

A photograph of a smiling man wearing a brown hat and a purple and red striped sweater, engaged in conversation with a woman whose back is to the camera. They are on a city street with blurred figures and buildings in the background.

**flourish**<sup>®</sup>  
AUSTRALIA

Where mental wellbeing thrives

**Social  
Citizenship**

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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## Vision

To enable full participation within a diverse and inclusive community.

## Mission

Working together for optimal mental health and wellbeing.

## Values

Hope, inclusion, partnership, diversity, integrity, respect, trust.



**Interpreter**

Flourish Australia is committed to providing equitable access to services for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and/or people who experience a hearing or communication disability. If you would like support with anything within this annual report, please contact us on 02 9393 9000 and we can arrange an interpreter or translator to assist.

# Social Citizenship

## FLOURISH AUSTRALIA ANNUAL REPORT 2018

### Purpose of this report

Flourish Australia is one of Australia's most experienced not-for-profit mental health organisations. For over 60 years, we have worked in local communities to support people on their mental health recovery journey.

We are continually responding to community needs that are identified through our local consultations, service delivery, research and advocacy.

This report for the year 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, provides a record of our activities, performance and financial position. In reviewing our outcomes and achievements for the year, we acknowledge our Board, senior leadership team and our highly professional staff, people with a lived experience of mental health issues, their families and carers, all of whom have contributed to these results.

This Annual Report will be printed in limited numbers, and is also available online at [flourishaustralia.org.au/annual-reports](http://flourishaustralia.org.au/annual-reports)

### Theme explanation

To flourish as individuals we all need social citizenship.

Social Citizenship acknowledges the importance of social engagement and community participation, to mental health and wellbeing – the very cornerstone of Flourish Australia's approach.

At Flourish Australia, we believe that true citizenship is about the ability for each person to grow, learn and exercise fully, their unique capacity and capabilities for doing the things that they like to do, that they are good at, and value the most. Social networks create the necessary opportunities to engage, connect, participate and receive recognition for those individual strengths and achievements.

We offer a great diversity of services and outreach programs to support people with a lived experience in creating their most fulfilling and rewarding life – as an active member of their local community and in society as a whole.

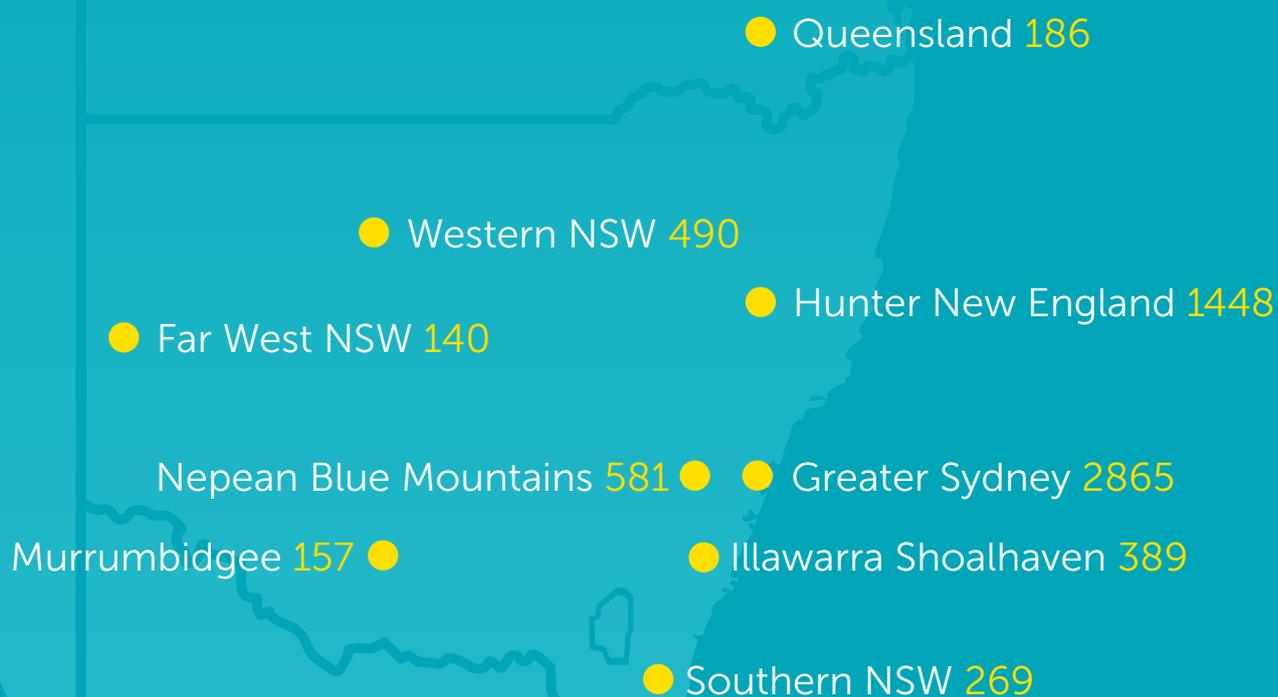
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# CHAPTER 1

## Year Overview

**6340** unique people accessed our services across  
**63 LOCATIONS** within the following regions...



# Fast Facts

## Our major services supported\*:

**3601**

people to make friends, get involved and learn new things



**1601**

people where they live



**810**

people find a job to gain confidence and independence



**1496**

people through the NDIS



**214**

people to have access to clinical services

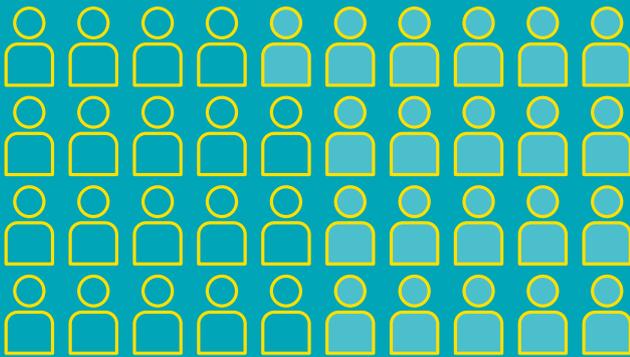


**753**

people in headspace



772 people were **EMPLOYED** by Flourish Australia



**53.7%** with a lived experience of a mental health issue

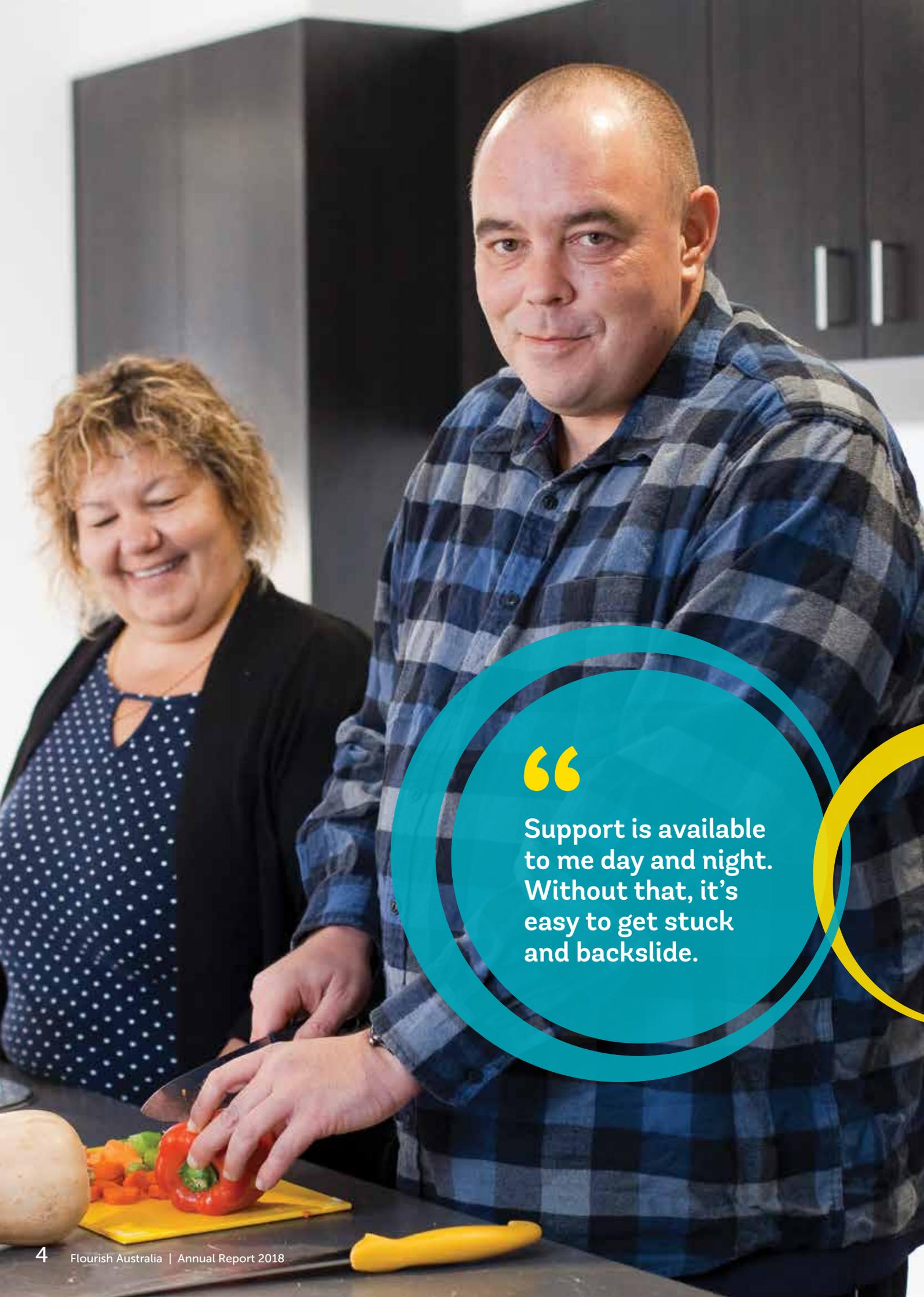
**39** internal promotions within Flourish Australia

**10** new Certificate I,II,III,IV enrolments

**181** Peer Workers across NSW and QLD

**18.8** hours on average per staff member in training

\*Some people may attend more than one location and program



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Support is available to me day and night. Without that, it's easy to get stuck and backslide.

# Brendan's Story

MAITLAND, NSW

Drug addiction robbed me of so much of my life. It's taken me 40 years not to fall through the cracks anymore. On June 28, 2018 I celebrated 500 days clean; I have the respect of my family and people who believe in me. There's even hope of a job doing Peer work and it's all thanks to Flourish Australia and the NDIS.

Things changed when I accessed the NDIS scheme. Another service would visit four times a week to get me out in public and there were transition meetings with carers and doctors. When someone from Flourish Australia came along to a meetings and heard I'd been re-admitted repeatedly, they offered me a place in one of their houses.

This place is amazing! I've come through another four months of detox and for the first time, I haven't looked back. Support is available to me day and night. Without that, it's easy to get stuck and backslide.

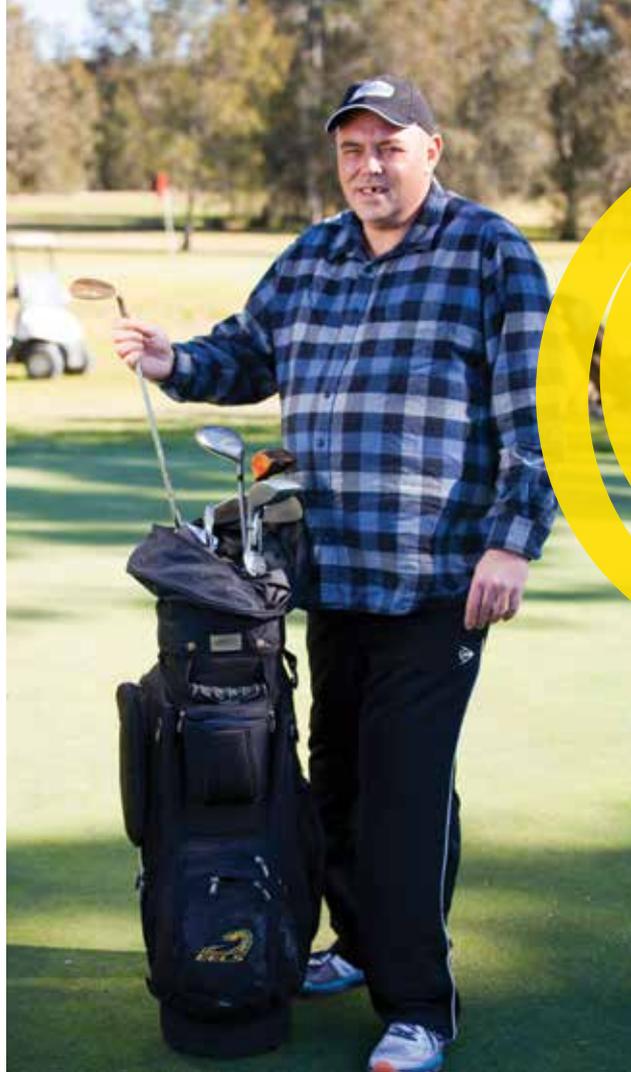
Since being with Flourish Australia I've become a different person. My own mum was uncomfortable around me before. I would only call on her when I needed money or help. I've realised I need to treat her with respect and she's actually proud of me. I help with her volunteer work for the homeless and we love spending time together. It feels good knowing my family aren't stressing the way they used to.

I think about the future now. I'm looking into social studies at TAFE so by the time I'm 45 I might have a good job. I'll need to learn how to use computers which I can do for free at the library here. There's hope I might become a Peer Worker which is a little scary because I've failed at so much in life but I have people who believe in me now.

I've given up meat because I don't agree with the way abattoirs treat animals and Flourish Australia support that choice by helping with shopping lists and cooking. They have exercise bikes too, so I'm giving that a go to get in shape.

By living more independently I've learned that if I want people to take me seriously, I need to make responsible choices. My pop died in debt and I won't let that happen to me or my family. I like being able to pay for things now. I used some of the money I earned recently, for a golf membership because I always wanted to be an A grade golfer when I was young so now that's another one of my goals.

Nothing like this would have been possible for me while I was still in the old system. The thing that's different this time is that all these opportunities have shown me how much I have to lose. I feel good about myself and I want to keep growing.



I enjoy getting involved with groups at the Flourish Australia centre in Newcastle because it's such a calm and relaxed place. When I meet young people who are struggling, I remind them right away that they don't want to be sitting here at 40, going through what I'm going through. When I went through detox, it was the ex users I listened to and how I'm the person they were so I'd like to get into drug and alcohol work and be part of a lived experience advisory group where I can help others choose a better way, by sharing my story.

Over the past 18 months, thanks to this place, my life is flourishing. I'm clean. I'm earning money and I'm starting to play sport again. I can be trusted and my family can depend on me. It feels so good being fully into everything which is what Flourish Australia has shown me how to do.

If I had my way, everyone in the system would be on the NDIS program and out in a house supported by Flourish Australia because they'd go from hopelessness to possibility. They don't give up on you which makes you want to keep at it. It's just a really positive place to get well and move forward in your life.



# Chair's Report

The last twelve months have brought with them significant change for the organisation, driven in large part by the retirement of our longstanding Chief Executive, Pamela Rutledge, the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and developments in board level governance.

In December 2017 we said au revoir to Pamela as she finished her time at Flourish Australia. A series of farewells marked the amazing contribution Pamela has made to the organisation, including leading the merger of Richmond Fellowship of NSW and PRA in 2012 and growing the breadth and depth of the organisation. We were so fortunate to have had someone of Pamela's passion and commitment to innovation at the helm for so long.



Pamela Rutledge receiving her TheMHS Outstanding Achievement Award. Presented by the Health Minister, the Hon Greg Hunt MP.

Of course, we were delighted to see Pamela's contributions to Flourish Australia and the mental health sector Nationally recognised with an Outstanding Achievement Award presented by the Health Minister, the Hon Greg Hunt MP at the TheMHS conference in August 2017. This was a fitting Award for a life of devotion to public service and supporting a wide range of people to pursue their inclusion in local communities. We wish Pamela well in her next endeavours.

There was also change at the board level this year as we welcomed Diane Robinson, a lawyer who has worked for many years in protecting and promoting the human rights of people with a disability and mental health issues. Diane brings with her a wealth of experience in many roles, including as a former President of the Guardianship Tribunal, Deputy President of the Mental Health Review Tribunal and an Adjunct Associate Professor of Law at the University of Western Sydney.

As announced at the 2017 Annual General Meeting the Board appointed Mark Orr as the new Chief Executive and he commenced in the role on 1 January 2018. Having been the Chief Information Officer since the merger Mark brought with him a deep understanding of the organisation and its culture, and a passion for our work.

The transition to a new Chief Executive is always a time of change and renewal and the first six months of Mark in the role has been true form. A Strategic Visioning process in December 2017 between the Board and Senior Leadership Team agreed to pursuing a growth plan. The first half of 2018 has seen significant work undertaken in that area, particularly in relation to the NDIS, which will begin to bear fruit in 2018-2019.

Being a Service Provider in the NDIS has continued to be a challenge as we have pursued changes to governance processes, financial management and reporting. The implementation of a new integrated finance, human resources and payroll technology solution and an increased focus on marketing is assisting the organisation to reshape itself and secure a sustainable future in an increasingly competitive and complex service and funding environment.

As one response the Board has devoted significant time to the development of a fundraising culture within the organisation as we seek to diversify our income streams to provide for greater flexibility and innovation. The development of a Fundraising Plan has been a priority and the establishment of a Fundraising Foundation will be a large focus in this area in 2018-2019.

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**The first half of 2018 has seen significant work undertaken, particularly in relation to the NDIS, which will begin to bear fruit in 2018-2019.**

As many boards have this year, the board increased its attention on cyber security always cognisant of the vast amounts of sensitive personal information we collect from people. Whilst our efforts to protect data and information meet best practice standards, we remain vigilant and maintain this issue as a standing item on our board agenda.

As part of its commitment to good governance, the board undertook its annual performance self-assessment this year. As a result of the external Board Review undertaken in 2014 we exceeded the usual 30% target for women on the board, achieving six out of eight Directors. We continue to have discussions about the broader diversity question for the board and this year we decided to commence work on developing a board skills matrix and diversity statement to guide decisions about future Director appointments. We also decided to invest in the board’s professional development as not-for-profit Directors.

In corporate governance discussions across the country this year organisational culture and the role of the board has been high on the list. The board has focussed on this issue throughout the year in order to ensure it was providing the ‘tone from the top’ required. Whilst we believe our organisational culture, as reflected in the feedback we receive from people accessing our services, partner organisations and staff, reflects our values, we have continued to explore additional ways in which the board can monitor organisational culture. To that end we will once more be embarking on site visits in 2018-2019 and seeking additional opportunities to meet with staff and people accessing our services, including the Community Advisory Council.



Professor Elizabeth More AM MAICD, Chair

On behalf of the board I thank Pamela and Mark, as well as the Senior Leadership Team for their leadership of the organisation across 2017-2018. I also warmly acknowledge the great contribution the Community Advisory Council has made to the development of the organisation and look forward to further conversations about how Flourish Australia can continue to grow as a recovery-oriented organisation.

And finally, I would like to thank the Members of Flourish Australia for their support of the Board throughout the year. We are always mindful that you continue to entrust us with continuing the great legacy of assisting people to explore opportunities and achieve the life they seek.

This Annual Report sets out some of the many great achievements of 2017-2018. I hope you enjoy reading about them.

Professor Elizabeth More AM MAICD  
Chair



# CEO's Report



Mark Orr, CEO

It is a great honour to be able to write my first Chief Executive's Report conscious of the great legacy of Pamela Rutledge when she left the organisation in December 2017. Many of the achievements of the organisation this year are the result of Pamela's leadership, and I pay tribute to her for them.

Pamela's departure was only one of a number of significant changes experienced by the organisation this year. Mike Smallsman, our long-time Chief Financial Officer retired in October, we continued the implementation of the new finance and human resources and payroll software, and we continued rolling out the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which made us focus significant effort in changing processes and systems. Each of those changes are significant for any organisation, so being able to successfully manage them all and continue to deliver high quality services, is a credit to the Flourish Australia team.

One of my delights this year has been the opportunity to travel to our many sites across New South Wales and South East Queensland. Whilst I was not able to get to visit them all by the end of June 2018, I got to about two thirds. It has been inspiring to meet people who access our services, family members and carers, and the Flourish Australia teams in so many different communities. I have been able to hear of their challenges and many achievements, and to witness first-hand the recovery focus of our services in each place.

Of course, one of the major changes occurring across our service footprint this year has been the NDIS. The NDIS continues to grow rapidly and is becoming a much larger part of the work we do. This year we supported 1496 people with NDIS packages and that work accounted for \$15.6M or 25% of our revenue, up from 13% in 2016-2017. The NDIS Price Guides continues to be challenging for us given the specialist skills required for the work we do. The Price Guide does not yet reflect that expertise sufficiently, especially for one to one support hours, an important type of support people seek from organisations. Hearing stories of organisations withdrawing from providing one on one supports, due to not being able to make it financially sustainable, causes us great concern.



Visit to Young, NSW

Employment support is an important aspiration for many people who access our services and an important part of what we do. Our community business continued their reform processes this year and due to a lot of hard work by the team are making great strides to making the businesses profitable. We were successful this year in achieving Disability Employment Service contracts in 9 Employment Services Areas to commence 1 July 2018. We are confident that this new approach will deliver great outcomes for many more people.

As planned, during the year we opened the new Resolve program in Cranebrook and Orange, funded by the Resolve Social Benefit Bond and the NSW Government. The program has operated very successfully in partnership with Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District and Western NSW Local Health District. We were delighted that the NSW Minister for Health, Hon Tanya Davies MP was able to officially open the program in February 2018.



Resolve Launch with The Hon. Tanya Davies MP, NSW Minister for Mental Health

Resolve was built on the successful development and growth of the Peer workforce. Very pleasingly, by 30 June that workforce had grown to over 180. That is a major achievement in itself but we hope to grow even more.

Committed to promoting the positive impact Peer work has on mental health services and people's recovery journeys, we were very pleased this year to partner with Mind Australia to fund and develop a new book on the subject, *Peer Work in Australia: A new future for mental health services*. The book will be launched in September 2018 by the Minister for Health, Hon Greg Hunt MP.

In the Annual Report last year, we began to mention the importance of exploring what citizenship means in supporting people with lived experience of a mental health issue. During the year we entered into a co-design process to undertake that important thought leadership work. The results to date have been very exciting.

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**It has been inspiring to meet people who access our services, family members and carers, and the Flourish Australia teams in so many different communities.**

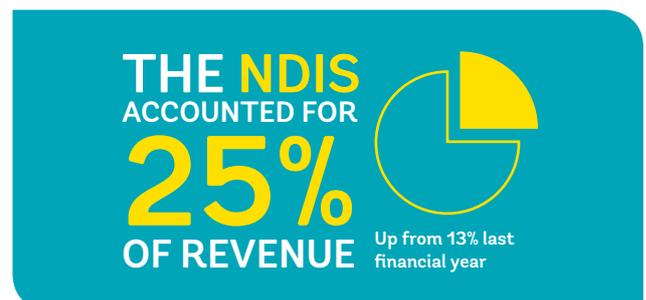
As I reflect on the last twelve months, I am deeply thankful for the work of Pamela Rutledge. Taking over as Chief Executive after Pamela has been daunting, but made much easier by how recovery-oriented, person-led and trauma informed the organisation is – and, that it has an abundance of people who are passionate about their work.

The achievements outlined in this Annual Report are the result of courage and determination of people with lived experience who commit themselves every day to a better future. We are privileged to be asked to walk alongside people on their recovery journeys, often to support them along with their families and friends. I thank them for their trust.

We could not do our work without the support of our funders, with many of whom we have longstanding relationships. It is a pleasure to be work with funders who are every bit as committed as we are to providing support that make a difference in someone's life, that supports them to pursue the life they want and to be part of their local community.

I am very proud of the work Flourish Australia does and deeply value the contribution of everyone who is part of our team. I express my thanks to the Board, led by Professor Elizabeth More AM, for placing their trust in me to lead the organisation, to the senior leadership team for joining me in that task so wholeheartedly, and to everyone who works at Flourish Australia for their passion and enthusiasm for making Flourish a place where mental wellbeing thrives.

Mark Orr GAICD FGIA FCIS  
Chief Executive



# How Did We Go?

2017-2018

## Retirement of Pamela Rutledge

As mentioned last year, Pamela Rutledge completed her time as Chief Executive of Flourish Australia on 31 December 2017. A series of farewell events were held to acknowledge Pamela's great contribution in leading the organisation. In August 2017 the Board announced the appointment of Mark Orr as our new Chief Executive. Mark was an internal appointment, having been the Chief Information Officer since the time of the merger.



## Resolve Program

The Resolve Program commenced operation on 1 October 2017 in both Orange and Cranebrook. By 30 June 2018, 124 people have been supported by the program.

## Peer Work in Australia: A New Future for Mental Health

Our Peer workforce has grown to over 180 across our service footprint. This year we partnered with Mind Australia to create a book about Peer work in Australia, which outlines the current state of play. Sadly, we were not able to complete an evaluation of our "Why not a Peer Worker?" Strategy this year. That evaluation is in the planning stages and we hope to progress it in 2018-2019. We are also planning on undertaking research specifically focusing on Peer work.



## Using Technology

The important role of technology in our work continues to grow, particularly as we seek to support our mobile workforce better. Our mobile device fleet increased significantly over the year and we completed the implementation of the new cloud-based finance and payroll system. We also commenced planning research around access to and use of technology by people accessing our services.



## Family and Carers

We increased our focus on Families and Carers this year, following the development of a Family and Carer Action Plan and Position Statement. We provided more information about supports available and published a brochure specifically focussed on Families and Carers.

## New Enterprise Agreement

In partnership with staff and Unions, we finalised the development of a new Enterprise Agreement but were unable to secure approval prior to 30 June 2018.





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It means the world to me to hear Brendan say he feels safe now, and to know that he has other people supporting him who care.

# Judi's Story

CARER, MAITLAND, NSW

Flourish Australia has been a safety net for my son and I. Brendan feels safe now and I have the peace of mind that comes with knowing he is surrounded by support people who genuinely care and know what they are doing. They listen to my concerns and we all work through problems together. I have my family back and I'm beginning to reclaim my life.

People tell me I'm so strong, but I've only done what any mum would do, to support my son through a lived experience of a mental health issue. I was drawn into Brendan's struggle with absolutely no experience of mental health issues and everything else that came with it. I had no idea what to do to help him or where to seek help.

My life became a relentless cycle of responding to Brendan's frequent distress calls and supporting him through repeated hospital admissions. I wondered if what his case workers were telling me was true – that Brendan would never change and I just had to accept that – but I could never give up on my son. I would ask myself, when will this stop? Why is it happening? What would happen to Brendan if I wasn't here for him; and what about people who have no one?

The hardest thing for me was not being heard by mental health and medical professionals. Brendan was so afraid of being hospitalised that I was the only person he trusted enough to talk to openly about what he had done and what was going on for him. That was a terrible burden to bear on my own but I wasn't believed by the experts I turned to for advice, because it didn't fit with their assessment of Brendan.

Just prior to his last period of difficulties, Brendan called in desperation and said 'mum if you don't help me, I'm going to do something'. When he eventually came home, I wasn't equipped to cope with the mental health issues Brendan was still struggling with. Doctors would ask me to bring Brendan in for a script at times when his state of mind was so alarming that I had no idea how I would get him into the car with me. Even after he was placed with an independent living program, I spent most of my days rushing down there, in response to his cries for help.

That was two years ago now. Finally, Flourish Australia became involved and suggested a share home arrangement for Brendan. I had my reservations about group housing, given our negative experiences of supported accommodation, but when I saw the house and the neighbourhood it is in, I felt so hopeful.

The peer support Brendan receives from Flourish Australia has brought peace of mind to my life. A weight has lifted because I know he's somewhere safe and surrounded by people who know what they are doing and genuinely care. I see the respect they have for Brendan as a person. He's not just a number or a diagnosis to them. They are so empathetic and understanding and I am so grateful that



they take the time to listen to us both. I can share a real conversation with them about my concerns and we work through the problems together. If Brendan slips with his medication, they are onto it right away. They notice things and address him in a straight forward way that he responds to. It's like a huge safety net for us both.

Flourish Australia have helped me to understand what is going on for my son and why. I am a lot less stressed these days and I relate differently with him. He still overloads me with information but now I'm able to encourage him to speak with his support worker and they're always there for me too. It means the world to me to hear Brendan say he feels safe now, and to know that he has other people supporting him who care.

Always being there for Brendan meant that I had shut myself off from other people in my life and had little to give my partner or younger son. Daniel has become so wise for his age, as a result of our lived experience of his big brother's struggle. As Brendan is gaining more independence, I've been able to step back a bit and find the freedom and time to take care of my own needs.

The house Brendan now lives in is such a homey, friendly environment that it's starting to feel like family to both of us. I have my son back and feel I've gained two more, in his housemates. I can visit him somewhere that feels like home to him and catch up over a coffee.

Things have turned around so completely for us now that Brendan even likes to join me in the work I do to help the homeless. Volunteering with local charities was an escape for me, to take my mind off my own problems, when I felt powerless to change my life or Brendan's. Now, helping people is something we like to do together. Brendan and his brother have reconnected too. All of our lives and relationships are so much better and we have Flourish Australia to thank for it.

# CHAPTER 2

## Our Highlights

Former CEO  
**Pamela Rutledge**  
received an award in  
recognition of her  
**40 year career in mental  
health and social service  
sectors from TheMHS**

The Supported Placement program went from strength to strength supporting people to maintain jobs within Flourish Australia, and externally in organisations such as the CSIRO and Canada Bay City Council.

**"I am very much enjoying my time at work, it definitely helps in how you see things which I believe makes you feel better in yourself."** Matthew Schipp,  
program participant and Receptionist at the CSIRO



**24 new businesses chose  
Figtree Conference Centre  
as a venue for their events**

In recognition of our celebration of diversity, We won the "A Taste of Harmony" diversity competition. The prize being a visit from TV celebrity chef Fast Ed. Fast Ed spent the day cooking with the Figtree Conference centre team

**373 individuals worked in the Community  
Businesses during the year** and we  
supported 38 people through the DES  
program to gain open employment,  
supported 41 people to maintain open  
employment for 13 weeks and 20 people to  
maintain open employment for 26 weeks

As part of the Western Sydney and Nepean NAIDOC festivities, Western Sydney teams held a stall at Jamisontown Park. With over 10,000 people attending, all the promotional items flew out the door

4 new cleaning and  
grounds maintenance  
contracts within  
our community  
businesses across  
Leeton, Wagga Wagga,  
Tamworth and Griffith  
**provided employment for  
21 new people**

Flourish Australia  
received a  
**TheMHS award**  
in the Consumer  
and Peer category  
for growing the  
Peer workforce.



We reached **53.7% of staff** who have a lived experience of a mental health issue

International Womens Day saw 21 Flourish Australia women receive a **certificate of recognition** for participating in the Women Advancing Flourish Australia program



Flourish Australia and Mirvac joined forces to host **ConnectFest 2017**, a fun filled community day in support of young people who access Flourish Australia services. The event was part of Mirvac's National Community Day program, where it's staff volunteer and help charitable organisations with the aim of enhancing the health and wellbeing of the community and strengthening social inclusion

124 people were supported through the new **Resolve Program** in Orange and Cranebrook

We started providing Peer Worker services in sub-acute services in **Bathurst and Dubbo**. 338 people have so far been supported by the programs

We ran 3 forums on Consumer & Carer engagement for the **National Mental Health Commission** and one forum to provide input into the seclusion and restraint review



Bankstown headspace were awarded **Organisation of the year** on Australia Day 2018 by the City of Canterbury Bankstown

We attended the 47th NSW **Aboriginal Rugby League** Knockout to provide information about where our services are and how we support people. Over 35,000 people attended the event over 4 days



We had our first booth at **Fair Day during Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras**, with staff from metro and greater Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle and Nowra coming together to spread the important message of mental health support in the LGBTI communities

# Our Highlights

## CONTINUED

We opened a new headspace centre in Broken Hill, this was the **100th headspace center opened!**



Evaluation report showed the HASI Plus program has **saved \$4,677,746** through reduced hospitalisation costs

A new Family & Carers brochure was developed to further support staff, carers and people accessing our services



The Hon. Senator Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Rural Health and Parkes MP Mark Coulton, paid a visit to the Broken Hill headspace team!

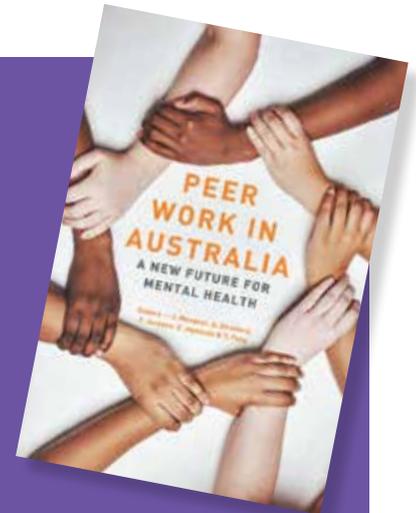
An independent review of community businesses by Disability Services Consulting (DSC) showed strengths in customer satisfaction and employee engagement

November 2017 saw the completion of the **Guildford Building**



# New Book Launch

## PEER WORK IN AUSTRALIA: A NEW FUTURE FOR MENTAL HEALTH



From left to right: Anthony Stratford, Erandathie Jayakody, Tim Fong, Kim Jones, Fay Jackson, Janet Meagher

This year Flourish Australia, in partnership with Mind Australia, agreed to create and publish a book titled *Peer Work in Australia: A new future for mental health*. The book is a collection of papers written by leading Peer Workers, lived experience advocates and allies from across Australia.

An Editorial Working Group assumed responsibility for overseeing the publication, inviting contributing authors to the book and planning a forum which would gather a collective voice about Peer work. The Editorial Working Group consisted of:

- **Janet Meagher AM**
- **Anthony Stratford**, Senior Advisor, Lived Experience, Mind Australia
- **Fay Jackson**, General Manager, Inclusion, Flourish Australia
- **Tim Fong**, General Manager, Human Resources, Flourish Australia
- **Erandathie Jayakody**, Team Leader, Consumer Engagement Unit, Mind Australia
- **Kim Jones**, Project Officer, Inclusion, Flourish Australia.

The book is a valuable resource for mental health services across Australia that highlights Peer work in Australia, its history and future directions, and help influence national discussions about this important and emerging mental health workforce. It was felt that the book would also ignite a much stronger dialogue about the value of Peer work in mental health services and lead to a far greater rate of employment and support of Peer Workers than has historically been experienced.

Contributors to the book were selected because they are strong Peer work advocates who have opened doors to enable the lived experience and Peer workforce to take its rightful, respectful place in mental health services. They have supported people and services to bridge gaps between advocacy for Peer work and the benefits it can bring, and supported the growth of suitably qualified people into much needed Peer work positions.

Flourish Australia has been one of the leaders on this important movement in Australia. We have hosted interstate and international visitors who have wanted to learn about how we have so successfully grown our Lived Experience and Peer Workforces.

We have championed this because we know the powerful and deeply meaningful work that Peer Workers achieve – the humble, empathic way in which Peer Workers walk alongside people who have experienced similar distress and support them without trying to ‘fix’ their situation; helping the person believe in themselves, so that they discover their own solutions, self-agency, self-advocacy, strengths, capabilities and possibilities.

The book demonstrates how the Peer workforce is an ever increasing and vital component of multifaceted teams in public, not-for-profit and private mental health services, and how lived experience and Peer work employees can bring about much needed cultural change in services and workplaces.



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Peer work is completely unlike anything I have ever done. I've seen the difference my story can make to someone's entire outlook.

# Bruce's Story

MOREE, NSW

There was a time I would have struggled to ask a mate if he was ok. Since being a Peer Worker at Flourish Australia I've felt the stigma around talking about mental health dissolve. Now I can have that conversation with a complete stranger and I'm committed to seeing stigma disappear completely from the wider community.

I'm a bloke from the bush, born and bred. I spent my early years learning all about farming and grazing livestock and went on to drive trucks all over Australia for about 20 years. A relationship breakdown brought me back to my home town of Moree where I could be close to my sister while I got back on my feet.

Moree is a small town of about 13,000 people, so it's a fairly tight knit community but being so remote, it can feel quite isolating for people. That's something I can empathise with as a result of my own lived experience of depression. The support that Flourish Australia offered me at that time in my life showed me how valuable Peer work is to the local community.

Up to that point in my life, farming and truck driving was all I'd known and I was about to take on another contract in Queensland when I was approached to consider a Peer Worker position with Flourish Australia at Moree. That got me thinking long term about whether truck driving was what I wanted to still be doing in five years time and thanks to the support I had already received from Flourish Australia, I had the confidence to give something new a go.

Peer work is completely unlike anything I have ever done. It's so rewarding to be able to use the experience of a dark time in my life to bring hope to other people who are struggling with their own challenges. I've seen the difference my story can make to someone's entire outlook.

Having travelled a lot, I'm able to talk to most people and many of them around here are off the land like me, so we connect right away. I know first hand from experience with my own father that the best time to talk to a bloke is when he's on the tractor and has these long straight runs. Like doing long hauls in the truck, that's when you have plenty of time to think things through.

For me, one of the most positive changes has been going off medication, after I talked to my doctor. As I became more involved with other people through my work at Flourish Australia,

I grew frustrated with feeling tired all the time and started feeling good enough in myself to no longer need medication to get me through each day.



Like anyone, I have down days, but working in such a supportive environment, surrounded by colleagues I can talk to, has made a world of difference to my ability to bounce back. The support you get from everyone here at Flourish Australia is terrific. If I ever needed help with anything at all I knew I could turn to my support person who has since become a wonderful work colleague.

In the past I would never have believed I'd have the opportunity for a job like this – or thought it possible that I could be capable of it.

I feel driven to find out even more about mental health and grow from peer support into a mentoring role. One of my goals is to play a part in getting rid of the stigma associated with mental health matters altogether.

FLOURISH AUSTRALIA EMPLOYS

181  
PEER WORKERS

## CHAPTER 3

# Our Organisation



# About Us

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**We are the mental health charity for people with a lived experience provided by people who have been there.**

**Our purpose is to create and inspire a world where everyone's mental wellbeing flourishes.**

## **WHAT we do**

We support people with a lived experience feel supported and meet their everyday challenges. We want them to live ordinary – even extraordinary – lives.

## **HOW we do it**

Valuing lived experience  
Supporting recovery  
Connecting people  
Connecting families  
Connecting communities  
Challenging discrimination

## **WHO we support**

Those with a lived experience and those around them.



“

Having a workplace where I'm accepted wholeheartedly and having extra support around me from the people at Flourish Australia helps me to remain resilient.

# Edwina's Story

MARRICKVILLE, NSW

Many of my choices were driven by fear and anxiety in the past and I masked my vulnerability with big hats and a flamboyant style. Flourish Australia helped me to reconnect with my creative side in an authentic way. Now I aspire to writing articles that people will respect and want to hold onto, because what I have to say has made a real difference in their lives.

It was anxiety, brought on by the Bali bombings that led me to migrate to Australia, back in 2003.

Where I'm from, on the East Cape of New Zealand, it's very isolated and news of the bombings triggered my fears for the safety of my mum, who was living in Brisbane. So I set my studies in fashion design aside, despite there being just two years remaining, to attain my bachelor's degree, to be closer to her.

Sadly, after a falling-out with my mum and step-dad, I ended up on a plane to Sydney and found myself homeless on arrival. At first I sold The Big Issue to get by, living on the streets. I was looking at jobs on the internet when I came across Flourish Australia who were advertising packaging work in their warehouse. I'm so grateful I took the step to apply. It's been a very good move for me and has changed my life in so many ways.

Working in a factory environment was all new to me, but the people are very welcoming and encouraging which put me at ease. Flourish Australia have helped me to secure an NDIS package which gives me access to things like The Academy of Learning, as well as practical support like cleaning, A Life Plus meals and Night & Day products for people with disabilities. All of that has been a big help.

I haven't taken up where I left off with my studies but I have worked as a tailor with the prestige brand, Easton Pearson, where I contributed to a big Marina boating event, and I would like to do more with design one day. A visit to the Maritime Museum and seeing James Cameron's art and his work as an innovator in screenwriting and film producing, got me thinking in that direction and re-connected me with my creative side. I've already put together some photos, to produce as a video, once I can secure some funding.

For now, I have started writing articles for Flourish Australia's Panorama Magazine. I'm so proud of that. I've always loved keeping a journal and it feels good to now be writing something that others can enjoy. I'm working toward being able to confidently edit a piece of writing that's suitable for publication in a mainstream newspaper. I want to be able to create something that people in the wider community will respect and want to hold onto, once they read it. I like to believe that one day, people will say 'here's what Edwina has written', because what I have to say, has made a difference.



In particular I would like to give a voice to people from the outreach posts that depend so heavily on that support, day in and day out.

Despite how far I've come, I still feel quite vulnerable and like I'm fighting with life, because of the discrimination I encounter in the community, around me being transgender. The Flourish Australia team at Marrickville often organise BBQ's that I find uplifting to go along to. They've really taken the time to get to know me but they also know how to give me space to breathe when I need it.

Finding more stability since being with Flourish Australia has also given me the freedom to travel and get back to my love of language studies. Back in high school, I excelled at Japanese, until the teacher left and was replaced with a French teacher; so we all had to switch to that. There's a part of me that is still driven to know more about the Far East, so I've made plans to travel to Japan next year.

One big change for me lately has been doing away with wearing flamboyant hats and statement glasses; a throw-back to the days when I designed hats. People want authenticity. They want to see a face they can identify with and get to know the real me. For the first time in my life, thanks to Flourish Australia, I'm ok with that.

FLOURISH AUSTRALIA'S  
COMMUNITY BUSINESSES EMPLOY

250+

PEOPLE WITH A LIVED  
EXPERIENCE OF A  
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE





## Our Senior Leadership Team

Standing from left to right:

Aidan Conway, Tim Fong, Julie Fraser, Andrew O'Brien, Peter Neilson, James Herbertson, Mohammed Alkhub.

Seated from left to right:

Fay Jackson, Mark Orr, Megan Hancock.

SLT bios can be found on our website:

[flourishaustralia.org.au/our-senior-leadership-team](http://flourishaustralia.org.au/our-senior-leadership-team)

# Organisation Structure

## OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



# Governance

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Flourish Australia is committed to implementing the highest standards of Corporate Governance, reflecting our belief that only by recognising and implementing these high standards can we fulfil our obligations to a wide range of parties, including, the people who use our services, their families, our staff, employees, funding bodies and the community at large.

The Board has adopted a formal Charter setting out the functions reserved to the Board and those delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The Board's principle role is to govern Flourish Australia by ensuring that there is a proper governance framework in place to promote and maintain the services provided.

Directors represent our stakeholders and oversee and appraise the organisation's strategies, policies and performance, taking into account its role in the community. The CEO is responsible to the Board for the management of Flourish Australia, for the implementation of the strategic direction set by the Board and the effective performance of the organisation.

Flourish Australia's Board currently comprises eight members, all are non-executive Directors. The Board renews its membership in a progressive and orderly manner, and Directors are elected or appointed for three-year terms. Staff members of Flourish Australia are not permitted to be a Director.

The Board of Flourish Australia has established four standing committees to assist in its governance and monitoring roles. As committees of the Board, they advise the Board on specific areas and make recommendations for the full Board's approval.

Each committee has a Charter, which includes Terms of Reference, clearly defining their role, procedures and functions, and these are ratified by the full Board. Committees may co-opt outside members from time to time in order to bring additional skills and experience to their deliberations.

From time to time the Board may establish special purpose committees or working groups to address a particular task or issue. The five standing committees are:

## Audit & Risk Committee

This committee is tasked with assisting the Board in fulfilling its statutory obligations, implementing sound corporate governance, and overseeing the Board's responsibilities in relation to risk management, external and internal audit and internal control function.

## Finance Committee

This committee is tasked with overseeing the Board's responsibilities in relation to financial and commercial management and reporting, investment and borrowing policy and management and endorsement of the annual budget and underlying assumptions. Major investments and capital purchases are referred to the Finance Committee for review prior to approval by the Board.

## Services Committee

This committee is tasked with assisting the Board in fulfilling its obligations, and overseeing the Board's responsibilities and commitments in relation to service quality and client satisfaction, program development and innovation, and evaluation and continuous improvement. Objectives of the committee include providing advice to management on systems and approaches for measuring the quality and effectiveness of the organisation's psychosocial programs and services, advising the Board on these important services, receiving reports from the Independent Advocate, and reporting on these to the Board. The Board has processes in place to regularly review its composition, and annually evaluates its collective and individual Director's performance and development needs. This review covers a range of issues including the Board's role and processes, interaction with management, and Director's contribution to the ongoing performance and strategic direction of Flourish Australia. Flourish Australia respects and values our members. Our Annual General Meeting provides an opportunity for members and other stakeholders to meet with and question the Board and management of Flourish Australia.

## Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee has been formed to identify, renew and propose to the Board candidates for appointment as a Director of Flourish Australia.

## Marketing & Fundraising Committee

The Marketing and Fundraising Committee is tasked with providing oversight to the organisation's strategic marketing and fundraising activities, ensuring compliance with charitable fundraising legislation and related requirements.

# Our Board

Our Board provides strategic leadership to the organisation and ensures the highest level of corporate governance is maintained.

Our Boards bios can be found on our website:  
[flourishaustralia.org.au/our-board](http://flourishaustralia.org.au/our-board)



**CHAIR**

**Professor Elizabeth More AM MAICD**

Appointed December 2015  
*Marketing & Fundraising Committee Chair  
Finance, Audit & Risk Committee Member*



**TREASURER**

**Jeremy Thorpe**

Appointed October 2015  
*Finance, Audit & Risk Committee Chair*



**Dr Josey Anderson**

Appointed August 2015  
*Service, Quality & Risk Committee Member*



**Paul Clenaghan**

Appointed April 2009  
*Service, Quality & Risk Committee Member*



**Paula Hanlon**

Appointed February 2015  
*Service, Quality & Risk Committee Member*



**Rachel Slade**

Appointed August 2015  
*Finance, Audit & Risk Committee Member*



**Robyn Carmody**

Appointed July 2012  
*Service, Quality & Risk Committee Chair  
Marketing & Fundraising Committee Member*



**Diane Robinson**

Appointed November 2017  
*Marketing & Fundraising Committee Member*



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I've found I get a lot of satisfaction out of maintaining my day-to-day responsibilities; like grocery shopping and caring for my canaries.

# Richard's Story

NEWCASTLE, NSW

Finding my Flourish Australia family and getting involved with my local church community were the keys to leaving behind the loneliness and isolation I had been living with.

Although I have lived here in Australia for 41 years, I still identify as Korean and my local Korean gospel church has kept me connected to my heritage. My family migrated to Australia from South Korea in the 70's. I lived in Sydney, Melbourne and Lismore before mental health issues led to my being hospitalised on and off, over a period of about 30 years. I came to Newcastle because I had family and friends here and now I count my Flourish Australia family among them.

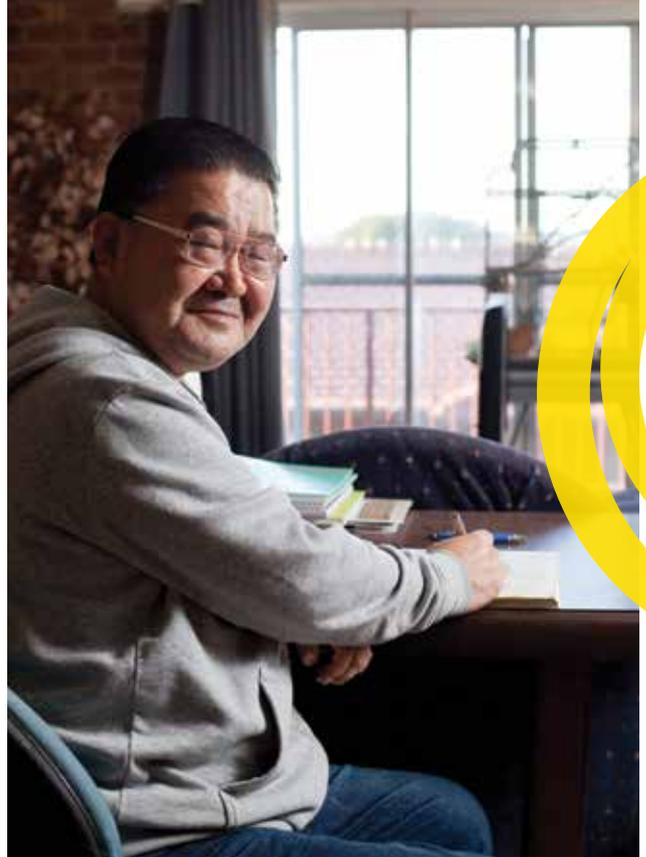
I first started going into Flourish Australia's Newcastle centre a few years ago, at a time when I was feeling very lonely at home and isolated in the community. My NDIS case worker arranged an introduction for me as part of my NDIS package. It has worked out well for me to be able to drop in there, a couple of days each week. Flourish Australia offer lots of activities, but it's just being with the people there that I like the most. It lifts my spirits. We do lunch together, or I might join in a game of pool or just chill out in the TV lounge. There's no pressure. I can just be there and enjoy the positive atmosphere, or be as involved as I want to be, depending on how I'm feeling.

I'm not employed at the moment but I am an aspiring writer and I consider that to be my work. For the past six months I've been writing a sort of semi-autobiographical novel, in diary form.

I've wanted to be a writer since I was a young boy. It has always made me happy to put my imagination down on paper that way and I dream of one day being recognised as a great writer.

Flourish Australia encourages me to set goals and work toward them. I have a number of goals I want to accomplish; like establishing a soup kitchen, here in our suburb, so that anyone who is disadvantaged can come in for a nice meal when they need to. We have a professional chef at Flourish Australia, and it's so comforting to come in and share a lovely meal with my friends, that I would like to find a way to give more people that feeling.

Thanks to the support of Flourish Australia, I've found I get a lot of satisfaction out of maintaining my day-to-day responsibilities; like grocery shopping and caring for my canaries. One was a welcome gift from my neighbour when I first moved in to my place. I bought a mate for it and now I find so much joy in listening to the two of them and feeding them once or twice a day.



Staying active in my local church community and regularly taking communion helps me to feel fulfilled too. It's a Korean, Christian church, so it has meaning for me both spiritually and culturally. They give me a ride to and from church and after each service, we share in a nice Korean meal. That sort of inclusion, and courtesy are aspects of my Korean heritage that I value greatly and feel proud to be aligned with.

Getting involved, in my church and Flourish Australia families, has taught me to be more open minded and generous. When I see my Peer Workers going out of their way to do such nice things to support other people, it makes me want to be more like that. Flourish Australia have done so much to improve the quality of my life and I've found that giving to others, the way they do, makes me a happier person too.

Flourish Australia Peer Workers are more than support staff, they are my trusted companions.

Since spending time with them, I've become more outgoing in reaching out to others in the community. When Flourish Australia staff first started coming to my place and talking to me, they were so understanding; so now if I see someone struggling, I greet them warmly. They are always so appreciative that I feel a lot of satisfaction knowing I've been able to brighten their day in a small way. They will still have their on-going challenges, but I know, from experience, how much the smallest gesture of kindness can mean to someone who is feeling low and alone.



3601



PEOPLE ASKED FOR SUPPORT IN  
DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

## CHAPTER 4

# Our Work



# Demographics

## OF PEOPLE WHO ACCESS OUR SERVICES

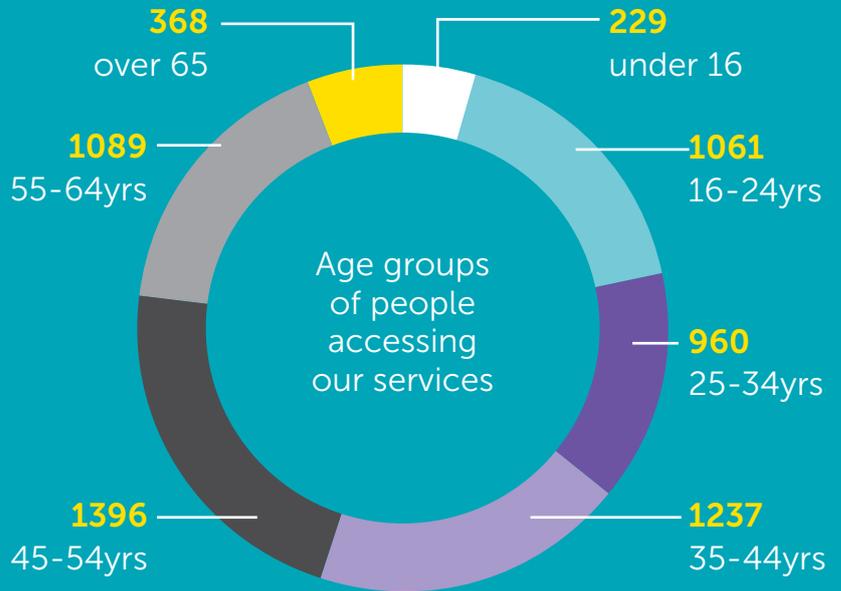
People accessing our services identified as:

Male **3214**

Female **3096**

In another way **15**

Did not say **15**



**772** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessed our services



**1044** culturally and linguistically diverse people accessed our services



**69** physical health promotions held



**93%** rated our service good/very good or excellent\*



“

By sharing our stories,  
we can break down  
the stigma around  
mental health and get  
people communicating  
constructively.

# Jessica's Story

PENRITH, NSW

Since graduating from Flourish Australia's Youth Community Living Support Services (YCLSS) program I hold high hopes for my future. The support I received from Flourish Australia empowered me to start living independently and achieve significant life goals. It's given me the confidence I needed to create a new career path for myself.

For the first 13 years of my life I was exposed every day to abusive behaviour. My own struggle with post traumatic stress and anorexia proved to be too much for my family, so I felt I had to strike out on my own, at a relatively young age, to survive. I resorted to living in refuges to escape the volatile home environment. The turning point was my referral to Flourish Australia's YCLSS program 18 months ago. Since then, I've regained my independence and now live in a unit of my own, without requiring any community support.

My journey had been a long, lonely one, with repeated hospital admissions. Once I was part of the YCLSS program, Flourish Australia's outreach team would come to me, on a weekly basis. What appealed to me most was that their approach was in no way clinical. The Peer Workers felt more like buddies to me than therapists and as we spent time hanging out together, the trust between us grew. Knowing that they had once walked in my shoes gave me so much hope for my own future. Because I could identify with them, I felt able to open up about things that I would hesitate to share with a psychologist.

Having greater stability on the home front has freed me to think about my future. I had previously been studying medical administration but a recent opportunity to address the Prime Minister of Australia, on matters of mental health, has inspired me to set my sights on a career in advocacy.

This came about soon after my graduation from Flourish Australia's YCLSS program. I was feeling highly motivated and took the initiative to respond to a Facebook post that invited participation in 'politics in the pub' at Penrith, with the Prime Minister. I have always taken an interest in politics but, in the past, it would never have occurred to me to act on something like addressing the Prime Minister in person. My time with Flourish Australia has taught me the importance of persisting with the goals that are meaningful to me and I felt confident that what I had to say, on the subject of mental health, mattered a great deal to many people.

After many years of hospitalisation, I feel very strongly about the poor conditions I've experienced in the public mental health system. Others have shared their own stories with me over the years and I saw this as my chance to give us all a voice. I was selected to address the Prime Minister and his Minister of Defence and spent the night prior formulating my speech, to be sure I would get my point across.

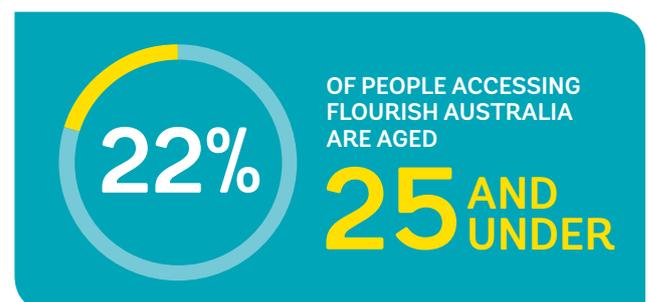


I feel so proud that I was able to make a real impact by sharing my lived experience, within the mental health system. They were genuinely concerned with what I described and receptive to being further informed. I am currently awaiting confirmation of a one-to-one meeting with the minister.

Being heard had a profound effect on me. I realised that I had the power to make a difference by talking about my lived experience and the whole experience has inspired me to carry that advocacy role into my future. I want to become a voice for people everywhere, who are struggling with mental health issues and feel so strongly that much needs to be done, to improve awareness of the unique challenges faced by people in the public mental health system.

It may seem ambitious, at the age of 24, to aspire to influencing political decision makers in mental health matters, but my life experience has shown me that changes need to be made, and I want to play a part in making that happen.

I feel I'm now in control of my own destiny and wellbeing. Being able to get out of bed each morning, with a sense of purpose is fulfilling for me. Before the YCLSS program, I had reached a point in my life where I was resigned to the belief that the way things were, was the way they would always be and that nothing would ever improve for me. Flourish Australia showed me that I am resilient and walked alongside me with the support and encouragement I needed to claim my place in the community. I feel like I'm on my way now and there's no doubt in my mind that I will get to where I want to be.



# Peer Work: Using Lived Experience in the Peer Space

## SUPPORTING QUALITY IN FLOURISH AUSTRALIA'S PEER WORKFORCE

Flourish Australia is a leader in the Australian mental health sector. One of its greatest accomplishments is its growing Peer workforce, currently employing over 180 Peer Workers across 63 service locations.

The recognition of lived experience as a qualifying skill through the national Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work qualification, positions Peer work as a tangible and substantial contributor to mental health support. Over time, Peer work has steadily confirmed lived experience as a primary support within a person's support network options. It is fast becoming the pinnacle of those networks.

Considering the diverse responsibilities Peer work encompasses, one question continues to confront Peer work and evades constructive responses, how do I use my lived experience in my Peer work role?

This year we developed a one-day workshop titled Peer Work: Using lived experience in the peer space, which provides a practical and hands-on approach to using a lived experience perspective in a Peer work role. The primary target group for this workshop is Peer Workers and Senior Peer Workers. That is, front line staff who use personal lived experience in their role.

The workshop invites participants to explore the elements of the peer space and practice building connections from a lived experience perspective. It includes the following fundamentals of using lived experience:

- Share your connection to recovery by sharing from a personal perspective
- Explore the value of sharing lived experience by understanding the purpose of sharing
- Identify opportunities to connect with people by recognising opportunities and knowing personal boundaries
- Invite sharing from a strengths-based position by sharing from your personal lived experience
- Practice effective, meaningful and purposeful sharing by responding to particular circumstances.

To test the content, 2 pilots were facilitated in Newcastle and Sydney in May 2018. Participants submitted an expression of interest, outlining their skills and experience in training and assessment. 22 staff participated representing a diverse range of disciplines including Peer Workers, Senior Peer Workers, Managers and Mental Health Workers.

Participants represented a variety of communities including Newcastle, Waratah, Maitland, Tamworth, Blacktown, Ashbury, Bega, Hervey Bay, Goulburn, Surry Hills, Parkes, Marrickville, Wollongong, Katoomba, Taree and Sydney Olympic Park.



The pilot asked participants to perform 3 tasks when assessing the curriculum:

- Critique the content
- Test the activities
- Assess the effectiveness of the workshop

Following each pilot, the content was evaluated and updated based on the facilitator's observations and assessment, as well as participant feedback. A number of activities received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Those that did not were reviewed and updated. Upon the conclusion of each pilot, participants were asked to summarise their experience in one word. Their responses included words like, innovative, excited, invigorated, energised, knowledgeable, fun, educative, engaging, inspiring, beneficial, enjoyable, informative, respectful, encouraging, reflective, supportive, empowering and safe. All participants reported achieving the training goal "How do I use my lived experience in my Peer work role?" and a number of participants indicated their interest in becoming facilitators of the workshop. This feedback is overwhelmingly positive and reflects exceptional outcomes from the pilots.

Peer Workers participating in activity for pilot.



Co-facilitation is an essential ingredient in successfully delivering this module. Throughout the workshop, participants are required to reflect upon examples from their personal lived experience. Sometimes these exercises involve delving into very particular and sometimes sensitive spaces for people. Trauma informed facilitation is essential. Co-facilitation provides indispensable safeguards to support group dynamics, protect personal wellbeing and add dimensions of safety, enabling participants to focus on bringing real experiences into the training space. Co-facilitation presents an ideal opportunity for Flourish Australia's Senior Peer Workers to embrace the senior responsibilities within their role, instituting quality peer-to-peer supervision and mentorship in the process.

**Peer work has steadily confirmed lived experience as a primary support within a person's support network options.**

We intend to adopt the module as part of the suite of learning options for staff; prepare a training package for trainers; deliver train-the-trainer workshops to Senior Peer Workers; support the dissemination of the workshop across Flourish Australia locations and roll out an initial offering of training across the organisation.

The benefits of training Peer Workers how to effectively use lived experience in their Peer work role will enable strong, fruitful support relationships. Peer Workers will grow from each experience and progressively develop purposeful, meaningful and relevant connections that ultimately support stronger relationships with people accessing the services.

Training the Peer workforce adds weight to Flourish Australia's public commitment to Peer work in Australia and adds value when providing NDIS-based peer support.

Peer Work: Using lived experience in the peer space is the next and natural evolution to Flourish Australia's continuing investment in its Peer workforce. Watch this space...

“

It's the first time I've felt connected with someone in a setting like this.

– Mr B

## New Services

### IN WESTERN NSW

In October 2017, Flourish Australia commenced providing recovery focused support within Barraminya (Dubbo) and Panorama (Bathurst) Sub Acute mental health units in partnership with Western NSW Local Health District.

Staffed by Peer Workers and Mental Health Workers, we work closely with Western NSW Local Health District clinical staff to promote recovery and positive change by providing access to:

- A structured, supportive and safe environment;
- A range of contemporary, multidisciplinary mental health interventions, programmes, services and treatments informed by evidence based best practice;
- A selected professional team that works together with people, their family, carers, key supports and community partners to establish a dynamic, person-centred approach informed by principles of recovery; and
- A service that assists people to develop their capacity to live independently in the community and reach their potential.



Dubbo Sub Acute mental health unit

People have access to daily groups that assist them to develop skills and knowledge to support their recovery journey. Mental Health Workers, Peer Workers and allied health staff have developed a group program. It includes interactive information groups on healthy communication, self-esteem, mindfulness, stress management, identifying stress and anger, cooking, sleep hygiene and physical activity. Volunteer groups from the communities are also providing support with budgeting and pet therapy. Peer Workers from the Local Health District provide drumming groups.

Since the programs commenced in October, 2017, 338 people have received support within the units. Of those, 250 people have taken the opportunity to work closely with us to identify their recovery goals and needs. Over half of the people (56%) fully achieved their recovery goals before returning home with the other 44% continuing to work toward their goals upon returning to their community.

People accessing the support are provided weekly opportunities to provide feedback on the service, this feedback is used to guide and improve service delivery. Feedback on the benefit of Mental Health Workers and Peer Workers has been very positive.

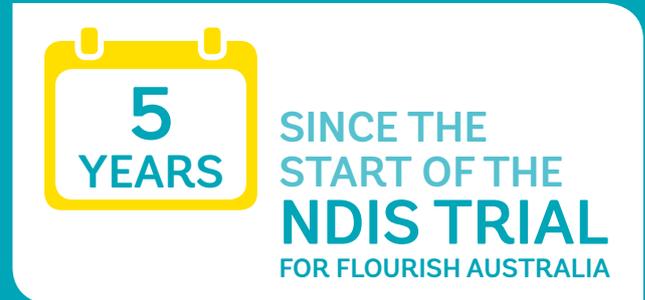
# NDIS & Flourish Australia

It has been five years since the start of the NDIS trial in the Hunter and since then NSW has completed the roll out of the NDIS, with the last areas being incorporated on 1 July 2017. During the year Flourish Australia expanded its NDIS footprint to cover all sites in NSW, with outreach into the ACT from our Queanbeyan office.

This year Flourish Australia provided support for 1496 people with NDIS packages. These supports range from complex housing support, employment, education, day services, coordination of supports and individual outreach support.

The NDIS continues to transform the lives of people with a psychosocial disability. It is enhancing and improving opportunities and choices for people – those who were already connected to Flourish Australia, as well as those who had never accessed support previously, particularly in rural and remote areas of NSW.

**We regularly hear stories of success and achievement from people who just needed an opportunity to thrive. The NDIS is giving many them that opportunity.**



Many services have believed that some communities are too remote to provide supports. Flourish Australia is choosing to think differently and actively reaching out to people in these communities who have a psychosocial disability. In one small town four people with a psychosocial disability have secured NDIS packages, and are now choosing how they want their services delivered in their local community.

Throughout the course of this year the NDIS grew to become the second largest funding source for Flourish Australia. This growth is expected to increase as National rollout continues. In the next twelve months our sites in Queensland will begin delivering NDIS supports and we will be considering whether we begin NDIS services in other States.

The organisation continues to adapt and change to meet the flexibility required to deliver quality services in a fee for service model. Flourish Australia has invested in technology and systems which are helping streamline processes in relation to record keeping, claiming, finances and a mobile workforce. These new and enhanced approaches are essential building blocks that will support growth, whilst maintaining quality and recovery orientation in service delivery.

Flourish Australia continues to embrace the NDIS. We champion and celebrate a system that provides people with choice about who supports them and gives them control in relation to what activities will improve their quality of life. This is consistent with our values and being a recovery-oriented organisation.

# Developing Social Citizenship

In 2014 Flourish Australia published the Recovery Action Framework. The framework was developed through a process of co-design with people accessing our services, staff and management. It challenged everyone to think about how Flourish Australia could demonstrate leadership around recovery in mental health services. We wanted to be clear about what it meant to be a recovery-oriented organisation and to make public statements about our commitments, to which we could be held accountable.

As highlighted in the Annual Report last year we began thinking about the next frontier, which we had identified as the concept of citizenship. This year we pursued that idea and began a co-design process, which the group called a Think Tank, focussed on what has become known as Social Citizenship.

One of our inspirations for this think tank was work by Professor Michael Rowe and Professor Larry Davidson from Yale University in the United States. Another was the feedback we had been receiving from people accessing our services and from our Community Advisory Council. They had been calling for a greater focus on supporting people to be engaged in their communities, to improve individual well-being and for us to take the Recovery Action Framework to the next level.

In line with the Contributing Lives focus of the National Mental Health Commission, we were determined to ensure people move beyond the base line of recovery, to reach their optimal potential and achieving deep meaning and purpose in their lives. To do this well, we knew we needed to explore the issues, working alongside the people who access our services in a co-design process.

The Think Tank took the view that in order to give the best possible opportunity for positive change to take place, individuals, families, our staff and our communities need to challenge and overcome inequitable social, cultural, and political mechanisms, which have become the status-quo and have historically restricted individuals' recovery. For this reason, the project has been steered through the lenses of inclusion, diversity, lived experience expertise, carer and family experience expertise and professional expertise.



The Social Citizenship Think Tank is comprised of twenty-one people made up of people accessing the service, supported employees and staff from all levels of the service. A large number of the staff have lived experience, and some have carer/family experience. There is also a large percentage of people who were not born in Australia, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and from other marginalised communities such as Aboriginal and First Nations, people from LGBTI communities, people involved in forensic services and the justice system.

Like the Recovery Action Framework, the Social Citizenship Framework will include a definition of Social Citizenship, and in order to facilitate organisation change will identify vital behaviours, accountabilities and a results statement.

THE SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP  
**THINK TANK**  
IS MADE UP OF  
**21 PEOPLE**  
FROM DIVERSE  
BACKGROUNDS





Chef Ed Halmagyi "Fast Ed" visited the Figtree Conference Centre team.

## Figtree

### CONFERENCE CENTRE

Figtree Conference Centre (FCC), has had a great year providing employment and training in hospitality to people on their mental health recovery journey and delivering an excellent venue experience to our customers.

Supporting employees that have open employment as one of their recovery goals is one of the most important aspects of FCC. 16 people have been employed as Conference Centre Assistants during this year, including 5 new staff. More experienced FCC employees are encouraged and supported to share their knowledge and help train newer staff. This peer support is great for team building and fosters a mentoring environment, which empowers the "old hands" at FCC and inspires new employees. FCC has introduced a documented training program for all new employees. This is a useful resource, as all of the tasks associated with their role are listed and can be used to track all of the new skills they are acquiring. If they choose to, this list can be incorporated into their resumes. FCC now has a Peer Support Worker who works on site one day per fortnight to support FCC employees with their mental wellness. 5 people have moved on from FCC, including 2 who have moved into open employment. One current FCC employee has been getting open employment with a hospitality agency.



FIGTREE  
Conference Centre

The conference centre and venue market is very competitive, so marketing FCC to increase sales is a major focus. FCC launched a new website this year. It has a fresh and contemporary look, with improved functionality, especially for online enquiries and processing credit card payments. There is also a Story tab that highlights FCC employees sharing their achievements and their recovery journey. FCC now has a Facebook page, an Instagram account and uses MailChimp for emailing updates and information to a customer database of 280 contacts. FCC introduced a new cloud-based venue management software which has streamlined meeting and event bookings and improved financial and forecasting reports. FCC was booked for 73.5% of available days this year; sales increased by 37% compared with last year; and 24 new businesses used FCC for the first time.

This year, FCC will be developing partnerships with businesses and organisations that could provide open employment opportunities for our people. FCC will work with these businesses to implement strategies that support our people to flourish in open employment and help break down stigma around mental health.

“

I moved from being someone who could only speak when spoken to, to being a consumer advocate for people whose lives have been touched by mental health issues.

Simon Swinson, Community Advisory Council Member, Newcastle 2016–2018



# Community Advisory Council

## CO-DESIGN, RECOVERY AND CITIZENSHIP

This financial year saw the inaugural Flourish Australia Community Advisory Council members complete their two-year tenure. These 24 people, from across New South Wales and South-East Queensland successfully pioneered the way for future representatives in co-designing our services, advocating on behalf of people with mental health issues, promoting wellness and recovery to wider communities and on a personal note, discovering new meaning, purpose and abilities.

Some Council members have directly attributed their involvement in the Council with gaining enough confidence and self-belief to enter open employment, enroll in TAFE or university, begin relationships and become involved in their local community. We are very proud of all Council members and are grateful for their dedication to their work and the positive changes they have brought to Flourish Australia.

During the two years, some of the Council achievements have included successfully contributing to the Flourish Australia NDIS marketing campaign, advising of the Strategic plan, Mission and Values statements, consulting on and writing the Welcome booklet and many other policies and documents. Flourish Australia has utilised the Council so much that after undertaking a survey of Council members, the Council identified the need to Increase Council meetings. The SLT and Board have agreed to this and the Council will now sit two, two-day meetings per year with working groups involved between meetings. Council have also sat on a number of focus groups:



### 2017–2018 Focus Groups

The Council has not only helped our organisation but has assisted the representatives in their own recovery and has broadened their potential in reaching full citizenship. Having a sense of belonging, helping to make a difference, actively engaging with others and accessing education and employment opportunities have contributed to their holistic wellbeing and in achieving citizenship within their communities.

The Senior Leadership Team and the Board wish to acknowledge and thank each of them for sharing their valued lived experience, professional experience and the contribution they provided to work toward improving Flourish Australia services.

### 2018–2019 Community Advisory Council

Twelve new Council members were elected during the March Council meeting to replace the 50% of members who were stepping down from the inaugural Council. The Council has a two-year 50% rolling tenure. This allows enough time for Council members to contribute and learn, it also ensures opportunities for a larger number of people to be involved and guarantees that we do not lose all of the wisdom gained by appointing a Council made up of 100% new members.

Flourish Australia is honoured to engage the new members and is already experiencing an even greater number of opportunities to ensure the co-design of our services. An example of this is the inclusion of Council members on the Senior Leadership Team Sub-Committees. The Council and these Sub-Committees will be leading our service through the growth and changes in our service and the expansion NDIS is bringing into the mental health sector.

Flourish has extended a warm welcome to the appointment of our new Community Advisory Council Chair, Maurice 'Mozzy' Wilkinson from the Parkes service and to our Deputy Chair, Scott Gourlay from our Taree service.

"In my capacity as Chair, I hope to work closely with all the members of the CAC, present and future, and Flourish Australia to make living with and recovering from mental health issues an easier and positive journey. Since I started with the CAC I feel better within myself and I and the other CAC members have strongly contributed to the co-designing of many documents such as policies, respectful marketing materials, projects and guidelines. Some examples of this are the Co-Design Policy, the Co-Design Guidelines, CANSAS and WHODAS. I am very proud to be a part of this work and our CAC team. I can see the difference our work will make. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to work along side the Community Advisory Council's Deputy Chair, Scott Gourlay located at Taree. Together I hope we can do wonderful things for the future."

**Maurice 'Mozzy' Wilkinson, Chair,  
Community Advisory Council, Parkes 2018**

We wish to thank and welcome all Council members for their valued input.

## CHAPTER 5

# Finance

## Our Financials

2017-2018

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At 30 June 2018 our Balance Sheet remains strong.

Our operating result for the year was a deficit of \$850,106.

During 2017-18 we increased the services we provided with our overall revenue from ordinary activities increasing by 8% from \$58.1m in 2016-17 to \$63.0m in 2017-18.

We continued to support people through government service contract programs. However, as more of our support arrangements transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and as the NDIS continues to roll out, funding from NDIS is becoming a larger proportion of our overall revenue. As a proportion of our total funding, NDIS revenue grew from 13% in 2016-17 to 25% in 2017-18.

The changing composition of our funding has required a continued focus on our business model and processes during 2017-18, which will continue in 2018-19.

During 2017-18 we completed the development of 41 affordable housing units at Guildford. As at 30 June we had sold 4 of these units as affordable housing investment properties.

This year we also implemented a new cloud-based Finance system, and an integrated Human Resources and Payroll system. These systems position us well for future growth and will enable greater insights during our business model review in 2018-19.

# Financial Report

2015-2018

OUR SOURCES OF REVENUE	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Commonwealth Government	37,964,761	18,652,215	14,922,987
NSW Government	18,426,505	32,296,363	35,264,761
Queensland Government	1,443,424	1,698,262	1,654,094
Business sales	3,352,417	3,527,454	3,333,127
Other income	1,795,218	1,906,777	1,617,431
Subtotal	62,982,325	58,081,071	56,792,400
Gain on sale of non-current assets	745,023	1,418,916	205,816
Total Revenue	63,727,348	59,499,987	56,998,216

COSTS SUMMARY	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Supporting people where they live	28,068,800	24,374,778	28,185,982
Working with people to find a job	10,426,622	8,970,812	9,452,548
Helping people make friends, get involved and learn new things	20,362,047	21,257,422	15,826,765
Other	5,719,985	3,744,153	3,201,716
Total Costs	64,577,454	58,347,165	56,667,011

OUR BALANCE SHEET AT A GLANCE	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
<b>ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cashable investments	11,347,774	13,904,732	10,228,611
Investment properties	12,471,263	-	-
Property, plant and equipment	10,294,393	24,143,387	19,899,786
Intangibles	597,090	-	-
Receivables	5,026,342	1,903,353	1,339,240
Other assets	1,996,413	772,054	645,791
Total Assets	41,733,275	40,723,526	32,113,428
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
Accounts payable	3,961,306	2,626,275	2,499,835
Other current liabilities	5,616,839	3,576,104	1,196,601
Financial liabilities	4,600,000	6,699,891	2,302,667
Provision for staff LSL and holiday pay	6,289,895	5,777,503	5,391,708
Total Liabilities	20,468,040	18,679,773	11,390,811
<b>EQUITY</b>	<b>21,265,235</b>	<b>22,043,753</b>	<b>20,722,617</b>

## CHAPTER 6

# The Next 12 Months



# Looking Ahead

2018-2019



## Social Citizenship

We will finalise and publish the Social Citizenship Framework. This will provide the foundation for a series of roadshows with people accessing our services and staff to explore what social citizenship means in local communities.



## Enhanced Disability Employment Service

The new Disability Employment Service Contracts begin on 1 July. Our new innovative integrated service model will be established to provide access to employment supports in nine Employment Services Areas.



## Peer Work in Australia

In September we will launch Peer Work in Australia: A new future for mental health services, a joint publication with Mind Australia.



## Recognition Awards

We will develop a recognition awards program to recognise the great work undertaken by people who work at Flourish Australia.



## Fundraising and Philanthropy

Following twelve months of careful research and planning, a new fundraising and philanthropy program will be launched in 2018-2019.



## Marketing Campaign

A new marketing campaign will commence in targeted sites celebrating the achievements of people with lived experience of a mental health issue.



## Technology

We will progress our move into the cloud with the implementation of Office 365 and the new human resources system. This allows us to provide access to important information from any device that can access the internet and the correct security credentials. We will continue to enhance our cybersecurity program and boost our cyber resilience to protect the sensitive information we hold as part of our work.



“

One of my goals now is to become an advocate for country people with mental health issues, and one day be the Flourish Australia representative for my region.

# Louise's Story

GRIFFITH, NSW

I'm a townie from the Riverina. I was schooled in Griffith and went on to work in administration for Barter's Eggs Head Office. I had an opportunity to move to country Victoria and turn an old dairy farm into a beautiful vineyard, with a friend of mine.

I became the manager there and for seven wonderful years, we rallied the community together, planting, harvesting and supporting a local hospital in the process. The venture unfortunately came to an end and we had to find somewhere else to live, so I moved to Narrandera on the Murrumbidgee and was lucky enough to find wine industry work, 30km away at Leeton. For seven years I loved working as a lab assistant for a family-run winery there.

Everything changed for me suddenly, when a series of traumatic life events led to a lived experience of a breakdown and suicidal thoughts. I spent almost five years, in and out of specialised mental health care, between Albury and Wagga Wagga. Having family and friends around me to help me get on top of things was so important but it put a real strain on them, having to travel 170km each day to spend time with me. I also faced the challenge of having to travel to appointments from Narrandera to Griffith, Leeton, Wagga Wagga or Albury and needing to rely on others for transport and support.

Mental Health support services in country areas can be very frustrating. For almost five years, it seemed that, just as I had developed enough of a rapport with a care worker to start opening up, they would move on or be transferred. I would have to begin the process of building trust all over again, with a new person. While I was so completely withdrawn, my partner Peter felt unable to leave me alone at home, so he became as house bound as I was and that placed us under significant financial strain. They say it's a journey and for us, the hardest part of the journey was finding out where to turn for help.

Things took a turn in the right direction for me when a care worker recommended Flourish Australia. They were very accommodating and met up with me at our local bakery in Narrandera. 18 months later, their support has made a world of difference to my life and wellbeing.

All my life, I had held back a lot and wished that I could just let go and enjoy life the way other people seemed to. I struggled with anxiety, guilt and social acceptance. In just 18 months, with the support of Flourish Australia, I have become a completely new person and live with more hope, joy and confidence than I have ever experienced. I allow myself to laugh out loud now, without letting other people's opinions get in the way.

Flourish Australia's social group in Griffith had been exactly what I needed. I had always kept things bottled-up and avoided expressing how I really felt or what I really wanted. Being together with new people on the bus trips and



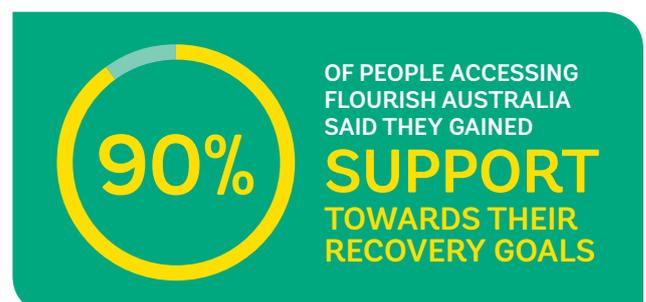
social outings, and trying new activities with the group, helped me to develop my confidence and new skills for communicating.

I can talk to people now, without hesitation, when once I would stay in bed all day, sometimes for months on end, just to avoid communicating with anyone. My social outlook has changed completely. I am more outgoing and positive and better able to express my feelings than ever before. I've also become more aware of other people's feelings and needs and I'm beginning to look after my own as well.

The best part is – I am only just getting started! Flourish Australia offer so many opportunities to grow. They've encouraged me to go after my goal of pursuing further education, so I'm doing a Certificate II in business at TAFE. Before Flourish Australia, I felt too intimidated to go within 10 feet of a computer.

My Peer Worker, Colleen, is like family now. Peter and I are both able to sit and talk through things whenever we need to. The trust that comes with knowing I'm unconditionally accepted and supported has made my relationships richer and more rewarding. What the people at Flourish Australia have shown me is that, even though they are from vastly different backgrounds and life experiences, they all share a willingness to listen and help you to laugh, so that you can start to relax and enjoy life again. It was with my friends at Flourish Australia that I realised I was laughing out loud for the first time. That wasn't something that came naturally to me in the past. I would stress all the time and wish that I could be like other people who seemed so chilled. Allowing myself to just enjoy life has been a massive shift.

Being a part of Flourish Australia has helped me to be able to love myself and honour my own needs and see all the shame and guilt I've carried over the years as the very experiences that brought me to a better place in my life. Without that sort of support, it can be difficult to accept where you are at and almost impossible to move forward.



# Our Funders

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Flourish Australia acknowledges the significant financial support from the following funders that allows us to do our work:

## Australian Government

- Department of Health
- Department of Social Services
- National Disability Insurance Agency

## NSW Government

- Department of Family and Community Services – Ageing, Disability and Homecare
- Department of Family and Community Services – Child and Family Services
- Department of Family and Community Services – Housing NSW
- Far West Local Health District
- Hunter New England Local Health District
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District
- Murrumbidgee Local Health District
- Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District
- NSW Health
- South Eastern Sydney Local Health District
- Southern NSW Local Health District
- Sydney Local Health District
- Western NSW Local Health District
- Western Sydney Local Health District

## Queensland Government

- Queensland Health

## Other funders

- EACH Social and Community Health
- Grand Pacific Health
- HealthWISE New England North West
- Hunter Primary Care
- Illawarra Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre
- Mission Australia
- Murrumbidgee PHN
- New Horizons
- One Door
- South Western Sydney PHN
- WentWest Limited
- Wentworth Healthcare Limited
- Western NSW PHN
- SVA Nominees Pty Ltd as trustee of the Resolve SBB Trust

Flourish Australia receives funding from the Australian, New South Wales and Queensland Governments. For more information visit [flourishaustralia.org.au/funders](http://flourishaustralia.org.au/funders)

# Consortia Partners

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## headspace Bankstown

- Dr Josey Anderson (Chair) Clinical Director – Black Dog Institute
- Aftercare
- Black Dog Institute
- DAMEC At Work
- Mission Australia
- New Horizons
- One Door Mental Health
- Salvation Army
- South West Sydney Local Health District

## Supporting Organisations

- ACON
- Arab Council of Australia
- City of Canterbury Bankstown Council
- FYRST
- Transcultural Mental Health Centre

## headspace Broken Hill

- Councillor Darriea Turley (Chair) Mayor – Broken Hill City Council
- Black Dog Institute
- Far West Local Health District
- JobLink Plus
- Lifeline Broken Hill
- Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Service
- Nachiappan Surgery
- Neami National
- Royal Flying Doctors (RFDS)

## Supporting Organisations

- ACON
- Anglicare Northern Inland
- Benevolent Society
- Billabong Clubhouse
- Challenge Community Services
- EACH
- GoCo
- Mission Australia
- New England Partners In Recovery (NEPIR)
- Police Citizen Youth Club (PCYC)

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We are a quality accredited organisation.



Where mental wellbeing thrives

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