasks, develops skills to enable people to live as independently as possible and stay connected to their local community.</p>	 <p>AFTER SCHOOL VACATION & RESPITE CARE</p> <p>Fun age-appropriate activities after school and during school holidays for teenagers with disability in the Goulburn area, and the Hunter.</p>

Here is a summary of the range of services, supports and program provided by Ability Options. Full details on each service division are reported in this section (pages 19 – 45).

SUPPORT FOR ALL AGES

Ability Options provide services across each different life stages. From early intervention to school leaver programs, employment and independent living options, we aim to always provide choice, control and flexibility.





HUNTER & NDIS SERVICES

Ability Options operate throughout the Hunter region, including Newcastle and Lake Macquarie local government areas, as well as the Central Coast. Services include:

- Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund (SAIF)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) - direct support, case coordination, therapy supports and individualised accommodation supports through SAIF.

These extensive support services offer assistance to people at all stages of life from babies up to people aged 65 and over, including

- people with intellectual disability
- people with complex health and medical support requirements
- people with support needs as a result of alcohol and drugs
- people with mental health support needs
- people with disability who are experiencing such complexities as homelessness, domestic violence and family breakdowns
- people seeking assistance to develop and maintain independence either within their own homes or in other living environments like supported accommodation or nursing homes
- children with physical and cognitive disabilities.

Since May 2015, we have also provided respite services for young people through the integration of community-based not for profit service provider Newcastle Temporary Care.

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION INNOVATION FUND

Ability Options together with Compass Housing were successful in gaining a Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund (SAIF) grant in 2012, with Ability Options as the disability support provider and Compass Housing as the community housing provider. The project is providing new housing and support for 20 people with disability to live as independently as possible in the community.

The supports provided are individually structured to meet each resident's needs and wants. All units include two bedrooms, allowing residents to have a flatmate or family member live with them or use the space as they choose (in some cases this may accommodate a support worker overnight if required). The units have been built in line with each resident's infrastructure needs and will be used for long-term supported rental accommodation for people with disability. Ten of the units are located in the Newcastle area within the Hunter NDIS trial site, with a further 10 on the Central Coast.

This housing model requires employees who have the capacity to work independently, creatively and autonomously at a high level, and we have many dedicated support staff doing just that. Ability Options is privileged to have employees able to maintain these exceptional levels of drive and passion. The reward for us all is seeing the growing independence in the people we support.



Naomi McCorkell

Executive Leader
Hunter & NDIS Services*

Qualifications

Associate Degree in Law,
Bachelor of Social Science
and Master of Social Science
(Human Services Management)

Naomi has been with Ability Options since August 2013 heading up the Hunter & NDIS Services in NSW. Prior to her appointment she held senior roles in government and non-government organisations across the disability services sector. Naomi's focus is to develop a sustainable business model to be implemented across Ability Options following the full rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Naomi is passionate about all people having equal access to a good life and committed to supporting the disability services sector in this time of significant change. The roles she has held in recent years have given her a sound understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by the introduction of the NDIS.

** Naomi would like to acknowledge and thank Andrew Warren who acted in her position from August 2014 to February 2015.*

Over FY 2014-15 the residents in these SAIF houses have been settling into their new homes and establishing themselves within an unfamiliar and different environment. In many cases it is the first time they have lived on their own. They have come from diverse backgrounds - from living with their parents or in foster care, to staying in aged care facilities/institutions and rehabilitation centres. For many this move has been profound as they take their initial steps into a new local community and familiarise themselves with its amenities and services.

FEATURE STORIES

RENEE SKYE

Renee Skye lives at one of the 20 newly built SAIF houses on the Central Coast. Her perspective on life has shifted significantly since she moved in. A year ago Renee Skye received up to 75 hours of support per week and now needs only 23. This is primarily around building skills towards greater independence at home, including learning how to stay safe, accessing medical appointments and support to engage, connect and participate in her community thereby building a local support network. Renee Skye says she has great trust in her support team to help her to implement her plan and is taking huge steps forward to becoming an independent adult.

Renee Skye was happy to share her story and took great pride in writing this:

"Well we all have to grow up at some point, and this is where I start ... I've lived in care since I was two years old and have experienced a lot which made me grow up a little faster than you would expect or than most of us. I travelled around the countryside and many foster homes, not that I was counting, got into the system in unfortunate circumstances. Was with 16+ foster families and over 15 schools - that's what taught me to learn and grow faster and be a stronger person."

JARROD

Jarrold had been living at home with his parents but wanted more independence. We were able to support him to move into his own two bedroom flat. Jarrold is now learning to cook his own meals and driving himself to work, enjoying the freedom to make his own choices.

Recently Jarrold decided he wanted to join a gym. Ability Options helped him plan what he'd need to enable him to attend and matched him with Brendan, who now facilitates his gym visits.

Jarrold now feels more confident and is enjoying his independence, secure in the knowledge he has support and assistance when needed.



NDIS SERVICES

The NSW Government Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC)'s decision to trial the NDIS in the Hunter region from 2013 introduced a new paradigm for Ability Options. Given our established commitment to offering a person centred approach (we have been providing a self-managed service model since the NSW pilot of individualised funding in 2007), we were in a strong position to take a proactive role in implementing services which offer individualised support for people with disability, providing greater choice and control in determining what works best for them. We recognise the NDIS' role in opening up opportunities for people to enhance their lives and are pleased to be at the forefront in offering life-changing options.

Ability Options currently offer a range of services to meet the needs of people of all ages who have received an NDIS package and during FY 2014-15 we supported 175 participants in the Hunter NDIS trial site and another 11 on the NSW Central Coast. Services and supports are coordinated to meet individual requirements - no two NDIS plans are the same - and include housing solutions, life skills, therapeutic supports and community activities.

With our solid track record of NDIS experience and an expert team including employees who are themselves participants in NDIS, we are ideally positioned to offer planning sessions to make transitioning to the NDIS easier, working with participants to help them turn their NDIS plans into action. We are developing greater expertise in case coordination under the NDIS model and are expanding the therapy supports we offer.

Our services have been designed to maintain a strong focus on and link to the NDIS objective of supporting participants and their families so they can be at the centre of promoting and achieving their goals.

As such, we are always looking for opportunities to assist participants and their families to experience greater empowerment, which in turn enables us to be guided and driven by them. We don't take over - rather we encourage participants and their families to actively decide how their NDIS plan will come to life.

When developing a plan with a participant and their family, we have a detailed service agreement outlining who does what and by when – ensuring our ongoing accountability to the people who utilise our services. We have implemented technological resources enabling us to provide families with weekly updates about how their plan funds have been spent and how much is remaining, in line with our goal of being completely transparent.

We also actively seek feedback from participants and families on a regular basis – even asking representative participants and family members to review our key pieces of documentation to see whether they made sense and how they could be improved.

Our case coordination and therapy teams work side by side, utilising the team members' expertise to ensure complementary supports. In this way we are able to provide the best possible service.

Service gaps or areas for improvement are constantly being identified. For example we saw that our support workers needed to be better nurtured and more connected to our organisation and sought their input on how we could bring this about.

Changes in the sector, generated by the NDIS, are expected to create an increased casualisation of the workforce. We know we need to invest in the people on the ground doing the hard work and ensure they are feeling valued and appreciated. This has led to the introduction of workforce development focus – we are looking forward to refining this further over the next financial year.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Speech Pathologist Kimberly Mulder was appointed to head our Transdisciplinary team of speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists who assist young children and teenagers. The Transdisciplinary approach ensures families have one key contact who manages the services they require, reducing overlap between various specialists and providing continuity by focusing on building a strong relationship between the key worker and the family.
- The imminent full rollout of the NDIS is prioritising the need to maximise efficiencies and operate a financially sustainable model of support while maintaining fixed prices and minimal profit margins.
- Our team has responded proactively, viewing this evolution as an opportunity to further refine the way we work alongside people – improving our systems and processes to provide a more responsive and transparent high quality service. We spend time with participants and their families in order to better understand how, when and with whom they would like their support services implemented.
- The level of technological development over FY 2014-15 has been significant, with particular gain made in the seamless interfacing of all Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems. Our goal is to streamline all back of house processes to ensure maximum energy can be focused on quality service delivery.
- In Spring 2015 we undertook market research (see Page 55) to better understand the needs of people participating in the NDIS, as only through in-depth insight into their experiences can we apply those learnings and thereby continue to refine the services we offer.

The workforce changes presented by the NDIS are far-reaching. We expect significant growth in the number of support workers required to support participants in the scheme. A key concern is the need to ensure the skills and attributes of support workers match the needs of participants and their families. We are developing flexible and responsive structures to meet the needs of the growing number of people utilising our services requiring therapists and case coordination services.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our team remains 100 per cent committed to continuous improvement and service excellence. They use every opportunity to review practice, to reflect, and to seek feedback from people we are supporting and their family members. This is 'action learning' in practice – we review everything we're doing to make sure we're operating at maximum efficiency in this landscape of change.

We will continue to interact closely with Ability Options services in Sydney and across NSW, sharing our learnings and experiences with those parts of the organisation currently outside the NDIS trial site. This is providing invaluable insights for all employees as services and participants transition to the NDIS, as per the scheduled statewide rollout due for completion by 2018.

NEWCASTLE TEMPORARY CARE

In May 2015 we were able to expand our offering in the Hunter Region to include respite services for young people through the integration of Newcastle Temporary Care, a community-based not for profit service.

Newcastle Temporary Care works closely with our Charlestown team while retaining its respected brand identity and continuing to offer a suite of services currently accessed by more than 250 people in the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle areas.

The strategic integration helps ensure Newcastle Temporary Care's long-term sustainability and also allows us to expand operations in the region, filling a gap in our participant life stages strategy to now include respite and support to families.

Former Chair of Newcastle Temporary Care Brett Walker supported the integration into Ability Options, describing it as "a positive outcome for the people we support, their families and caregivers, and our employees."

Working together we can now assist a larger number of people across a wider demographic to achieve their goals and aspirations for community inclusion.

FEATURE STORIES

DANNY

Danny's case exemplifies how participants in our NDIS trial are taking an active role in assisting the scheme's design for the whole of Australia.

Danny has been providing feedback to members of parliament and local council members on the positive impact of the NDIS. While his life may appear similar to pre NDIS days, in fact Danny is much more in control and able to make decisions about when, where and from whom he receives supports. Danny is someone who has taken hold of the choice and control the NDIS provides and is utilising it to his best advantage with the support of Ability Options at each step.

The knowledge that he was able to contribute to how the NDIS evolves has empowered Danny with a sense of purpose and achievement. He is on the lookout now for other forums and opportunities where he can continue to share the positive direction his life has taken since attending his NDIS planning meeting and choosing Ability Options as his service provider.

ABBI

Abbi is a young girl who has a sparkling personality and loves dressing up and dancing. With assistance from Ability Options, Abbi's therapy team expanded to include speech and sign therapy towards the end of 2014 to assist her in communicating her needs and wishes. Working with Ability Options speech therapist Kimberley Mulder, Abbi's family have set goals of specific importance rather than focusing on 'textbook' goals for her age.

Abbi's strengths and motivators have been supported by speech and sign therapy to provide additional strategies to aid her progress and development on a daily basis. A majority of these sessions have been convenient in-home visits.

By integrating her speech and sign therapy within joint sessions which include other services, strategies have been developed which enable service providers from several different organisations to integrate and communicate with ease. This ensures Abbi is provided with the best possible support to meet her needs and ensure further personal growth.



EMPLOYMENT

Ability Options offer Disability Employment Services (DES) across 14 sites in greater western and south western Sydney. Services also embrace Employment Support Services and Disability Management Services. Our goal is to work with employers to create and support jobs which can offer our participants opportunities for community contribution and personal achievement.

We also offer IPS (Individual Placement and Support) employment services through a co-location agreement with local area health services, presently based in Katoomba and Blacktown.

The new jobactive employment program was launched across the northern Sydney region and NSW Central Coast from July 2015 via a subcontracting arrangement with Olympus Solutions.

This new Commonwealth Government initiative (replacing the Job Services Australia (JSA) program) represents a major shift for Ability Options, as it marks our move into mainstream employment services including activities such as Work for the Dole.

The Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTEC) was launched in 2014, replacing the former IEP (Indigenous Employment Program). It is based upon agreed intent by employers to employ candidates before commencing training. The program proposes to change the way Aboriginal people are engaged within employment programs and was championed by philanthropist and Fortescue Metals Group Chairman Andrew Forrest.



Brenda Odewahn

Executive Leader
Employment & Social
Enterprises

Brenda has worked in employment services since 1997, commencing in Disability Open Employment and moving into other areas including Job Services Australia, Aboriginal employment programs and specialist programs working with people requiring support for mental health needs and ex-offenders. She has held various management positions and been involved in tendering for government contracts.

Brenda joined Ability Options in 2011 and is focused on ensuring that people feel empowered to exercise real choice in their life pursuits, that they are treated with respect and appreciation, and that all efforts are made to build on their individual skills and strengths.



HIGHLIGHTS

- During FY 2014-15 Ability Options won a tender to deliver disability management services. This followed the Government's decision to open the disability employment market to competition and tender out services formerly delivered by Government provider, CRS Australia.
As a result, we expanded operations in western Sydney and commenced delivery of these services just prior to Christmas 2014.
- Improvement was achieved in our DES Star Ratings. The Government's DES Star Ratings system measures the relative success of providers in achieving outcomes for job seekers taking part in programs. Our Mt Druitt, Seven Hills, Baulkham Hills and Merrylands sites all achieved a five star rating, with Penrith, Hornsby and Aboriginal specialist programs in Camden and Campbelltown achieving a four star rating, which represents an outstanding result.
- We worked hard to solidify relationships with the local area health services as this better enables us to deliver quality results in achieving positive outcomes for participants with mental health support needs. Expectations are strong that we will achieve good results in 2015 audits against the IPS service delivery model.
- Our Community Liaison team continues to represent Ability Options at expos, schools and community events, engaging with the broader community to inform people about our programs and services. This has resulted in a continued steady stream of direct registrations by participants who might otherwise not have connected with a service provider in their efforts to fulfill their aspirations to work.
- During FY 2014-15 we also led a process to create Olympus Solutions, a new tender bidding consortium for employment services. This was developed particularly to tender for the new Commonwealth Government jobactive initiative which replaces JSA, but also has the potential to provide a tendering group to look at other opportunities to provide services to more people.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Olympic Solutions consortium submitted a successful tender for the delivery of jobactive services in one region – north and western Sydney (which includes the NSW Central Coast). The innovative tender proposed a customer service driven “Energise Model” utilising technology and web-based applications.

This is supported by a centralised customer service centre where the majority of routine administration functions will be undertaken along with claims processing and compliance management. From July 2015, Ability Options will operate as a subcontractor to Olympus Solutions for delivery of jobactive at nine locations in northern Sydney and the Central Coast.

VTEC services began in July 2014 based in the Macarthur and Illawarra regions, providing a new style of service support and delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Finding suitable staff to work within the new contract was initially challenging, as was introducing the concept of requiring employers to sign a letter of intent to employ. Following a series of employer breakfasts designed to promote the program and seek letters of intent, placements quickly grew and our slower start turned into a steady increase of participants gaining quality employment opportunities in companies including Qantas, Target, Australia Post and Officeworks. Recently the Australian Retailers Association conducted a five week retail skills course for nine participants, all of whom completed and went to work in a variety of retail outlets.

We are contracted to assist 220 Aboriginal people in finding meaningful employment by the end of 2015, with payment for work undertaken only made when the individual has achieved 26 consecutive weeks of employment.

FEATURE STORIES

CAROL

Carol wanted to make a contribution to her community but had been unemployed for a long time prior to being referred to our IPS employment specialist. She says the program has helped her overcome obstacles often experienced by people with mental health support needs. As part of the IPS program Carol received individualised support at all stages, from job seeking to comprehensive on the job assistance from our IPS employment specialist.

Carol now works as a cleaner and housekeeper at a bed and breakfast. "Finding someone who was loyal and wanted to come to work was one of my requirements and Carol really wanted this job," says business owner Anna. "She fits in very well to the workplace and having her here has been a breath of fresh air for me."

AMANDA

As a participant in our DES program, Amanda is very excited to have successfully secured a fulltime position as an Administrative Assistant at Rhino Rack. Through our IPS service, Amanda was supported by an employment specialist to help overcome her anxiety relating to public transport, in particular the navigating of bus routes. This included initial on the job support during her first two days of employment.

Amanda achieved a sense of accomplishment in overcoming her anxiety around public transport. Now she is excelling and thoroughly enjoying her role within the team.

KELLYANN

As CEO of Naturally Wild, a 100 per cent Australian owned company that has created a new category of 'wild Australian meats' for Coles and Woolworths, Marnie Flanagan was keen to employ Aboriginal Australians as a means of helping to ignite passion and pride in the communities from which her business sources produce.

Through our VTEC employment program Marnie was introduced to job candidate Kellyann whom she describes as "a passionate, loyal, enthusiastic young woman who demonstrated she was a good fit for where we wanted to take our business."

Kellyann is excited and optimistic about her new role with Naturally Wild, offering this advice to job seekers: "When it happens, it can happen quickly so you have to grab an opportunity when it arises."







TRANSITION TO WORK

The two-year Transition To Work program is offered across multiple sites in greater western and south western Sydney and the NSW Central Coast. It is designed to assist school leavers to develop skills, knowledge and real life experience which can facilitate their move into open employment or further education. The service options, which are provided to a diverse group of people with different support needs, include:

- pre-employment supports
- interview/job skills
- work experience placements across various industries
- support to develop strong networks
- tailored learning support
- social/recreational opportunities
- links to Disability Employment Services (DES) team upon graduation
- development of pictorial cues and other workplace modifications
- hands-on approach to learning new skills
- visual charts and pictorial cues to aid in organisation and communication
- chill out space
- close connections with Ability Options Connecting Health clinical team
- workplace modification
- referral to allied health services
- liaison with healthcare professionals to develop workplace strategies.

Our focus is on offering individualised planning tailored to each participant's specific goals. To this end, each person is allocated a case manager who identifies and works through the goals listed on their plan as these are achieved. We also undertake extensive networking and engage community support to help participants achieve their goals.

We aim to ensure that during their time with Ability Options, participants gain skills in life and work to assist in sustaining their capacity to be successful in their careers.

HIGHLIGHTS

FY 2014-15 has seen the highest number of participants in the Transition to Work program since its inception and our team has worked diligently to create a range of tailored work experiences which allow participants to try different career possibilities, making it easier to find the right one for them. By expanding the variety and number of work experience placements, most participants have been able to attend work experience multiple times per week. Such placements are of greater appeal than in-house training as they provide the opportunity to build skills and capacity in a real life situation.

Tailored sessions are conducted, often in groups, focusing on work skills and expectations and confidence in meeting or working with colleagues or customers, with some fun activities for balance. We also hosted events in which participants are able to showcase the growth they have achieved, culminating in graduations attended by friends and family.

We have successfully expanded our size, building the program offered at our Hornsby site and employing four new workers. The training package has been developed and refined to ensure relevance and links to participants' goals.

As Transition To Work is aimed at school leavers aged 18-24, it provides a complementary service to Ability Options Disability Employment Services program. In 2015 both teams worked hand in hand for the final six months of each Transition To Work program, providing participants with additional engagement and job search activities prior to graduation.

Some participants have been uncertain about how the NDIS will affect them. Our team have addressed this by completing the NDIS workbook with participants and assisting them to further capitalise on free training and community information events.

FEATURE STORY

LOOKING AHEAD

During FY 2015-16 we will open a new site in Campbelltown, offering a self-managed version of the Transition to Work program in Taree, Forster and Port Macquarie.

We will build and develop Work Readiness and Employment support services offered under the NDIS for young people in the Nepean Blue Mountains region. We also plan to launch an Employment Enablement program, dedicated to job seekers with intellectual disability aged 30-55.

Our focus for the future is to continue developing a range of services and delivery models to ensure we are fully NDIS ready as the scheme rolls out across NSW. We are also committed to working more closely with Ability Options Employment to utilise the skills development centres and assist participants to achieve in a safe learning environment.

JACK

Jack is 20 years old and who was keen to study fitness with the long-term goal of working as a personal trainer. As a participant in our Transition To Work program with mild intellectual disability, Jack was assisted to enrol in TAFE and linked with on-campus learning support to ensure he was successful. Jack was also aided to gain a concession travel card enabling him to travel independently between home, TAFE and Transition To Work at minimal cost, and assisted to write a resume.

Through work experience at Shalvey Community Centre, Jack gained confidence and a sense of community involvement.

After completing the program, Jack sought the support of our Disability Employment Services team in Penrith and with their support has now commenced a fulltime two year Fitness Traineeship in a gym.

Through the support and encouragement of his family and aided by Ability Options, Jack has achieved the goal he has held since age 15 and now has the opportunity to learn his trade in a professional and supportive environment.





WHOLESALE NURSERIES

Ability Options operate two wholesale nurseries, one in St Clair in NSW which is funded as an Australian Disability Enterprise and the other in Redlands Bay, Queensland which operates as a commercial not for profit social enterprise. Both nurseries provide local employment opportunities for people with disability. In addition to employment we provide work experience, support school programs and community activities. Our employees are highly valued and contribute significantly to the ongoing success of our business.

The two sites work together to grow quality annuals, perennials, herbs, vegetables and hedging lines for sale to Masters Home Improvements, Harris Farm, Aldi and other supermarkets as well as local government and contractors, landscaping contractors and independent nurseries. At the time of writing there are 30 people with disability across both sites who have regular employment in a commercial operation.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In August 2014 our new site in Redlands Bay, Queensland commenced operations and sold its first product by October. This new location allows us to grow stock lines and provide them earlier in the year (as they bloom later in the southern states).
- Both the NSW and QLD nurseries have undergone a makeover including expansion of outside growing areas and investment in machinery to allow for higher production levels and seeding facilities. These innovations have assisted in a more efficient cost rate.
- During the year we had three supported staff achieve employment milestones: one reached 25 years of service and two others reached 20 years.
- We continue to invest in business development and opportunities to sustain the nurseries and look forward to being able to offer open days from the NSW site in late 2015.



ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES

We provide accommodation services for more than 100 people with disability in NSW across a wide range of age groups, offering assistance with

- local community engagement
- building and maintaining relationships
- creating opportunities for people to realise their hopes, goals and dreams.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Our key focus over FY 2014-15 has been to minimise restrictive practices and procedures, ensuring people are supported to expand on meaningful real life experiences that contribute to their personal growth. To this end support services are designed according to a rights-based approach. We are always looking for ways to broaden inclusion and provide assistance for people in supported living to find valued roles and opportunities to experience full citizenship in their local community.
- The restructure in June 2014 has helped build a more cohesive management team – we now have one accommodation team working in a supportive environment and sharing knowledge and experience, with everyone able to draw on each other's strengths to get the job done.
- In our ongoing effort to evolve and improve productivity we have also updated all our policies and procedures, streamlining and mapping them in accordance with best practice principles – a major undertaking resulting in improved compliance efficiencies. Examples include a new medication management plan and new financial reconciliation system, ensuring staff are effectively resourced.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our aim is to continue creating positive opportunities for people to achieve their goals, always focusing on providing individual support. We are also striving to find new accommodation for young people with disability, including the opportunity to choose more regular options and to determine who they would like to live with.



Michelle Hodge

Executive Leader
Accommodation &
Supported Living

Michelle has extensive experience in the disability sector both here and in New Zealand and joined Ability Options in March 2014. Michelle is committed to raising the expectations of service delivery by ensuring a culture of true respect, inclusion, equity and enhanced opportunities for all people to live their best life possible.

FEATURE STORY

JULIE

Julie has been moved from home to home since she was 12 years old and says safety and security were often lacking in these environments. With assistance from Ability Options she has finally been able to achieve her long held goal, moving into her own house in Penrith in August 2014.

With assistance, Julie was successful in gaining a lease with the Department of Housing. Whereas previously we would organise bill payments and grocery shopping on her behalf, Julie is now managing these responsibilities herself. While we still provide her with support services, her new living arrangement has empowered Julie to exercise greater choice and control over her life.

It has also provided her with the impetus to rise earlier each day to do her own housework as she is attentive in tending to the care and appearance of her new home.

Julie was happy to share her story, written in her own hand, in which she makes clear how pleased she is knowing that she won't have to move again unless she decides to.

End of goal at getting my own place some time in the year ago. I found the list of housing centres to try to see if I can get on a place where I don't have to move from ever since I was 12 years old I have been moving around and they never allow me to stay and stay but so far 1 year later I have achieved my goal by moving in to my new house on August 1 this year I don't have to move ever again.

Everyone can see the difference, I'm a lot happier.



COMMUNITY & LIFESTYLES

Community & Lifestyles offer a diverse range of services across NSW from case management and individually funded services, tailored individualised support and drop in support, to out of school hours and vacation care, as well as centre and community based programs with an emphasis on skills development.

Our focus is to ensure that the participant's experience forms the centrepiece of all services provided and that we are responsive to individual and family needs.

We strive to achieve individual outcomes so that the people who use our services are the drivers of change, control, choice and flexibility, enabling them to enhance their skills and independence while staying connected with their communities.

Ability Options have championed the implementation of family and communication forums in western Sydney and Goulburn over the past 12 months as part of the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). These have provided much needed information to assist people in understanding how we can provide them with support within the NDIS framework. On July 1 2015 Nepean Blue Mountains became the next district to roll out NDIS funded services, a year ahead of schedule. These target people from 0-17 years and will support up to 2000 children and young people with disability. We expect that 1000 of these children and young people will be currently receiving Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) funded services with the remaining 1000 new to services.

COMMUNITY & LIFESTYLE ACTIVITIES

Community & Lifestyles provide fun and skills based activities in which people can come together with old friends or make new ones while out and about connecting to their local community. We have recently extended fee for service based activities allowing participants to design and tailor the service they want to achieve their individual goals.

We provide a range of activities each week based around learning and education or just getting together and having a good time. These choices are reviewed quarterly to assist in ensuring variety.

In our efforts to provide a more individualised service, we hold regular feedback sessions and invite anyone interested to provide us with input and information so we can continue striving to deliver the best experience possible.

HIGHLIGHTS

- During FY 2014-15 we received a \$75,000 Community Building Partnership Grant from the NSW Government which will be used to build a kitchen and sensory experience room at our Seven Hills site. Further renovations are proposed including the creation of four purpose built rooms. With these renovations in place, in 2015-16 we plan to create an exciting, improved community hub plus a youth-based program hub.



Wayne Curry

Executive Leader

Community & Lifestyles

Wayne joined Ability Options in May 2015. His extensive experience in human services, leadership and management includes developing, managing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery in disability, emergency support and other community based services.

Wayne worked in the high support induction unit with young people aged 10-21 with very complex trauma based support needs. In his current role Wayne is heading up transformational change in supporting employees, participants and their families during the progressive implementation of the NDIS, ensuring the people we work with are empowered to exercise decision making, choice and control so they can live life to the fullest.



FEATURE STORY

MICHELLE

Michelle wanted to learn how to swim but was initially reluctant to go into the water. Swimming and hydrotherapy activities were highly recommended by her health professionals as she has difficulty walking long distances.

Through the partnership we offer with Blacktown Aquatic Centre, Michelle worked with specialist swimming instructors and after a year finally went into the water.

Michelle is now swimming 20 metres without any aids in Blacktown Olympic pool and is continuing her weekly lessons. She is really proud of her achievements and wants to keep gaining further confidence.

LOOKING AHEAD

A number of projects are scheduled for implementation in FY 2015-16:

- Community Arts and Creative Satellite Hubs: Ability Options Board have endorsed a 10 year initiative to provide an exciting opportunity for people participating in our services to take part in an inclusive community experience embracing creative, visual and performing arts initiatives.
- South West Sydney Community Hub: to provide opportunities for skills based and recreational activities with additional drop in support, respite, case management, fee for service programs, individual activities and opportunities for participants to complete further training and education.
- Transitional short term accommodation: a project to scope unmet need in short term accommodation (Centre Based Respite). We plan to commission the service model in the second half of FY 2015-16 (subject to financial sustainability analysis and Board approval).



INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING

Ability Options support around 300 people in self-managing their individual funded packages provided by ADHC, helping them to focus on their strengths and passions in order to achieve their aspirations and goals.

To ensure the best interests of participants, we develop a tailored person centred plan for each which identifies individual desires from education, social and community inclusion perspectives. Once these plans are developed and support identified, we continue to work with participants to build sustainable support into the future.

Types of packages which are funded include:

- Community Participation
- Life Choices
- Active Aging
- Supported Living Fund
- Individual Accommodation Support Package
- Individual Support Package
- Flexible Respite.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In October 2014 Claire Galvin was appointed to the position of Self Managed Program Manager which had been vacant almost a year.
- In November we were provisionally accepted onto the Lifetime Care and Support (LTCS) Panel to provide attendant care services to participants within the LTCS scheme (full accreditation is expected to be complete by November 2015). In line with this, we appointed our first attendant care consultant in April.
- In July 2015 ADHC released its new Individual Funding Handbook which formalised and mandated the processes and procedures we had put in place to ready self-managed participants for the NDIS. Employees in Sydney are working very closely with our Hunter team, partnering with them to further develop processes and procedures in readiness for the NDIS national rollout.



CASE MANAGEMENT

Ability Options Case Management aims to make a difference in people's lives every day. Whether advocating for the rights of someone to have a key card to access their own bank account, or for health services to provide equivalent levels of care to all individuals, we work alongside people to ensure their voices are heard and their rights upheld.

The people using our services live independently or with family members and the supports we offer vary depending on individual needs, including:

- working with housing providers around tenancy, with Centrelink to obtain the Disability Support Pension, or with allied health services such as dental and skin checks. We work closely with mental health teams and other service providers to ensure a holistic approach and support with legal, court, medical, hospital and advocacy concerns.
- applying for guardianship and providing information to people's families and support networks regarding long-term planning and safeguards for the future.
- linking into social groups and activities and finding creative ways of building confidence and breaking down barriers so people can participate in regular community activities and build informal relationships through social groups.
- working with ADHC and FACS (Family and Community Services) to provide solutions regarding child protection concerns and changing needs for women and their children and families.
- assisting in the development and maintenance of life skills so people can remain as independent as possible in their community. This can include support with budgets, banking, shopping, appointments, cooking, travel and training – all tailored to individual needs.

HIGHLIGHTS

- During FY 2014-15 we provided case management services to 51 individuals, including to one participant on a fee for service basis.
- Activities have included the sourcing of safe and affordable housing through Housing NSW or community housing and we have also supported applications onto the ADHC register. As of June 2015 we have one participant transitioning and another who has settled into new supported accommodation. Both have worked hard to overcome identified risks with living independently.
- Several of our participants have been successful in finding employment which has had a very positive impact on their lives both personally and socially.
- We continue to work closely with complementary service providers and community stakeholders, and are building a strong collaborative working relationship with Partners In Recovery (PIR) to achieve positive outcomes for the participants and their families.

FEATURE STORY

JOSHUA

Joshua has complex support needs and for his 21st birthday his foster family wanted to take him on a cruise with a pirate theme. As Joshua uses a wheelchair, this required special planning and enough people (all informal supports) to cover a 24 hour support roster. Joshua's family were determined that he would not be prevented from participating and a shower chair and hoist were organised to go onto the ship. A fabulous time was had and the family have since booked another cruise for everyone.

Joshua's message is "Be brave".



DROP IN SUPPORT AND DISABILITY HOUSING AND SUPPORT

This service provides drop in support for up to 50 hours per week to people living in their own homes who are looking for assistance to develop skills so they can live relatively independent lives. These include people with intellectual disability and people with mental health and/or physical health issues.

Services are offered in greater Sydney, Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands. Our team works closely with each individual to develop a unique plan to help them achieve their goals and aspirations in a way which meets their individual needs, wants and lifestyle, thereby empowering them to greater independence.

The support we offer has included weekly grocery shopping and budgeting, housework and assistance with GP and specialist appointments, as well as help with participating in interest groups within the local community.

HIGHLIGHTS

- During FY 2014-15 we supported a participant in his successful application to receive funding for Run Projects, a My Choice Matters program, which aims to aid people with disability to have more 'choice, voice and control' in their lives by doing a project that explores:
 - Choice: actively selecting options, alternatives and possibilities and making decisions right for the individual
 - Voice: having a say, being heard and speaking up
 - Control: making it happen – having the skills to put the participant's choice and voice into action.
- We provided people with strength based supports to enhance skills and independence along with supported holidays. These assist with the breaking down of fears and barriers to active participation in the local community.
- We supported one participant with volunteering at a community radio station and another to complete regular hydrotherapy sessions to assist with Multiple Sclerosis and general wellbeing.

LOOKING AHEAD

We will continue to build strong relationships with families and carers to strengthen informal supports.

Looking to the future we are committed to meeting the challenge of building stronger stakeholder and community partnerships with access teams and mental health providers, and promoting greater community acceptance and understanding for those using our services.

AFTER SCHOOL/VACATION CARE FOR TEENAGERS WITH DISABILITY

This service provides parents and carers with the opportunity to continue to work after school hours by creating a fun environment for young people from 12-18 years to participate in activities, develop new skills and spend time with peers and friends.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In July 2014 After School/Vacation Care received a \$2500 grant from Goulburn Workers Club and Goulburn Soldiers Club, enabling us to install a sensory garden which provides touch, taste, smell and sight experiences for everyone who attends our centre.
- During the Christmas period the young people visited Canberra Botanical Gardens and War Memorial, Thirlmere Train Museum and Berrima historical village.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our focus for the future is to build on an exciting and innovative space in which young people may spend their time and ensure that we support families and carers through the NDIS journey. Some initial planning will be undertaken to scope a possible new site in the local Goulburn community which will create improved accessibility for After School activities.



FEATURE STORIES

MICHAEL

Michael* was experiencing significant anxiety about going out and meeting new people and this had made him housebound. Our drop in support team worked with Michael to slowly expose him to a world outside of his home. Using our strength based support model, Michael was able to build trust and confidence and gain the skills to start doing things independently. One example was making a phone call to a service from which he wanted specific support. Michael was determined to do this independently and successfully made the call following a roleplay which included various scenarios. Michael has achieved increased independence and confidence and we are all very proud of his accomplishments.

** Name changed for privacy.*

COURTNEY

Courtney attends Crescent SSP (School for Specific Purposes) in Goulburn and has participated in the After School/Vacation service since 2005. With the support of Ability Options, Courtney completed her resume and developed skills to assist in finding a job. This led to her gaining valuable work experience with Coles and McDonalds in Goulburn. Courtney hopes to achieve fulltime employment upon graduation.

CONNECTING HEALTH – ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES

Connecting Health provides specialist support to people across a broad range of circumstances, such as living with autism and eating disorders through to chronic mental health support needs.

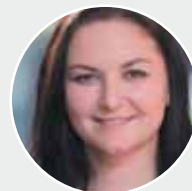
Our team, including qualified psychologists, counsellors and trainers with specialist skills, provides proactive behavioural support, case consultation and skills development and assessment, empowering people to make positive life choices and improve their communication skills. This can enhance both their daily interactions with others and their access to services.

We work closely alongside Ability Options Employment and Accommodation to provide support within an integrated framework when needed. Examples include assisting participants in the Transition To Work program by providing behavioural support and skills development, or providing assistance to people moving from supported living to independent housing.

HIGHLIGHTS

- During FY 2014-15 we established a transdisciplinary team which enables us to offer a greater diversification of services to the people we support. The new team includes an occupational therapist, a speech therapist for the Hunter region, a physical therapist and dietician, all of whom are working together to provide integrated services.
- We also focused on solidifying our existing team, consolidating areas of responsibility in preparation for the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).
- Our training program is now up and running, enabling us to share and exchange our knowledge and expertise with other NGOs.

- We have introduced a new fee for service program, enhancing the services we already supply as per the terms of our tenders with additional support. Examples include providing supportive letters for people who want to live on their own or who might require home modification for medical reasons or specialised equipment.
- We have been offering a cognitive behavioural therapy support group every month for Employment Services to assist people in overcoming mental health barriers which might otherwise prevent their return to work. Attendance has been on the rise and outcomes excellent, with many participants reporting positive results in breaking down of negative thoughts and building greater capacity for emotional regulation.



Ariana Kenny BA (Psy);
PG DIP (Forensic); MBA

Executive Leader

Connecting Health (Clinical Services)

Prior to joining Ability Options Ariana worked across rehabilitation organisations with young people leaving care, foster care organisations, homelessness supports and employment services.

With a forensic background and experience working in the area of alcohol and drug issues and with juvenile justice, Ariana has set up psychological services in private and not for profit work areas as well as delivering training in supporting confronting behaviors, risk management and mental health for more than a decade.

Ariana continuously endeavours to ensure the delivery of quality services to meet individual allied health support needs.

FEATURE STORY

JAMES

James* was referred to a vocational counsellor following unemployment linked with mental health concerns. On attending he shared his issues relating to depression, a family history of suicide and lower back pain, all of which were impacting on his ability to achieve his goals.

After a number of sessions James was assisted to access in-patient mental health services as well as counselling services provided by us.

Three months later he has achieved great outcomes including a full-time job as a foreman, which allows him to work doing what he knows and loves best without aggravating his back. James continues to utilise our counselling services.

** Name changed for privacy.*

AbilityOptions™





ENABLING TEAMS

QUALITY ASSURANCE, RISK, COMPLIANCE & PERSON CENTRED PRACTICE

EVOLVING SECTOR STANDARDS

Ability Options remain accredited to the NSW Out of Home Care standards and Disability Quality Assurance standards and are now also accredited to National Community Housing Standards which came into effect in 2014. Also in 2014 we were successful in completing our Third Party Verification.

We are partway through the process of accreditation to the Attendant Care Industry Standards. An initial audit has been completed in 2014-15, and we are currently incorporating the learnings from this into our internal processes.

RIGOROUS INTERNAL AUDITING

Ability Options Board have endorsed an internal audit charter for the organisation which is reflective of our risk profile.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

During FY 2014-15 we have rolled out frontline training in complaint handling across Ability Options. All levels of employees have been included, from direct support services through to Board members. The training process is due for completion in early 2016.

PERSON CENTRED APPROACH

Ability Options are committed to creating an organisational-wide culture of values-based practice which focuses on individualisation, community inclusion and greater choice and control for people accessing our services and supports.

To ensure the adoption of this Person Centred Approach we are providing intensive team education and workshops focused upon human rights and values and inclusive practice, as well as reviewing our marketing material and use of appropriate language.

We have provided profile pieces and utilise person centred thinking tools to gather detailed information about the best support for individuals and teams from this perspective.

In FY 2014-15 the role of Person Centred Practitioner with Ability Options has an organisational focus, rather than being dedicated to Accommodation and Supported Living services as in the previous financial year. Interactive workshops have been provided with the opportunity for people from all divisions of the organisation to attend, with more intense team training within Accommodation and Supported Living. Person centred planning processes have been introduced and utilised by a number of people receiving support.

We have regularly reviewed language used in marketing material to ensure it reflects our commitment to values-based practice and have participated in Communities of Practice, linking with other organisations involved in person centred work.

Regular workshops are planned for FY 2015-16 covering a basic introduction to person centred work, with employees and interested supported people invited to attend. Following the completion of person centred planning for all people accessing Accommodation and Supported Living services, we plan to introduce these concepts to Transition To Work and divisions of Community & Lifestyles services.

We will also be using person centred approaches to review recruitment processes within selected divisions and attending conferences to demonstrate Ability Options commitment to person centred practice thereby increasing our sphere of influence.



Karen Dhu

Executive Leader
Quality Assurance, Risk,
Compliance

Karen has been with Ability Options for more than 20 years, during which time she has held both operational and administrative function positions.

In her current role Karen works with the Senior Leadership Team to raise the profile of quality management and ensure necessary resources and attention are devoted to compliance and risk management issues. This helps to build an organisational-wide culture fostering the delivery of constant seamless service excellence, continuous improvement, compliance and risk minimisation.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

The People & Culture team works to ensure Ability Options has the leadership, shared mindset, organisation structures and roles, employee capabilities and human resources policies and processes to enable it to deliver its long-term objectives. We champion the needs and aspirations of our employees in planning and decision making while supporting managers in their critical leadership role.

SUPPORTING RAPID GROWTH

During FY 2014-15 the People & Culture team has continued to provide effective people management solutions. Between July 2014 and June 2015 we grew to over 710 employees including Newcastle Temporary Care staff. We recruited 234 people during the year, backfilling turnover and more importantly supporting expansion of services particularly in the Employment team, many of whom started in July and August 2015. Open roles rose by 275 per cent over the period – peaking at 128 in June 2015, another indication of our rapidly growing workforce.

A major focus for the second half of the financial year was the employee and industrial relations support we gave to the restructuring of our Employment team and the implementation of our jobactive services, including staffing our Customer Service Centre.

In a few short months People & Culture screened hundreds of resumes; partnered with managers in conducting close to 100 interviews; conducted five Assessment Centres to fast-track hiring; made offers to 22 external hires; confirmed over 20 internal transfers and facilitated the onboarding of over 30 staff from BreakThru People Solutions.

In addition, a one-week onboarding program was developed for the entire Employment team, including an innovative one-day Energise Induction utilising professional actors to introduce and embed our new service delivery model.

To ensure the People & Culture team could support this level of growth we restructured to increase our recruitment capabilities, including a resource in the Hunter. We also implemented an online reference checking system (Xref) which has delivered a significant productivity improvement as the team no longer play telephone tag with referees.

Efficient and effective payroll processing is another often forgotten but critically important function of People and Culture. During the year we processed over \$17 million in employee payments, comprehensively mapped all our payroll processes, progressed enhancements to our time sheet interpretation and prepared to take on the Newcastle Temporary Care payroll.



Tony Scrivens BA Hons Business Studies

Executive Leader
People & Culture

Tony is an internationally experienced commercial Human Resources Leader who has worked across an array of industries including not for profit, pharmaceutical, FMCG, automotive, IT, e-commerce, manufacturing and financial services – with both blue and white collar workforces including GE, Netscape, Pfizer, SNP, Chandler Macleod and Aspect Autism Australia.

Tony is experienced in the strategic alignment and operational implementation of all facets of Human Resources including Change Management, Employee Relations, Industrial Relations, Employee Communications, Organisational Development, Talent Management, Coaching, Learning and Development, Compensation and Benefits and e-HR systems.

Tony had a longheld goal to work in the disability sector. Joining Ability Options has given him the opportunity to apply his extensive commercial experience in the management of an organisation that assists people who need support to achieve their goals and find their place in the community.

EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK SURVEY – HIGHLIGHTING STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In late 2014 we again invited employees to participate in an independently administered online survey and provide feedback on the strengths of Ability Options as an employer and where they thought we can improve. Not surprisingly given the amount of change Ability Options has experienced since the previous survey, the results on the whole dropped a little by comparison.

However, the survey highlighted a range of positive foundations for the future, including

- employee commitment to the organisation: 74 per cent favourable, down only 1 per cent from the previous survey
- employee awareness of the Ability Options strategy: 66 per cent favourable, up 17 per cent since 2013 - testament to the effort we put in to explain our future direction and the reasons we must continue to transform.

Our employees also told us we needed to work harder in several areas, including

- career development – increasing opportunities for career moves and time invested in career planning.
- communication throughout the organisation – including knowledge and information sharing and overall cooperation between teams.
- Capability Development - the ongoing development of staff knowledge and skills.

Importantly, the majority of employees are still engaged and happy with their work, putting us in good stead to address future challenges while working on the issues raised in the survey.

CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

In a clear response to the survey, Capability Development resources were brought under People & Culture, moving from the Quality, Risk and Compliance team. A series of programs have already commenced including

- Predictive Index – an online behavioural assessment which provides insights into candidate and existing employee behaviours and motivators. The tool is already proving highly beneficial in shortlisting candidates and informing insightful interview questions and more than justified the investment during jobactive staffing project.
- Induction and onboarding – a major revamp of our corporate, business unit and workplace induction programs.

LOOKING AHEAD

FY 2015-16 will be a busy year for People & Culture with a series of programs already mapped out, including

- Career and Capability Frameworks – we will accelerate the implementation of these sector-wide structures developed by National Disability Services (NDS) which provide foundations for job design, recruitment, training, performance management and remuneration.
- Corporate Values Refresh – ensuring the values that underpin our culture remain relevant to our changing business.
- Recruitment Review – a thorough end-to-end assessment of the organisation's recruitment capability and Employee Value Proposition (EVP) to ensure we can meet our future hiring needs, including the rollout of a Cloud-based e-recruitment system.



RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

As we expand our services including our work with Aboriginal Australians through VTEC and our successful employment tender for jobactive commencing 1 July, we are delighted to formally partner with Pindarri, a remarkable organisation we have worked with for some time. Pindarri seeks to improve equality through cultural appreciation, cultural translation and strategic workforce development, and will support Ability Options to deliver our Reconciliation Action Plan.

We are committed to opening up knowledge sharing and training for all Ability Options employees – this includes retention and recruitment planning, identification of professional development needs and priorities, and most importantly recruitment and workforce sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (ATSI).

Pindarri Director Bradlee Commins is working directly with Ability Options to increase the engagement, employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people while ensuring we have a holistic understanding of cultural protocols.

With assistance from Pindarri, Ability Options have initiated the Reconciliation Action Plan and the first round of employee training took place in June 2015. This organisational wide cultural awareness program will strengthen our contribution to the VTEC Employment initiative and provide a program of supports for jobseekers and employers with an ATSI background.



RESEARCH

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION INNOVATION FUND (SAIF) HOUSING PROJECT

The Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund (SAIF) Housing Project which provides individual, high quality community housing for 20 people with disability and varying support needs is a joint initiative of Compass Community Housing in partnership with Ability Options. (see page 22)

To assist with development of additional innovative accommodation options, Ability Options have appointed a researcher to evaluate residents' personal outcomes and achievements. 'Pre-move' interviews have been completed with all residents and the majority of residents have since moved in to their new homes. Residents are already expressing positive outcomes in their wellbeing and quality of life, such as exercising choice and control and the ability to meet new people and become active members of their community. .

SOCIAL IMPACT MEASUREMENT TOOLKIT TRIAL

During FY 2014-15 the National Disability Services (NDS) led the development of the Social Impact Measurement Toolkit (SMT), which identifies a range of outcome measures under 'Being, Belonging and Becoming' for people with disability. Ability Options successfully applied to be part of trialling this tool across NSW and plan to undertake training in its use for employees and facilitators from October 2015. Invitations will then be extended to a cross-section of people receiving our support to participate in the trial.

This research complements our strategic goal of providing person centred outcomes and consistent and seamless service excellence.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTED LIVING PROJECT

Ability Options are involved in a number of external research projects and support collaborative research, including the Individual Supported Living (ISL) Project. The ISL project, which will review 150 ISL arrangements across Australia, is funded through an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant involving researchers from Curtin, Deakin and Sydney Universities and more than 10 NGOs including Ability Options.

Individual Supported Living arrangements, which take many forms, are designed to enable people with disability to live in their own home with support. The research aims to measure the impact of ISL quality on outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disability.

'KEEPING MY PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY' ACHIEVING SUCCESSFUL AGEING-IN-PLACE FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (ARC LINKAGE GRANT)

This study explores the challenges encountered by people both with and without lifelong intellectual disability as they age. Findings from earlier pilot projects have been incorporated in the development of the new study, which has been pilot tested and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee. Data collection has now commenced and includes interviews with policy makers, CEOs, senior managers and managers of disability and ageing organisations, people with high support needs and their carers, and the completion of a survey by people who are ageing.

As a Partner Investigator, Ability Options are actively involved in the Steering Committee and will promote the survey to potential participants.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

MARKETING STRATEGY AND DIRECTION

Ability Options marketing capabilities have evolved significantly over FY 2014-15 and a strategic framework has been established for ongoing development. Marketing activities were aligned with the organisation's strategic priorities of Safeguard, Strengthen and Shape to include:

- communicating with the people who use our services and their families, employees and other stakeholders
- supporting tactical specific business development opportunities
- developing and implementing initiatives to support key business objectives of the Employment and NDIS service areas.

The marketing team has expanded to support a more proactive business development focus. We have built marketing tools, in-house resources and expertise in brand and direct marketing, media relations and digital communications across business and consumer audiences.

In March 2015 the Marketing Strategic Framework was endorsed by the Board Marketing and Fundraising Committee, laying out a roadmap for ongoing strategy and identifying the key steps to prepare for two 'game-changer' events. These are expansion of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Hunter region trial into the Maitland local government area, and Ability Options launch into mainstream employment services following the successful tender for jobactive via the Olympus Solutions consortium.

MARKETING ACTIVITIES

The rapidly evolving disability sector and new Government initiatives during FY 2014-15 required proactive marketing measures on our part and we implemented a number of tactical campaigns. In December 2014 Marketing worked with the VTEC team to organise breakfast seminars for employers in Campbelltown, Wollongong and Liverpool. Presentations promoted the benefits of VTEC to employers and featured Aboriginal sporting icons including Mark Ella. Attendees included representatives from Costco, Officeworks, the Master Plumbers Apprentices and Coles, resulting in firm commitments to offer employment opportunities via Ability Options VTEC team.

Marketing also worked with Hunter NDIS Services to create a purpose built stand at PossAble disability services Expo in Maitland, introducing Ability Options to the latest NDIS region. An iPad-based system was delivered to ensure efficient data capture and a competition encouraged participation.

Able Cable, our quarterly update on news and events around the organisation, was reformatted for print in February 2015 and distributed directly to participants, families, influencers, employees and visitors to Ability Options employment sites. An e-version of Able Cable was also launched in February with links to drive traffic to abilityoptions.org.au – this incorporates tracking which provides valuable insights into how different audiences engage with each news story.

Brenda Odewahn, Executive Leader Employment was also acting Executive Leader Marketing until August 2014.

Tony Scrivens became acting Executive Leader Marketing in September 2014 in addition to his role as Executive Leader People & Culture.

DIGITAL AND ONLINE MARKETING

We have refocused and strengthened our online marketing and are seeing encouraging results. Our website's content management system was upgraded in November 2014 and over the first six months of 2015 we revised the site's structure, navigation and content to deliver a more user-friendly experience for employment and disability services visitors.

A series of web-to-lead forms have been implemented to encourage people to enquire online in preparation for the NDIS and jobactive campaigns. Google Translate, which translates web content into multiple languages, has been implemented and we continue to investigate cost effective options for improving site accessibility.

By April 2015 visitors to abilityoptions.org.au were more than double the previous year. This increased traffic is a result of search engine marketing, social media posts, email campaigns and refining the e-version of Able Cable. We continue to strive to engage more with our social media community: our Facebook audience is small but has reached a milestone of 1000 'likes' and we are interacting with a growing audience on Twitter.

We successfully applied for a non for profit Google grant in March 2015 entitling us to a daily budget for AdWords. We have since implemented a wide range of no cost search ads for Ability Options services and continue to build our organic search rankings through on-page optimisation and keyword evaluation.

We completed an upgrade to Salesforce, our database and customer relationship management system and can now store contact details for people interested in our services, distribute marketing materials plus record and evaluate campaigns. Salesforce is also used by Ability Options Employment to develop relations with a network of employers; a similar project is underway to develop sales processes and functionality for NDIS prospects.







INTEGRATED CAMPAIGN PLANNING

Workshops were held with the Employment team and the Hunter NDIS team to gather insights and develop marketing plans to drive two major marketing campaigns launching in July and October 2015. To inform marketing planning we needed to build a bank of customer insights. We completed in depth research to explore:

- how new participants go about ‘actioning’ their NDIS plans, and current NDIS participants’ perceptions of Ability Options
- employers’ recruitment processes and their opinions of jobactive and Disability Employment Services as methods of recruiting staff.

The NDIS campaign development is well underway. Plans include online and offline channels to test approaches and refine strategies in the Hunter region, in preparation for the NDIS rollout commencing in 2016. The goal is to better understand why NDIS participants chose to work with Ability Options and how we can best promote our services. Communications will be refined to align with various life stages and new services provided by the Hunter NDIS team.

In Sydney we commenced NDIS information sessions, publicised through a digital marketing campaign and one-to-one communications from our Individualised Funding team.

To prepare for jobactive, the new government initiative with a start date of July 1 2015, 42 in depth phone interviews were completed with employers. These assisted us in identifying key messaging for an employer acquisition campaign across north and western Sydney and the NSW Central Coast. The resulting insights informed marketing planning and a direct mail campaign was produced targeting employers across the jobactive regions. As part of the Energise Model’s implementation, internal signage and a general ‘look and feel’ were developed for new and refurbished employment sites.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

In the lead up to International Day of Disability, Ability Options worked with the government led ‘Don’t DIS MyABILITY’ campaign. Two Ability Options participants’ stories featured in the campaign’s widely distributed ‘Made You Look’ publication.

Holroyd Council granted Ability Options \$40,000 for the ‘YESS Project’ for the Merrylands Employment site - funding a part-time consultant. We produced a four page update to showcase success and generate further grant funding for the Youth Work Readiness Holroyd Program.

Marketing also facilitated a volunteer team-building exercise for 47 employees from TAL Insurance. Work on our Maria Loch property included painting of all common areas, bedrooms and ceilings; planting two garden beds at the front of the site; replacing and painting the old outdoor fencing; and upgrading ground cover in the courtyard. TAL donated a new barbecue and photos of the day were shared with TAL staff at a gala dinner.

FINANCE, INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY & ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Shared Services team provides financial stewardship, information communications technology (ICT) and asset management services across the organisation.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The Care Manager (TCM) is a core, whole of business application that captures information about our participants' needs and the services being delivered, allowing us to provide integrated support reflecting our 'one source of truth' strategy.

In 2014-15 TCM has been extended into more areas of the organisation – namely accommodation and Newcastle Temporary Care. We have integrated TCM with Connecting Care Worker, an electronic rostering system, and in addition we can now provide enhanced financial recording for NDIS claims and MDS reporting.

Following Olympus Solutions' successful tender for jobactive employment services, the ICT team commenced a major project in early 2015, to implement the Energise model across Ability Options Employment. This project involved establishing a new customer service centre supporting the business. A network upgrade was completed across all 21 sites in the employment division, including wireless technology to each office with integrated smart boards and smart TV to support the Energise Model.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

The asset management team proactively manages all Ability Options property assets whether owned or leased. This involves regular maintenance assessments, supporting business operations and responding to unplanned incidents.

Following Olympus Solutions' successful tender for jobactive employment services, the asset management team located and set up 9 new employment sites and managed the refurbishment and upgrading of facilities in all existing employment offices to meet the launch of the Energise Model.

We pride ourselves on providing people with disabilities and their families with flexible accommodation and support solutions. We are continuing to consolidate and grow our accommodation portfolio to meet the needs of current and future participants.



Brian Ward Bachelor of Business, MBA, Graduate of Australian Institute of Company Directors, current CPA member with CPA standing.

Chief Financial Officer and Company Secretary

Brian joined Ability Options in 2013, bringing 20 years' experience in the private and public sectors with extensive experience in financial and budgetary control, strategic planning, change management and corporate governance.

Brian's previous roles include 15 years as General Manager Corporate Services and Corporate Secretary for Port Kembla Port Corporation and two years as Executive Manager, Parliament of NSW.

In addition to his Ability Options responsibilities Brian is Deputy Chair and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee of Wollongong UniCentre Limited and has been a University appointed non-executive director since 2002.

Ability Options Limited ACN 003 175 335

Financial Statement Extracts
Summarised Financial Report

Directors' Declaration

The Directors of the company declare:

1. The financial statements and notes, as set out in the following pages are in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001:
 - (a) comply with Australian Accounting Standards; and
 - (b) give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2015 and of the performance for the year ended on that date of the consolidated entity.
2. In the Directors' opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with the resolution of the Board of Directors.

SIGNED and DATED at Bella Vista on 21st October 2015



Jonathan Isaacs – Chairperson and Director



Richard Mossie – Director and Treasurer

Ability Options Limited ACN 003 175 335

Financial Statement Extracts
Summarised Financial Report

**Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income
for the year ended 30 June 2015**

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
	\$	\$
Revenue from ordinary activities	31,218,225	29,536,946
Change in Inventories held	260,264	167,703
Raw materials and consumables	(1,209,793)	(668,835)
Employee benefits expense	(20,479,912)	(21,178,671)
Depreciation expense	(964,624)	(1,053,898)
Gain on acquisition of Newcastle Temporary Care Limited	1,410,136	-
Other expenses	(9,098,562)	(8,119,673)
<u>Net surplus / (deficit) from ordinary activities before income tax expense</u>	1,135,734	(1,316,428)
Income tax expense	-	-
<u>Net surplus / (deficit) from ordinary activities after income tax expense</u>	1,135,734	(1,316,428)
<u>Other comprehensive income</u>		
<u>Items that will be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss when specific conditions are met</u>		
<u>Net gain on revaluation of property, plant and equipment</u>	-	1,021,728
<u>Total other comprehensive income</u>	-	1,021,728
<u>Total comprehensive income</u>	1,135,734	(294,700)

Ability Options Limited ACN 003 175 335

Financial Statement Extracts
Summarised Financial Report

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
as at 30 June 2015

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
	\$	\$
<u>Current Assets</u>		
Cash and cash equivalents	766,360	909,952
Trade and other receivables	348,227	173,642
Inventories	568,440	308,177
Other assets	2,814,815	789,074
Financial assets	18,465,431	17,943,543
Total current assets	22,963,273	20,124,388
<u>Non-Current Assets</u>		
Property, Plant and Equipment	11,469,069	12,988,630
Total non-current assets	11,469,069	12,988,630
<u>Total Assets</u>	34,432,342	33,113,018
<u>Current Liabilities</u>		
Trade and other payables	7,184,992	7,241,038
Provisions	1,293,239	1,098,228
Total current liabilities	8,478,231	8,339,266
<u>Non-Current Liabilities</u>		
Provisions	294,032	249,407
Total non-current liabilities	294,032	249,407
<u>Total Liabilities</u>	8,772,263	8,588,673
<u>Net Assets</u>	25,660,079	24,524,345
Accumulated Surplus	22,459,993	20,999,566
Reserves	3,200,086	3,524,779
Total Accumulated Funds	25,660,079	24,524,345

Ability Options Limited ACN 003 175 335

Financial Statement Extracts
Summarised Financial Report

Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2015

	<u>2015</u> \$	<u>2014</u> \$
<u>Cash Flows from Operating Activities</u>		
Receipts from operations	29,421,767	39,708,583
Payments to suppliers & employees	(31,069,946)	(37,797,985)
Interest received	689,352	544,752
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	(958,827)	2,455,350
<u>Cash Flows from Investing Activities</u>		
Payments for property plant and equipment	(588,002)	(2,000,228)
Proceeds from the sale of assets	1,925,125	324,689
Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities	1,337,123	(1,675,539)
Net increase in cash held	378,296	779,811
Cash at beginning of financial year	18,853,495	18,073,684
Cash at end of the financial year	19,231,791	18,853,495



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AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION

As lead auditor for the audit of the consolidated financial report of Ability Options Limited for the year ended 30 June 2015, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the Australian professional accounting bodies.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "RSM Bird Cameron".

RSM BIRD CAMERON

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C J Hume".

C J HUME
Director

Sydney, New South Wales
Dated: 21 October 2015

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Standards Legislation

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE MEMBERS OF
ABILITY OPTIONS LIMITED

We have audited the accompanying financial report of Ability Options Limited ("the registered entity"), which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2015, the consolidated statement of comprehensive income, consolidated statement of changes in equity and consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information and the directors' declaration.

Directors' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The directors of the registered entity are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commissions Act 2012* (ACNC Act) and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the registered entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

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a scheme approved
under Professional
Standards Legislation

Birdanco Nominees Pty Ltd
ABN 33 009 321 377
Practising as
RSM Bird Cameron
ABN 65 319 382 479

Major Offices in:
Perth, Sydney,
Melbourne, Adelaide,
Canberra and Brisbane

RSM Bird Cameron is a member of the RSM network. Each member of the RSM network is an independent accounting and advisory firm which practises in its own right. The RSM network is not itself a separate legal entity in any jurisdiction.



Opinion

In our opinion the financial report of Ability Options Limited has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 30 June 2015 and of its financial performance and cash flows for the year ended on that date; and
- (ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "RSM Bird Cameron".

RSM BIRD CAMERON

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C J Hume".

C J HUME

Director

Sydney, New South Wales

Dated: 21 October 2015



AbilityOptions™



One Trusted Source – Many Options™

AbilityOptions™



enter to
WIN

1x OLYMPIC

1x MINI TABLET

2x

US CAMERA OR
7 MINI TABLET
every day

Transition to NDIS

it's simple with Ability Options:

- Plan Coordination
- Social and Community Engagement
- Daily Life Skills
- Therapeutic Supports
- Assistance with Personal Activities
- Accommodation and Tenancy

HEAD OFFICE

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EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**Bateau Bay**

Shop 11, Cresthaven Shopping Centre
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Blacktown

Suite 2/40 Third Avenue
Blacktown NSW 2148

Brookvale

Suite 102, Level 1, 696 Pittwater Rd
Brookvale NSW 2100

Camden

Shop 19, Camden Village Court
Camden NSW 2570

Campbelltown

37 Queen Street
Campbelltown NSW 2560

Chatswood

Suite 1A, Level 5, 2 Help Street
Chatswood NSW 2057

Gosford

Shop 1-2, 91-99 Mann Street
Gosford NSW 2250

Hornsby

Suite 5, Level 3 20 George Street
Hornsby NSW 2077

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Katoomba NSW 2780

Merrylands

Shop 2, 175 Pitt Street
Merrylands NSW 2160

Mount Druitt

Shop 11c, Zoe Place
Mt Druitt NSW 2770

Parramatta

Ground Floor, 15 - 17 Argyle Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

Penrith

3/30 Woodriff Street
Penrith NSW 2750

Quakers Hill

Quakers Hill Neighbourhood Centre,
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Quakers Hill NSW 2763

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Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre,
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Seven Hills

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Seven Hills NSW 2147

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The Entrance NSW 2261

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St Clair NSW 2759
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