The background of the entire page is a teal color with a pattern of overlapping leaf outlines in a slightly darker shade of teal. The leaves are of various sizes and orientations, creating a dense, organic texture.

Annual Report 2021

Resilience

flourish®
AUSTRALIA

Where mental wellbeing thrives

Our Patron

We are very honoured that Her Excellency the Honourable **Margaret Beazley AC QC**, Governor of New South Wales is our Patron.



Why resilience is our theme in 2021

What exactly is resilience? And why do we embrace it?

Resilience can be understood as our ability to withstand and bounce back from challenges and change, by tapping into our personal reservoir of strength. This is what underscores Flourish Australia's person-led approach to recovery. Now more than ever, the pressures of an on-going global pandemic mean resilience is critical, not only for people who experience complex mental health issues, but for our communities and society as a whole.

This year, we collaborated with leading Australian mental health service providers on an important survey into Resilience in Isolation. People with complex mental health issues told us the value of resilience and access to in-community supports, in helping people to cope with a changed world. High levels of resilience and previous experience of managing their own mental health issues, were recognised as key factors for people managing the changes successfully and identifying new opportunities to learn and grow.

We have never been more proud of, and grateful for, the resilience demonstrated by the people we support and our team members.

Together, we found new ways to maintain strong connections. Refusing to see the challenges presented by COVID-19 as insurmountable, we took decisive action to positively adapt. Most importantly, we encouraged each other, to nurture self-confidence and hope, and emerge even stronger. Our Community Advisory Council played an important role in this.

Throughout necessary centre closures and transitioning to remote supports, we developed new strategies for taking care of one another and ensuring the resilience of our services, turning challenges into an opportunity to springboard technological advancement.

Our supported workforce and community businesses have grown more resilient by responding to changing work conditions by diversifying and up-skilling. As a result, the employment opportunities we provide have continued to expand.

In compiling this report, we uncovered many powerful stories of resilience from across our organisation and trust that these will be an encouragement to us all.



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 1300 779 270 and we can arrange an interpreter or translator to assist.



About Flourish Australia

For more than seven decades we have served Australian communities by providing support for people with a lived experience of a mental health issue, as well as their families and carers.

At the core of Flourish Australia, is a single and powerful vision: To actively create and inspire a world where everyone's mental wellbeing can flourish.



The purpose of this report

Representing part of our accountability to the people we support, their families and carers, the members of our organisation, our funders and the general community, this annual report offers important insights to the work we do. It recognises the many achievements of the people we support, our team members and the organisation as a whole.

Reflecting the person-led, recovery-focused, trauma informed approach we are known for, it is woven together by the touching and inspirational stories of changed lives, courageously shared by several of the incredible people who access our services and some of the dedicated team members who deliver them.





Our
vision is creating communities where everyone's mental health and wellbeing flourishes.

Our
purpose is supporting people to flourish, believing in their future and their place in the community.

Our
values hope, inclusion, partnership, diversity, integrity, respect, trust.



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Chapter 1

Year Overview

Flourish Australia's *fast facts*

9869 people accessed Flourish Australia services in the 2020/21 financial year. During this time our services supported...



4188

people to make friends,
get involved and learn
new things



1959

people to find a
home of their own



1318

people to find
employment
that suits them



2666

people to access
headspace centres
across NSW



311

people to access
clinical services



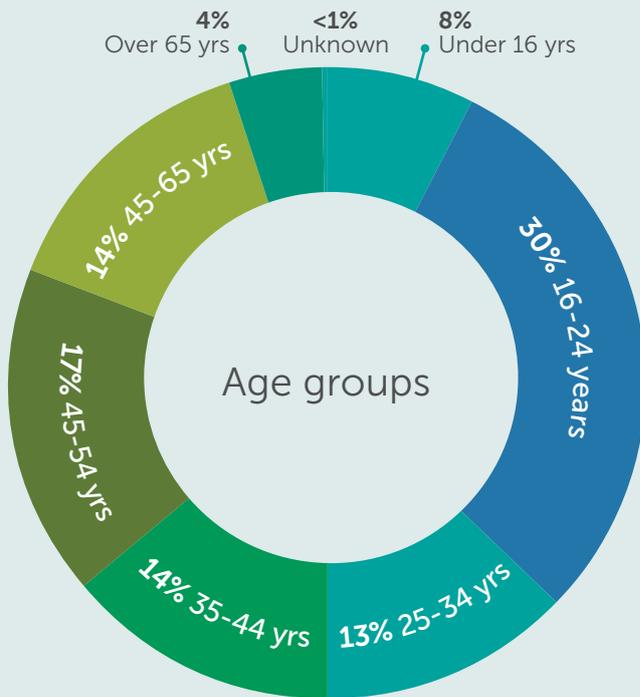
344

people in the National
Psychosocial Support
(NPS) Program

Some people may attend more than one location and program

Who we support

At Flourish Australia we celebrate diversity. The data below is an overview of the people we supported in the 2020/21 financial year.



0.58% Other / 2.58% Not Stated

From inner city to remote areas

72 locations across NSW, QLD, VIC & ACT.

19%

are Culturally & Linguistically Diverse

12%

are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

7%

identified as LGBTI

Chad

Accessing the NDIS has brought me closer to living my dream

I had never even heard of the NDIS when Flourish Australia first suggested that it could provide me with a choice of support services during the COVID-19 lockdown. Accessing it with their support has opened the door to wonderful new opportunities which help me to remain resilient through tough times.

While focused on my mental health recovery, I had enjoyed the creative aspect of working in the food industry, at a café called Monets. When I heard about Flourish Australia, I hit them up for work with their drop-in centre café, and they offered me a job on the spot.

For five years, I've loved working there as a kitchen hand, so I felt quite discouraged when COVID-19 hit and the centre had to close. What I missed most was being part of a music group that Flourish Australia ran on site. I'm really into blues and rock and have written a few of my own songs.

Flourish Australia encouraged me to stay resilient. They explained how NDIS funding worked and assisted me to apply for funding so that I could access support to meet my needs. As a result, I was connected with an NDIS provider called Reliability, who run a music studio and creative hub where you can produce animation or music. I had the opportunity to record one of my own songs and they're showing me how to move into the digital space through live streaming and putting my recordings on YouTube.

Doing this is a big deal for me. I've been playing guitar since I was 16 and do a bit of singing as well. Thanks to Flourish Australia, at the age of 46 I now feel the sky's the limit with my musical goals. The studio manager approached some media outlets about a track I played lead guitar for, called Uluru. We really want to get that out there and gained the Land Council's approval.

I'm really excited to soon be starting a job with the studios. I'll learn how to use the computer equipment and software for recording music. Right now, that is all done for me, but I'll be trained in how to do this for myself and have the chance to sit in on recording sessions for other musicians. Within a year or two, I expect to be fully skilled at recording, as well as finding fresh inspiration by collaborating with other musos.

I've come such a long way since being put through the ringer by my mental health issues. 20 years ago, when I was first diagnosed, everything in my life came to a halt!

I was in and out of hospital a lot, because I would go off my medications as soon as they started working, and wind up back where I'd started. These days, I know that sticking with taking my medication regularly helps me to stay well. By pushing on, through tough times, I've grown more resilient.

The impact mental health issues had on my life has been massive. Connecting with a support network, including good clinicians, who steered me in the right direction, has changed everything.



I know I'm still a work in progress, but as I move further into the world of music I'm feeling much happier and stronger in myself. It's great to earn a bit of money and you can't beat the feeling of playing a live gig with a band. Flourish Australia's music group gave me a taste of what that's like. We would put together performances for whoever came in that day to enjoy.

It's just an awesome place. It's so rewarding to reflect and realise that having too much time on my hands during lockdown turned out to be a springboard for moving forward in my life.



Chair's report

Professor Elizabeth More AM



“ Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving, we get stronger and more resilient.

– Steve Maraboli

Flourish Australia certainly found in 2020/21 that life had become even more challenging than we believed could be possible after 2019/20. However, true to its real nature, the organisation and its incredibly committed people, including those we support, became stronger, more resilient and learnt lots of useful lessons to take into the future along the way. So, at the opening, let me express my congratulations to all involved in keeping on and growing!

We started the financial year deep within the COVID-19 pandemic, with sites temporarily closed, and most supports being provided remotely. From a Board governance perspective, this was particularly challenging as our preference as an organisation is to provide the direct face-to-face supports people seek so they can live the life they hope for. However, everyone understood our prime responsibility was to keep people we support and staff safe. It is a testament to the resilience and flexibility of people who access supports from Flourish Australia and the Flourish Australia team that they were able to sustain providing and receiving this type of remote support for so long.

The Board has valued the important work of the CEO and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), acting as the Pandemic Response Team, in guiding the organisation through 2020 as we gradually reopened sites. The careful planning undertaken focused on ensuring gradual, thoughtful steps were taken to ensure safety, whilst we re-established face-to-face services.

The flexibility of people who access supports was a key part of the reopening. People coped well with the changes made due to outbreaks of COVID-19, and the related need to step back for a period before moving forward once more.

The Board undertook its annual performance self-assessment during the year to ensure that it continued to operate effectively. To enhance further its performance, the Board decided to undertake an external board review, and engage in training in relation to quality and safeguarding in services. Whilst the board review is pending, the Board and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors one day course, Governing to Protect Vulnerable People.

We were joined on the course by the Chair and Deputy Chair of our Community Advisory Council for the Right on Board Training, presented by Dr Alan Hough from Purpose at Work. Dr Hough also undertook an audit of our policies and organisational approaches to promoting human rights, quality and safeguarding, including preventing and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Board and SLT valued both the one-day training (which Dr Hough kindly provided online over three sessions) and the comprehensive review and report he provided including positive commendations and recommendations for improvement. The Board accepted the recommendations and the SLT have been progressively updating documents and approaches as a result.

One of the areas of continuous improvement this year has been discussions about key performance indicators and benchmarking. The Board was very pleased the

organisation was part of a financial benchmarking project led by the Australian Psychosocial Alliance, of which we are a member, during the year. The process provided some great insights. Our commitment to benchmarking means we are now pursuing opportunities to also benchmark service quality and outcomes. In parallel to this, we have been commencing the development of a suite of KPIs for internal use which will be a useful basis for the Board and SLT to gain actionable insights.

In August, the Board approved a new Strategic Plan setting out our areas of focus for the next three years. The new plan shows a strong focus on outcomes measurement, growing the evidence base for our work, community engagement, supporting businesses to address workplace mental health, using technology to deliver services, and supporting staff development and wellbeing. The plan was developed through the second half of the financial year and ensured that all key stakeholders were involved, including the Community Advisory Council. I thank Social Ventures Australia for their great work supporting the development of the plan, undertaking an analysis of need, engaging with stakeholders to gain their insights, and helping us craft a plan that was ambitious but achievable.

The Board is very grateful to the Community Advisory Council for their continued support and advice throughout the year. The Council has continued to meet monthly for three hours online, in order to help keep the organisation focused on the needs of people accessing our services. They have notably continued to advocate for a greater focus on growing the digital skills for people accessing services. This is an important part of ensuring people can contribute fully in and to the communities of their choice, to take up their digital citizenship, accessing supports online, and engaging with the wide variety of tasks that are now possible in an online environment. The work of the Council is summarised in their report on page 26-27.

Understanding the rapidly growing importance of technology and digital approaches for the organisation, the Board established a new Committee this year, the Digital Capability Committee, to be chaired by Dr Phil Wing. The new Committee will advise the Board on the organisation's digital strategy and future opportunities.

Very happily the Board was able to recommence meeting in person in April, and we moved to a hybrid meeting style. It was pleasing to be able to meet with colleagues face to face once more, and to reflect on how important this in-person connection is to the work of governing the organisation.

Importantly, this year the Board Service Quality and Safety Committee commenced discussions about the future of our supported independent living houses and supported employment. We are supportive of the call set out in the Ending Segregation Position Statement created by disability advocates and organisations, and are working to develop new models of employment, securing opportunities for employment at Award wages, and considering how we can increase the supported wage over time for as many people as possible. In addition, we are looking at how we can provide more choice and control for people living in

SIL accommodation and developing ideas for living arrangements which would see less than four people living together in shared accommodation. This is important work, but we acknowledge that it will take time to realise.

As always, I wish to thank my fellow directors for their commitment to governing and leading the organisation. The breadth and depth of skills and experience around the board table is impressive. That provides for a wide range of views to be canvassed and important questions to be raised in relation to service delivery from the perspectives of experts by experience (people with lived experience of a mental health issue, and family and carers) and experts by training (mental health professionals), as well as human rights, innovation and corporate governance lenses. The directors' commitment to the organisation is additionally highlighted by their willingness to engage in training to enhance our governance in relation to human rights and quality and safeguarding.

The Board has continued to focus on organisational culture during the year. An important part of that work has been on a statement on high performance and culture to provide guidance to the CEO and Senior Leadership Team. This statement will make the Board's position and expectations more explicit and accessible, and help communicate how we set the tone from the top.

On behalf of the Board, our thanks to Mark and the Senior Leadership Team. The last twelve months have been extremely challenging, and required additional expertise and commitment to keeping everyone safe and engaged in supports. The team have worked tirelessly to keep things running and people – both people accessing services and staff – supported. They have kept the Board informed and involved, as appropriate, in the ever-changing response to a volatile and uncertain environment.

All of this would not be possible without the support of our funders and donors. We thank them for their engagement, support and flexibility this year as we have, together, navigated the challenges of COVID-19.

Finally, our thanks to our Members. We thank you for your continuing trust in us to govern the organisation wisely for the benefit of people with lived experience of complex mental health issues, and their families and carers. Your support and oversight of our work is integral to ensuring we remain true to our purpose, and build on the wonderful legacy of those who have come before us.

Professor Elizabeth More AM MAICD
Board Chair

CEO's report

Mark Orr AM



The last twelve months has truly demonstrated the organisation's resilience as we continued to traverse the journey of COVID-19 as a service provider. As I reported last year, most of our services continued to be delivered online or by telephone, and this continued until September. By then COVID-19 protocols and community transmission had been sufficiently managed and we were able to start to safely reopen sites that had been closed.

This was important for many people who access services, as their social isolation was starting to impact negatively on their mental health. Their personal resilience began to be greatly stretched. Whilst reopening started small, those that really needed to connect in person were able to do so, and that made a big difference.

We continued to deliver telephone, online and in person supports throughout the year, with different amounts of each depending on what was happening in local communities, and what people asked for. Teams were very creative in what they did remotely with people working hard to continue to support them transition to these new ways of accessing support, and connecting with each other. Our accommodation sites worked tirelessly to keep people safe. Resilience has been demonstrated at every turn, in planning, in delivery and in the agile response to changing circumstances.

Our community businesses continued to operate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and our cleaning work continued to grow during the last financial year. Our previous experience, and work earlier in 2020, continued to demonstrate the high quality of cleaning that we could deliver, and this paid off. It was a great contribution by the team to keeping people safe, demonstrating how resilient they were, and how they could respond to an ever-changing environment. It is something of which they and we are very proud. The team also continued to play part of the COVID-19 response to keeping people safe by packing N95 respirator masks.

The reopening of sites was based on a four-stage plan which gradually saw more and more activities possible, but with the option to step back a stage if necessary due to a COVID-19 outbreak. This flexibility was important, and successfully used in a targeted way a number of times after we commenced the plan, and most recently in the COVID-19 lockdowns in various parts of Australia.

The Flourish Australia team has shown great flexibility in being able to move quickly in response to public health orders in all the jurisdictions in which we work, with the focus always on keeping people safe and connected. We could not have achieved as much as we have this year, as challenging as it has been, without the dedication of the team, and I am deeply proud of their hard work and many achievements.

As Professor More mentions in her report, the new Strategic Plan has provided a clear vision for the next three years, and identified the important pillars and

activities to pursue in order to realise that vision. The primary focus is on responding to the call of people with lived experience, identifying what they want us to do as a service provider, and importantly, how we further develop and implement outcomes-focused programs that support them to achieve the life they hope for.

I am fortunate indeed to be able to lead this wonderful organisation with such a distinguished history. We continued to reflect on that history this year as we envisioned the future through the development of the Strategic Plan. We also reflected on the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry reports understanding that their impact will potentially lead to significant reform of the mental health sector nationally. The change this foreshadows adds to significant and continual change already being driven by the NDIS which is challenging and stretching our systems and team. The collective reforms required are necessary changes to improve the whole mental health support system. The Strategic Plan provides us with important guides to address this continuing change, to prepare for the reforms ahead, and encourages us to take up the opportunities presented.

Knowing what happens as a result of the support we provide people is an important part of our accountability to individuals, the community and our funders. To assist us to measure things better, a new outcomes and improvements framework was co-developed with our Community Advisory Council and staff this year. This new approach incorporates a new Customer Experience (CX) Program pilot that was commenced in May. This pilot undertakes regular satisfaction and net promoter score measurement in services, initially focused on NDIS participants. It allows us to discuss with individuals their experience of our supports, and provides opportunity for us to address any concerns they have. The Community Advisory Council provided important guidance to us about the questions to ask and the regularity of measurement. The Council will also be providing advice to us on the results of the program to help identify changes that might need to be made, and to otherwise provide oversight. We are deeply grateful for the partnership we have with the Council and the guidance they provide us.

Another way of engaging with people and seeking their feedback was the launch of a new e-newsletter for people accessing services, with the title, Let's Flourish Together, developed by the Community Advisory Council. The e-newsletter provides a direct channel through which we can communicate with people, providing them with service updates, and engaging them in opportunities for research, co-production and feedback. The newsletter complements our longstanding magazine, Panorama which is written by people with lived experience for people with lived experience, and available in hard copy and digitally.

A new Support Hub for the organisation was established towards the end of the year in Bennelong Parkway, Sydney Olympic Park replacing the former premises at Figtree Drive. We were able to move everything into the new site just before the Premier of NSW sent

Greater Sydney, the Central Coast and the Illawarra into lockdown through stay-at-home orders, at the end of June. We have moved to a smaller site, taking into account the new hybrid approach to working some time at home and some time in the office. This will allow us much more flexibility, and increase our ability to engage digitally using new audio-visual equipment. This is part of our focus on developing new ways to support people digitally.

As outlined in Professor More's report, our commitment to governing and managing for quality and safety saw the SLT undertake training along with the Board and the Community Advisory Council leadership early in 2021. These were valuable opportunities not only to learn, but also to reflect together on our practice, and to identify opportunities for improvement. As a result, we have updated numerous policies, developed new training and guidance, and increased our focus on the development of service quality KPIs. The engagement of a data analyst in the new financial year will help us focus more on understanding the vast amount of data we collect in order to gain insights for action.

The organisation would not be able to achieve what it does, especially in a global pandemic, without the strong leadership of the Senior Leadership Team and our cluster and site managers. I thank them all for their amazing efforts and dedication to Flourish Australia's work this year.

A CEO cannot operate successfully without a strong relationship with the Board and, in particular, the Board Chair. Flourish Australia's progress and achievements are a direct result of the strong relationship I have with Professor Elizabeth More AM and the Board. The sense of collegiality and shared governance, with a sufficient amount of challenge, provides a positive environment for operations and development, whilst retaining a focus on accountability. The Board's focus on culture, quality and safeguarding means their questions are focused on how we deliver quality and safe services to people who access Flourish Australia's services, as well as their families and carers, and how these services are delivered by our skilled and committed team.

Importantly, Flourish Australia would be nothing without people with a lived experience of a complex mental health issue who choose us to walk with them on their recovery journey. To them, and their families and carers, many of whom work with us in such a strong partnership, a deep thank you. Your experience and resilience inspire us all to continue when things are tough, and to persevere always with a sense of hope for a better tomorrow. We could ask for nothing better to focus on right now.

The achievements outlined in this annual report belong to a large number of people – people with a lived experience, their families and carers, the Flourish Australia team, the Board, our funders and donors, and our extended support network. What you see in these pages is a direct result of your work, and the belief you have in Flourish Australia.

Mark Orr AM GAICD, FGIA, FCG(CS)
Chief Executive Officer



Chapter 2
Year Highlights

A summary of our highlights

for the 2020/21 financial year

Future-proofing Flourish Australia

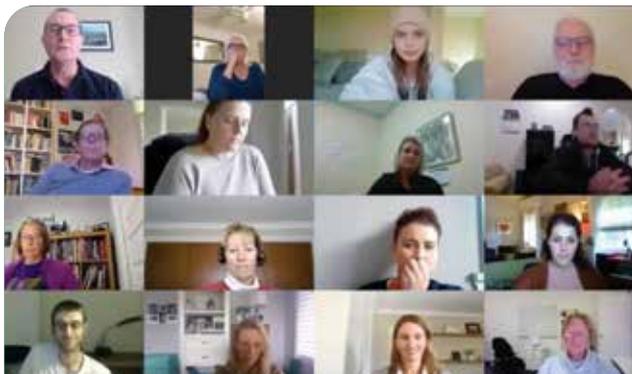
Transforming the way we work in an ever-changing environment, we finalised our three-year Strategic Plan, which identifies five, clearly defined goals that unlock exciting opportunities for innovation, efficiency and growth.

New outcomes and improvement framework

To more effectively measure the impact of our services, and people's personal achievement in their recovery, this year we co-designed a new outcomes and improvement framework with staff and members of our Community Advisory Council. The new framework will be progressively rolled out over the next twelve months.

Community Advisory Council

The Council continued to meet online each month to provide advice about service delivery, outcomes measurement and communications. We greatly value the time the Council Members devote to this important task and the practical insights they provide as people with lived experience.



Town hall forums

Recognising the need for constant communication across our organisation to maintain resilience, as we continually adapted to rapidly changing pandemic conditions, we introduced Town Hall meetings via Zoom, from April 2020. These 'all-hands', online gatherings gave staff the opportunity to raise any questions, or matters of importance to them, directly with the Senior Leadership Team.



Flourishing through team challenges

Our priority, as pandemic conditions kept us apart, was to nurture staff wellbeing and build resilience, by creating safe ways for us to stay connected and active. We engaged staff across the organisation with a series of fun, Nourish to Flourish challenges which succeeded in keeping team spirit alive through problem solving and collaboration, all while having fun!



A new support hub

Towards the end of June we finished the fitout of our new Support Hub at Sydney Olympic Park. We're now set for a fresh start at a new office space with a shared workplace environment, not far from our previous office in Figtree Drive.

Reopening plan

We developed and implemented the four stage COVID-19 reopening plan. The plan has allowed us to gradually and safely reopen sites based on the most up to date public health advice (and step back a stage when necessary).

Quality & safeguarding

We developed an e-learning module on quality and safeguarding as part of the mandatory training suite. We also published a new Rights of People with Disability Training module explaining the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with a Disability.

Workplace giving made easy

The Flourish Australia team told us that they wanted to make a difference by donating to causes that are important to them. So, we made it easier than ever to contribute by facilitating Workplace Giving. The team appreciate knowing they are making a positive social impact, without the hassle of remembering to transfer regular donations.

Award for Assisted Discharge Planning Program

For the past 5 years, Hunter New England LHD Mental Health has recognised outstanding mental health service via awards for best program, most collaborative leader and outstanding employee. This year, the Flourish Australia team in Newcastle were the Winners for the best program of 2021 within Hunter New England LHD for the Assisted Discharge Planning program (ADP).



Órama Institute MOU

We signed a MOU with the Flinders University's Órama Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing. The MOU sets out our commitment to collaborate on research, education and training programs with the aim of improving access to services for people with lived experience of a mental health issue, and ultimately play a part in reforming Australia's mental health systems and services.

Reflective practice month

We rebooted reflective practice as an important part of our work in April, following feedback from staff that they were missing connection with their managers face-to-face. We now ask staff and managers to record centrally when Reflective Practice occurs and to flag any safeguarding issues for discussion.

Research

We continued to increase our involvement in research this year with an empirical study on physical health and a book chapter on peer work in rural and remote settings published by members of the team. We also supported a number of research projects, and partnered in ten research funding applications with seven Universities.

Customer experience program

We commenced the customer experience program pilot focused on people accessing NDIS funded supports. This is providing data on a cohort of 500 people per week, and will be used to track satisfaction and net promoter scores at the cluster level.



E-Newsletter for people we support

We launched a new electronic newsletter "Let's Flourish Together" in December 2020 to connect with people we support. The newsletter focuses on information about new programs, and changes to the NDIS, as well as recovery stories to provide inspiration.

Microsoft Teams Calling

We implemented Microsoft Teams Calling to further embed MS Teams as our communication platform across the organisation. This move assisted with the establishment of the new Sydney Olympic Park Support Hub and also helped keep all our staff virtually connected throughout necessary centre closures.



AUSTRALIAN
LGBTQ INCLUSION
AWARDS 2021

HWEI
BRONZE SERVICE
PROVIDER

LGBTIQA+ Health & Wellbeing Index Award

Flourish Australia achieved Bronze Service Provider status in the 2021 Health and Wellbeing Equality Index (HWEI). The HWEI is a rigorous evidence-based benchmarking tool that assesses LGBTIQA+ equality and inclusion in service delivery.



Events done differently

Ensuring our events are safe and accessible for all participants is our priority and meant doing things differently this year. We adapted delivery of International Women's Day and Mental Health Month celebrations to a free, online webinar format. We were grateful for the support of our speakers at each event, Sam Bloom and Turia Pitt.

Pamela Rutledge AM

We were delighted to hear in January that Pam Rutledge, our previous CEO became a Member of the General Division of the Order of Australia this year. Pam's citation reads "For significant service to people living with disability or social vulnerability". Our congratulations and thanks, once more, to Pam for everything she has done for Flourish Australia. Mark Orr AM, our CEO, was delighted to be invited by Pam to attend her Investiture at Government House by our Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, the Governor of NSW.

Pulse survey

We have continued to run the pulse survey every two months to provide staff with opportunity to let us know how things are going at sites, based on feedback from people accessing supports as well as their own impressions. This has provided great opportunities to address local issues promptly.

Exiting supports procedure

We developed a new exiting supports procedure to ensure people are appropriately supported when they leave our services, connect to family (where they desire it), and to gain feedback from them that might help us improve.

93%

of people we support feel strongly that we assist them toward their recovery goals

Our use of strengths based language helps 88.7% of people we support to feel

hopeful



The overall likelihood that a person we support will recommend our services is

extremely high

(Net Promoter Score of +51)

91.8%

of people accessing our services feel strongly supported to make their own decisions



Chapter 3

Our Impact

Taking operations to the next level through *technology*

Technology is such an important part of our lives, and it continued to be essential to delivering supports this year. Using technology made it possible for us to continue to deliver a wider range of supports, virtually, from guided cooking classes and mindfulness practice, to special interest groups and social gatherings. The transition to online supports early in 2020 opened the way forward for us to expand our reach into regional areas, where availability of on-the-ground activities would otherwise be more limited.

By connecting through technology, we have also enhanced the support we can provide the Flourish Australia team and expanded our reach to more people, in more places. It has meant we can bring together larger groups of people, from their desktops and loungerooms, to discuss important issues; many more than we could easily bring together in person. Greater digital capability has increased collaboration between our Senior Leadership, Cluster and Site Managers, and with the Community Advisory Council. It has facilitated important discussions about our response to COVID-19, and the delivery of quality and safe services.

Formalising daily check-in sessions using technology successfully addressed any sense of disconnection felt by team members working remotely during lockdowns this year. Supporting staff wellbeing, the ease of connecting online has created opportunity for all-important, daily debriefing, which occurs more organically in a shared office setting. Introducing a new integrated online workspace for meetings, real-time collaboration and communication, as well as file and app sharing was an important part of expanding our use of technology this year. This helped us replace legacy communication systems, including desktop handsets, and delivered a state-of-the-art communication solution fit for the 21st Century.



The new support hub established at Sydney Olympic Park this year also enabled us to envisage more clearly the place of audio-visual technology and dedicated sound spaces to the modern office and support services. It has provided many ideas about the tools required to support communication across a geographically dispersed organisation, supporting people living in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote communities. Along the way it has helped distill elements for establishing new sites and the digital resources required.

Of course, technology is only one part of the puzzle. To extract the most benefit from technology and digital approaches requires access to technology and digital skills. Our Community Advisory Council clearly told us this year that we needed to do more in relation to supporting people to gain access to technology, to learn how to use it and to have supports available online across the organisation. That was a challenge we gladly accepted. To support our response to that challenge we began looking at specialist training for team members about how to engage with people and deliver supports online, knowing that to do this well requires a whole new set of skills.

These changes are but the beginning. The new Strategic Plan highlights the importance of technology to our future. A digital transformation strategy and enhanced digital capabilities are important organisational goals for the next three years as we extract the benefits technology can provide. This includes developing new ways of engaging people and delivering supports to more places using technology, how we make support scheduling and record keeping work easier, and how we maximise the amount of time available to deliver supports.



Adapting to ever-changing conditions

In 2021 the resilience of our operations has been well tested by the unfolding COVID-19 crisis. A cohesive response across the organisation cultivated deeper levels of trust between co-workers, among the people we support, and in our own capabilities. Service delivery was sustained through increased use of technology, persistence, and innovation that prioritised everyone's safety and wellbeing.

We built on our experience since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020 to come up with creative ways for essential supports to continue in pandemic conditions. Aware that what we do provides the only meaningful point of connection for some people, our dedicated team members were willing to do whatever was necessary to safely sustain essential face-to-face delivery. This continued to demonstrate the reduced time it took to make the necessary changes and develop new ways of working.

Peer Workers participated in a virtual support group and developed a habit of checking-in regularly with one another. The flow-on effect was that this helped to inform everyone of the latest developments across our service footprint, so that we could be more responsive and ensure consistency of service delivery.

We responded with creativity to the necessary temporary closure of sites, continuing to brainstorm new ways to structure connection and participation in line with public health restrictions and developing a wide variety of online group activities. For example, our Wollongong team took advantage of a free local bus service to meet participants at outdoor locations for activities such as art or exercise, within the bounds of safety restrictions.

Flourish Australia's four stage recovery plan was strictly aligned with government and Department of Health guidelines. Consistent messaging was rolled-out across all sites, at each stage. Significant resources were invested in supporting people to navigate unknown aspects of the unfolding situation, such as managing anxiety around the need to wear masks or self isolate. Phone contact was increased to ensure that all participants are informed and comfortable with any changes as they were implemented.

Developing digital skills was an important part of our response. We assisted people who access our services to gain devices and skills needed to confidently connect with supports using technology. We've seen people enjoy the new possibilities this opens up for them, watching them increase their digital citizenship.

2020/21 Community business update

Finding new ways for our community businesses and supported employees to flourish.

Resilience was a major focus of our community businesses this year.

Through persistent effort and innovation, we achieved growth during one of the toughest years on record for Australian businesses.

By pro-actively adapting to this year's ever changing market conditions, we were able to retain all 280 of our Sydney-based supported employees and offer additional work placements. We picked up additional, major contracts because our cleaning business has done such a good job of keeping workplaces safe with high quality, touch point cleaning.

This financial year we created two new roles; Cluster Manager, Community Businesses and Program Manager, Community Businesses, to help improve the supports we provide to employees, to drive the growth and evolution of these businesses and to create more employment opportunities in regional areas.

As Cluster Manager for Community Businesses, Sue O'Rourke's priority is providing opportunities for the people we support to engage in meaningful work, and to develop the skills and confidence needed to transition to open employment. Employment is such an important part of a person's mental health recovery journey that Flourish Australia is committed to the continued growth of our community businesses, which have contracts currently valued in the vicinity of \$6 million.

Responding to workplace volatility created by the pandemic, Flourish Australia reviews procedures and



Our supported employees are to be commended for their incredible resilience, showing a willingness to learn new skills and hit the ground running in new roles, as we all do our best to continually adapt to ever changing business conditions.

the needs of employees daily, on the basis of official Government and health advice. Some supported employees were supported to up-skill and transition to new positions.

When employees wanted to continue with their jobs during lockdowns, we found ways for them to stay productive, working from home. Key Workers engaged individually with supported employees working remotely to assess their wellbeing and satisfaction with

work arrangements. We are so proud of the dedication of our cleaning teams and grounds maintenance crews who chose to keep showing up to work and consistently complete their tasks with meticulous attention to detail and safety.

As the pandemic continued to unfold into 2021, we made the difficult decision to close our successful Figtree Conference Centre, which provided valuable hospitality training and experience to supported employees.

Importantly, no jobs were completely lost. All staff were retrained and offered positions with our other community businesses, where additional contracts had been secured that required increased resources. The incredible resilience we've seen among supported employees through these changes, is exemplified by a team member who found the confidence to transition quickly to cleaning, then scanning, and has gone on to gain full time, open employment.



'Our community businesses are tracking very well financially, generating an estimated surplus of \$1.3million and growth of around 5% in the number of people provided with supported employment opportunities.'

Customers' satisfaction with the quality and efficiency of services provided by our community businesses this financial year, opened doors to exciting new business and employment opportunities. On the strength of the courier service performance and the reputation of our cleaning business, we secured a major contract with the Department of Communities and Justice in October 2020, providing high touch point cleaning at more than 30 sites across NSW. This set the wheels in motion for our planned expansion into regional areas. Additional groundwork has been invested into other substantial new contracts which will come into effect for the 2021/22 financial year.

Our roadmap to community business resilience and regional expansion

This year we appointed Rob Eagland to the newly created role of Program Manager, Community Businesses, specifically to drill down into the efficiency of our regional businesses and set a firm foundation for expansion of our regional footprint. Starting with a thorough assessment of our established businesses, including our waterless carwash at Tamworth and car washing for James Sturt University at Wagga Wagga, we identified any areas for improvement to operating in commercially savvy ways, and better serving and growing supported employment opportunities

In addition to retaining all supported employees in regional areas, we created eight new positions this year, in locations where job opportunities were most needed. Our focus has been on developing systems and processes that support and govern business resilience, promote capacity building and staff skills development, while achieving consistent and cost effective ways of working. Potential risk factors to contracts and employees have been reviewed. Business processes at every level have been fine-tuned, from recruitment and selection of site managers and supported employees, through to safety and quality assurance, and all-important customer service management.

Securing a large-scale contract with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) who have sites all over NSW, opened pathways for us to branch out into more regional areas such as Lithgow, Orange, Dubbo, Bathurst, Shellharbour, Nowra, Bega, Murrumbidgee, Tumut and Wagga Wagga. The high touch point cleaning involved is an ideal re-introduction to the workforce for supported employees who can find taking that first step challenging.

We have taken steps to stabilise our businesses, including the waterless carwash in Tamworth which has proven to be an effective and resilient business model. A loyal customer base has been established, we actively pursued fleet service opportunities, and improved on marketing to successfully boost drive-in demand.

Administration processes, as well as the attainment and maintenance of service quality, have been optimised. We looked at ways of enhancing overall customer experience to drive return business and referral, such as making waiting rooms more appealing by introducing plants, water coolers and music.

Excellent supervisors are the cornerstone of our community business efficiency and key to successful expansion. Our business

'Flourish Australia recognise the importance of creating supported employment opportunities in regional towns, where job options can be particularly limited, understanding that moving away for work may not be viable for a person experiencing complex mental health issues.'



trading has been so strong two new supervisors have been recruited this year.

Coordinating a supported workforce entails responding to peaks and troughs in resources as we work with individual employees to support their day-to-day mental health issues and needs. It's important that supervisors are prepared to not only mentor and train team members, but also roll up their sleeves and step-in to help with the workload when necessary. Supervisors lead by example engaging employees in thinking through why we do things the way we do, from a customer experience perspective.

All of this builds a person's capacity and resilience for progressing in their chosen employment pathway.

We have looked at every aspect of our businesses for efficiency. For example, investing in a high-quality vacuum cleaner reduced the time taken to clean a car by 20 minutes.

In some regional areas, temperature extremes can impact productivity, so ensuring that staff are equipped with suitable PPE is essential, such as providing sun hats, sunscreen and potable water for hydration.

Work competency is a blend of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes. Our assessment is structured to take into account an employee's wellbeing in a whole sense, so that our involvement with them matches with whatever they

are doing elsewhere with Flourish Australia, or any other providers. The aim is to create succession pathways so that everything a person is engaged with at work, is a step in the direction of their big-picture recovery goals.

'There are so many examples of supported employees who have dug deep to come through this year flourishing.'

We strive to provide a wide variety of experiences that build the resilience of both the people we employ and the businesses they work within. Quality checklists, including customer feedback, are reviewed prior to undertaking each project, so that we can form a clear picture of the best way to do even better on every job we do. Instead of simply imposing procedures on team members, we engage them in this process to strengthen their skills of evaluation and deductive thinking; an approach endorsed by WHS and ISO standards.

Building the capacity and resilience of supported employees in these ways is giving rise to great results, as in the case of one team member who worked with us for a number of years, to position himself for open employment, then applied as an external candidate for a supervisor's role with Flourish Australia.





Events done differently

We did events differently this financial year to keep them accessible and safe for all participants, wherever they are located.

We adapted our popular, "Let's Do Lunch" event format to pandemic conditions by hosting free, lunchtime webinars, in lieu of the on-site gatherings we have traditionally catered at our Figtree Conference Centre, in Sydney Olympic Park. People were invited to 'do lunch' from the comfort and safety of home, with a guest speaker.

This made it possible for our Mental Health Month 2020 and International Women's Day 2021 celebrations to continue, in a way that was safe and accessible for people to participate, wherever they were located.

Through our "Let's Do Lunch" events, Flourish Australia strives to raise community awareness about mental health, and challenge stigma surrounding it, by inviting guest speakers with inspiring stories of lived experience. We know that powerful stories of resilience and hope provide encouragement and provide helpful information for people facing their own mental health challenges.

Our Mental Health Month webinar on 30 October 2020 featured champion of endurance, Turia Pitt, who shared her strategies for remaining resilient, to succeed in life against all odds.

"Turia is living proof that with purpose and vision we can overcome any lived experience"

On 10 March 2021, we were thrilled to celebrate International Women's Day with guest speaker Sam Bloom whose remarkable story of resilience in the face of unthinkable physical and mental challenges inspired best-selling book, *Penguin Bloom*, as well as the major motion picture of the same name. Sam spoke of the transformative power of sharing her recovery journey with an injured magpie chick.

"I didn't know it at the time but as I cared for Penguin, she cared for me. We were saving each other." *Sam Bloom*

Taking our event online attracted broad interest from all over Australia. In addition to those who regularly join our "Let's Do Lunch" events, including many of the people we support, Flourish Australia management and team members from our various sites, and people from the business community of Sydney Olympic Park, these webinars were joined by many people from the wider community, across Sydney and in remote areas of NSW.

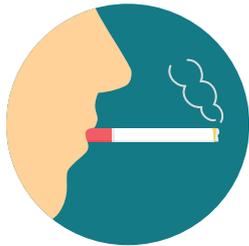
"By leveraging the technology, we have put in place this year, for connecting people remotely, we delivered webinars that provoked a lot of thoughtful questions and discussion about cultivating resilience in situations where all hope seems lost, among a broad audience," says Flourish Australia CEO Mark Orr who facilitated the experiences.

Hundreds of questions were enthusiastically submitted to guest speakers by webinar participants, from far and wide.

We anticipate continued success and growth in engagement with our "Let's Do Lunch" webinars.

Preventative health check-in

2315 people completed the preventative health check-in during the 2020/21 financial year.



Smoking

54% of people reported that they currently smoke.

26% of those reported that they are attempting to reduce or stop.

Flourish Australia provided information or support to access smoking cessation programs to **29%** of people who currently smoke.



A doctor to talk to

96% of people reported that they have a doctor to talk to about their physical health.

Flourish Australia provided **850 people** with information or support to connect with a doctor.

85% of people reported that they had had an annual physical health check by a doctor in the last 12 months.



Seeing a dentist

67% of people reported that they had seen a dentist in the last 12 months.



Physical activity

The most popular physical activities that people participated in daily were:

1. Walking
2. Gardening
3. Gym

90% of people report participating in some sort of physical activity.



Medication review

87% of people reported that they had had a medication review in the last 12 months.

Flourish Australia provided **431 people** with information or support to seek a medication review.



PhysiCards

166 people who completed a preventative health check-in reported that they used the PhysiCards to review their health.

70% of the people who reported using the PhysiCards also reported that it helped them identify a physical health issue.

Community Advisory Council

2020/21 financial year report



The events of this year have called us all to continually adapt to rapidly changing conditions. From the onset of the pandemic, the Community Advisory Council (the Council) quickly transitioned to meeting online. When it became evident that some of the existing Council members were either unable or did not want to be involved in online meetings, we asked some Alumni Council members if they would step back into the roles to form an Interim Council. Everyone generously offered their time and wisdom and the Interim Council has done a magnificent job.

The Council has been focused on being a core lead and adviser in all that Flourish Australia does. The list of documents we have produced or contributed to in the past year is too extensive to list, however a few of them include: the Pathways to Community Living Initiative Service Model, Warm Line Procedures, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, the COVID-19 Transition Plan and the Strategic Plan.

Ability to use technologies including email and Zoom, or the capabilities to learn and have ready access to devices, are now requirements for the Council, so that all members can participate remotely. Some of the Council Members were struggling with the online tutorials to learn how to use Zoom, so Kim Jones, Project Officer, Inclusion and Council members who had strong technological skills, wrote user friendly

guides for the Council. These training guides proved to be so successful that they have now been made available to staff and people accessing the services.

Throughout the year, the Interim Council has continued to meet monthly, via Zoom. This increased frequency has enabled us to be highly responsive to urgent needs and ensured the continuation of safe and efficient service delivery in challenging conditions such as COVID-19 and natural disasters as experienced during periods of fire and flood. The Council's involvement in the development and implementation of the Flourish Australia's Four Stage COVID-19 Recovery Plan is an example of their valued work.

One of the important projects the Council embarked on this year was the recording of two short videos to encourage staff and the people who access Flourish Australia services during the pandemic. The video for the people accessing services was aimed at helping them to not feel alone or forgotten, and to ensure them that Flourish Australia is rolling-out new ways of supporting them. Members also took the opportunity to express to Flourish Australia staff, how valued their commitment is, by the people they work so hard to support. Feedback was extremely appreciative, indicating that these messages 'from the heart' made a powerful impact and succeeded in lifting spirits.

The members of the Council have found that feeling valued, getting more involved, taking constructive action to bring about desired changes, helps to maintain a positive outlook and remain resilient in uncertain times.

The new normal

When it came time to onboard new Council members in June this year, we introduced a new Council recruitment process. The Council endeavours to maintain geographical, gender and cultural diversity in order to gain a wide range of ideas, experiences and opinions. We were pleased to assist with the interviews and recommendation for appointment to the Council. We are proud that people from urban and rural regions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds, older people, young people and people who identify as being from the LGBTIQ+ communities are represented in the Council. The new, diverse Council has 21 members from different service locations across Flourish Australia.

Reaching an international audience with what we do

An important area in which Council Members claimed their social citizenship was through the writing and publication of a peer reviewed journal article. This article was published in a special issue of the Brazilian Journal of Mental Health focused on people with lived experience. This paper explains the Council's important advocacy role and the value that people with lived experience bring to service design and outcomes. Council members Simon Swinson, Newcastle, Scott Gourlay, Taree and Mozy Wilkinson, Parkes, co-wrote and edited the article with Fay Jackson, General Manager, Inclusion and Kim Jones, Project Officer, Inclusion. Simon noted: "The way Flourish Australia gives people with lived experience a voice and values our influence with the organisation is quite unique."

Simon was invited to be lead writer because of his knowledge of the academic process and experience writing text books. "I am thrilled to get back into writing this sort of content," he said. The 3200-word paper was developed as a team collaboration, via Zoom and emails. Flourish Australia also had two other articles published in this journal.

Gratitude and pride

We are proud of and grateful to the Council members who quickly learned the new skills needed to contribute to online meetings. Their dedication to each other, the Council and Flourish Australia is exemplary. We thank them for sharing their wisdom and generosity in guiding and leading the changes needed throughout the year.

Our new online Council is a Council for the future as we embark on 'the new normal'.

Council Chair Mozy Wilkinson and Acting Co-Chair Megan Paul





School leavers employment support *going strong*

Flourish Australia's school leavers employment support (SLES) program has delivered great results for participants this financial year with all active participants successfully placed in positions they love. In addition to supporting school leavers, we provide individual employment assistance funding through the NDIS.

Flourish Australia's SLES program provides intensive, one-to-one mentoring, over a two-year period, for up to five days per week. Sessions are designed and structured according to each person's individual needs and schedule.

What we do is quite unique. It's about more than just getting someone job-ready. It means taking a more holistic approach than Disability Employment Services providers typically do. We look beyond a person's immediate employment goals and seek to understand the bigger picture of what they want for their life, to find the best ways for them to build the life they seek and to develop lasting resilience.

This approach better structures the support sessions. Most participants come to us straight from high school and are looking at alternatives available to them for finding employment. From a whole-person perspective, we look at what employment represents for that individual.

Imparting valuable life skills is an important part of what we provide through our SLES program.

Some school leavers look to us to learn the basics of living independently, such as doing laundry. We look at where each person needs extra, practical support, and work on this with them.

Among success stories this year, one young participant overcame a lack of motivation and difficulty grasping the value of money, through SLES participation. He has progressed to become fully engaged in his training modules and to pursue legal studies toward a paralegal career.

Violette

Flourish Australia's SLES opened my son to new possibilities for his life

It has given me hope to see Joshua (right) turn a corner and become excited about the possibility of employment, through his participation in Flourish Australia's School Leavers Employment Service (SLES) Program.

We were connected with Flourish Australia's SLES Program in 2020 through the NDIS. Their one-to-one approach with my son has made a positive difference to his whole outlook.

It took patience and perseverance for SLES Program Manager, Tina, to engage Joshua. For a long time, he showed no interest in taking part. Tina listened to my suggestions for what would interest him, such as gaming, and persisted until Joshua reached a point where he looked forward to showing up and participating in group activities. Now, he has a new job to look forward to, for the first time.

Ultimately, finding a job is Joshua's goal. He has never had the opportunity to work, earn his own money and take responsibility for managing it. Joshua experiences behavioural challenges and left high school before completing his HSC in response to bullying and feeling unsupported at school, which severely impacted his studies and mental wellbeing.

One of the most challenging things for me as a parent and carer is that Joshua takes his frustration out on me. With no family history of mental health issues, I have no frame of reference for how to support my son. Before he started school, I hadn't considered his behaviour to be unusual. I saw him as a free spirit who reacted to being confined. In those days, there was very little awareness about mental health and availability of support services was nothing like it is now.

Joshua tends to retreat into his own world and getting involved in the SLES group activities has helped him to connect with others. He shares very little with me but I notice that he looks forward to showing up for the groups and I see that participating lifts his spirits. Flourish Australia continued the group support through lockdown, via Zoom, and Joshua has grown less introverted.

I'm grateful that Tina keeps me informed about their progress together and involves me in the process. Joshua's involvement with SLES has opened a door to a job he is very excited about, at a nearby centre he can walk to.



It was a big disappointment for him when Sydney's lockdown commenced on the day he was due to start his new job. He can't wait for the lockdown to be over so that he can return to the centre, which represents real progress in his attitude.

I believe that with the right support, everything will happen for Joshua, in his own timing. What you see is what you get with him, as he tells it like it is, which I am certain the right employer will appreciate. He is very bright and has great ideas. Once he finds his feet in a job he loves, I don't doubt he will end up running the show one day.

Knowing he is supported by Flourish Australia frees me to focus on my own wellbeing, such as taking workshops provided by the community housing where we live, to develop the skills I need to further my own career.

I try to teach Joshua that he will need to afford employers respect in order to thrive at work. Seeing that he takes on board what Tina shares with him is encouraging. I hope the SLES support continues once he is out in the workforce because he's really enjoying it and making progress because of that.

The overall likelihood that a person we support will recommend our services is

extremely high

(Net Promoter Score of +51)



Chapter 4

Inspiring stories

Gregory

Bringing the 'Tinker' shop to life is my way of giving back to my community

The generosity I've received from the NDIS, and the support of Flourish Australia, led me to feel I wanted to give something back. I live to bring colour, curiosity and intrigue to the local streetscape with my "Tinker" Shop; a place where people can come to share ideas and immerse in the magic of the unexpected!

It's a far cry from where I was two years ago when my daughter first connected me with the NDIS and Flourish Australia. My mental health had been impacted by traumatic life experiences, including a relationship breakdown and botched eye surgery. I was scraping by on tinned food from a local charity, with no electricity or water. I lost most of what mattered to me, including my home and physical health.

Flourish Australia assisted me into a housing unit, and slowly, with their encouragement, I've found a real sense of purpose being re-born. Accessing the NDIS was a real turning point. It opened so many doors for me. Now, there are endless possibilities swirling in my mind.

In the beginning, due to my heartache, I had hated being in this town. As Flourish Australia patiently talked with me to get me thinking about my NDIS goals, I started to let my defences down. I opened myself up to putting myself out there again. I started by showing up to a men's group at the community centre. My support worker would encourage me to try new things and I'd say "what, do you want me to join the crochet club or something,?" She would laugh and suggest that there must be something that interested me. Gradually, I got more involved with group activities and began to enjoy life again.

Flourish Australia assisted me with using my NDIS for what I needed most, such as a pad for my blind eye, a mobility scooter, and an incredible computer that's set up for my vision impairment. With their support, I set myself up on social media so that I can connect with the wider community and family down South.

Receiving so much life changing support, motivated me to want to offer something in return.

I love to tinker, so my thought was to take that joy into the community by opening a "Tinker" Shop that would put colour into people's hearts and minds. I had faith, when I signed the lease, that I would make this work!

There were many roadblocks along the way, including my own poor physical health, but I pushed on, until everyone got on board with what I set out to achieve. The experience taught me that most people are willing to be helpful once they see your passion for a worthy cause. Flourish Australia have been amazed to watch me transform this little white shop into a vibrant environment that everyone is drawn to. I chuckle to myself that people take such an interest in what I have to say.

I've taken on a business partner, along the way. Jacob was at a crossroads in his own life when he wandered, wide-eyed, into my shop and said he'd love to be a part of something like this.



Getting involved in "Tinker" has been the diversion he needed and it helps me to share the rent.

Tinker attracts people from all walks of life – those struggling with addictions, housewives, travellers, locals and even a labour senator from Queensland. I've started a wall of signatures and I enjoy getting to know so many different people.

Through "Tinker" Shop I've attracted a bit of notoriety. I'm known around town and leverage my public profile to get community events going and raise money for local causes.

In my former life, I had no fear, only trust. I loved hang gliding and once danced along the edge of a cliff in full flight. "Tinker" Shop has me feeling like I'm flying and fearless, all over again. I greet every morning now with glee, wondering what I will do with that day. I contribute to council meetings, and I'm a member of the local museum, theatre and cinema. My goals now are to have my street re-named 'Groovy Lane', get a street exhibition of Mary Poppins-style chalk art off the ground, and run an Australian poetry fundraising night at the museum, with a bush band. I see so many exciting and worthy things to be done.

Fatoush

When caring brought my resilience to break point, Flourish Australia brought freedom

I tell it like it is and want carers to know that Flourish Australia will help you to stay resilient and reclaim your life.

From day dot, Flourish Australia took steps to support my brother Murat and I in ways that were life changing.

In my early teens, I stepped up to the massive responsibility of caring for my older brother Murat, who lives with complex mental health issues. His behaviour became so violent that my siblings were afraid and left us, so I felt I had to protect my mum. As his mental health spiralled, I relied on emergency calls to police and ambulance but after years of doing my best to cope, I felt overwhelmed and feared for my own mental health.

I put a call-out on Facebook for someone to tell me where to turn for help and a friend recommended Flourish Australia. Because I've never given up on Murat, he was open to seeking support.

Flourish Australia immediately came out to our home to meet with us face-to-face and took the time to really listen to me and understand all that was going on for our family. They connected us with wonderful people to support us in various ways, and worked together with us to bring about positive change.

It was necessary for me to let go of my career, to be available to Murat around the clock, but since Flourish Australia stepped in and took care of some of Murat's everyday needs, I am reclaiming time to focus on my own wellbeing. For example, they make sure Murat gets to his fortnightly medical appointment which saves me several hours of my day.

Being so supported by Flourish Australia takes a weight off my shoulders.

Thanks to all that they do for us, I feel 100% better in myself and hopeful for the first time, as a bit of balance is restored to my own life. I'm not alone in this anymore. I have a support network to share the load and listen to any concerns I have. Since my life no longer revolves entirely around my brother's minute-by-minute needs, I've gained clarity and things keep getting better for us.

The Flourish Australia team have great respect and care for Murat and when they share a little of their own lived experience, it reinforces to me that I'm not the only person to go through this, so I feel less isolated and more resilient. They constantly assure me I'm a wonderful sister which really lifts my spirits when I need it most.



In my experience, it's a much warmer, family-oriented approach than dealing with the average case worker. They really get to know you and build a beautiful bond. I love that they involve our whole family in making things work. That's such an important point of difference, because no one knows what a person needs to thrive, better than themselves and their own family.

It's empowering to be asked what we want. If I say 'it's been a bad week,' they're open to discussing what's going to work best for us that day. In the past, we've felt pressured to do things we didn't feel comfortable with, and for weeks the fallout fell to me to manage, which led me to lose confidence in accepting support.

I would encourage anyone caring for a loved one experiencing mental health issues to reach out for help. The way Flourish Australia does things has helped me to identify what will best meet our needs and connecting with them is so easy because they genuinely relate to what I am going through.

As things continue to calm down, I'd love to one day study to work with them.



Angela

My persistence paid off achieving a win-win care arrangement

I could cry when I think about how much of herself Jane, from Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Services, invested in going the hard yards with me to achieve the outcome I wanted.

Discouraged with my former role in supported independent living, I had been seeking alternative employment, when a close friend was diagnosed with a terminal illness. I began giving her a hand with her day-to-day needs while I searched for work.

Mental health issues run in my family and I was dealing with my own experience of PTSD and depression. After several months of supporting my friend, I recognised the need to re-focus on doing more to meet my own needs. It was apparent that the level of support she required would be challenging to maintain once I found full time work. As my stress levels increased, I struggled with what was required of me by employment agencies.

That's when I was connected with Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Service. Their whole approach helped me to regain my confidence and become more resilient. Where other agencies would tell me to go look something up online, which I found stressful because I didn't know how to use a computer, Flourish Australia assured me 'you can do this!' and assisted me to develop basic computer skills.

It made sense to me, to find a way to be employed as my friend's carer. She was dissatisfied with her experience of professional carers who had not been willing to support many activities that she wanted to do, such as getting to the beach. We were repeatedly told by employment agencies that this arrangement was not possible.

Flourish Australia persisted with supporting my quest until we found an agency willing to make this happen! They really go above and beyond to support people to achieve what they want in life and did the hard yards right along with me, ensuring that I got up to date with all of the training and qualifications needed. Feeling so supported helped me to remain resilient until things turned around.

Now that my friend and I work together, both of our lives have improved for the better. I'm thrilled to have found a career path that I enjoy and excel at and she feels fully supported to live the way she chooses to, without limitation. I no longer feel hopeless. I have given up drinking and I'm back at the gym.

What I love most about being a carer is making a difference to my friend's quality of life. Together, we have moved from discouragement and loneliness, to real resilience and sharing enjoyment as we go about her appointments or I help her with her hair. A support coordinator works with us to hash out the best ways for me to support her and my genuine empathy for what she's going through makes all the difference.



She experiences a lot of pain which gives rise to mood swings and sometimes I need to give her a gentle push to stay resilient. Flourish Australia remind me to stay on top of my own wellbeing and ask for support when I need it.

If I'm going to motivate my friend to do that for herself, it's important that she sees me walk my talk!



Adam

Giving up drinking and getting active has been life changing for me

Growing up, drinking was a big part of my home life, for as long as I can remember. Getting my own heavy drinking under control, with the support of Flourish Australia, has changed everything for the better.

It has taken me two or three years, with hospital stays along the way, to give up heavy drinking. Having Flourish Australia walk through recovery with me, and encourage me every step of the way, has helped me to stick with it.

When I first met my peer worker, Kamran, I was going through two cartons of beer every day. He would visit me at home every few days and patiently supported me to break out of this mindset. Mentally and physically, I wasn't doing so well. I knew I had to do something about my drinking and Kamran's encouragement helped me to make it happen. Seeing my doctor about medication to help stop the cravings I experience, made a big difference to begin with.

Flourish Australia had been recommended to me by a bloke I met at another support program, so I reached out to them and I'm glad I did. I go along on outings with them and get involved in lots of activities. Kamran motivated me to give swimming a try and I've really taken to it. It feels good to be getting physically fit and exercise helps to clear my head.

I feel so much better in myself these days. I went to Parramatta Civic Link to walk around there today. Being active all the time is a way of keeping my mind off other things and Flourish Australia is great at getting me out and about.

Kamran is a good bloke. Together, we've talked about what sort of goals I want to set for my life. Right now, I want to find work, anything that pays at this stage, just so that I can become a bit more independent and start saving toward buying a house.

I used to work in hydraulics. Flourish Australia helped me to arrange a reference from my former employer, and is assisting me with my job search.



Before the COVID-19 lockdown, I had started at TAFE where I'm learning to read and write. I wasn't nurtured at home as a kid and although I made it to high school, I would play up, and was kicked out, so I never went back. That lack of learning made life tough. This time around, I am really enjoying learning. At one stage, I was rewarded for reading a book which was a great feeling.

I used to have to walk to Richmond TAFE, until Flourish Australia assisted me with accessing the NDIS, to help cover my transport. Kamran would drive me when needed, always encouraging me to make my own way there, until I felt confident doing so.

Now that I've succeeded in cutting right back on alcohol, I've set myself the goal of giving up smoking cigarettes too. I wouldn't be doing half of what I do now if it wasn't for Flourish Australia. I've made some good friendships too, with some of the people who work there.



Skye

Stay resilient and you'll soon see light at the end of your tunnel

When addictive behaviour brought me to the point where my mental health broke down, I couldn't keep my family together. Reaching out for help turned things around.

I recognised the urgent need to make changes when my once supportive family would no longer speak to me. My life was in terrible shape, all round. My daughters had been removed from my care and I desperately wanted them back.

I took steps to find a detox program that worked for me and after four years in recovery, I reached out to Flourish Australia for mental health support that has been life changing.

One of the greatest things Flourish Australia supported me with was finding my family a home, in a nice neighbourhood. Having a safe and stable home is what I want for our future and was an essential step in re-gaining care of my kids.

As part of focusing on my mental health, Flourish Australia provided opportunities for me to complete really helpful courses in parenting and maintaining a healthy mind set.

What I learned has changed my whole outlook and approach to challenging situations.

The process of bringing home my youngest daughter was challenging and took 2 ½ years. As I grew stronger in myself, with the support of Flourish Australia, I became determined to stick with it. With persistence, I succeeded.

It means a lot to me that my daughters are so proud of the progress I've made. I keep beautiful notes from them on my fridge,

that I read for motivation whenever I feel discouraged. They tell me all the time, "you gave everything for us."

I've improved my life in so many ways and grown so resilient that I no longer experience dramatic ups and downs. Life still brings challenges of course, but I've learned better ways of dealing with what comes. I have my family around me again and continue to feel very supported by Flourish Australia. They genuinely care, they're always available to listen and they've been right there with me as I've taken every step forward.

I'm much happier in myself and have more confidence in my abilities, including my parenting. I couldn't be prouder of my three daughters. My eldest, aged 14, is so settled in her environment, she has a long list of dancing trophies to show for it. My youngest is an absolute gem who dreams of becoming a doctor or paramedic. I want her to have every opportunity to do that.

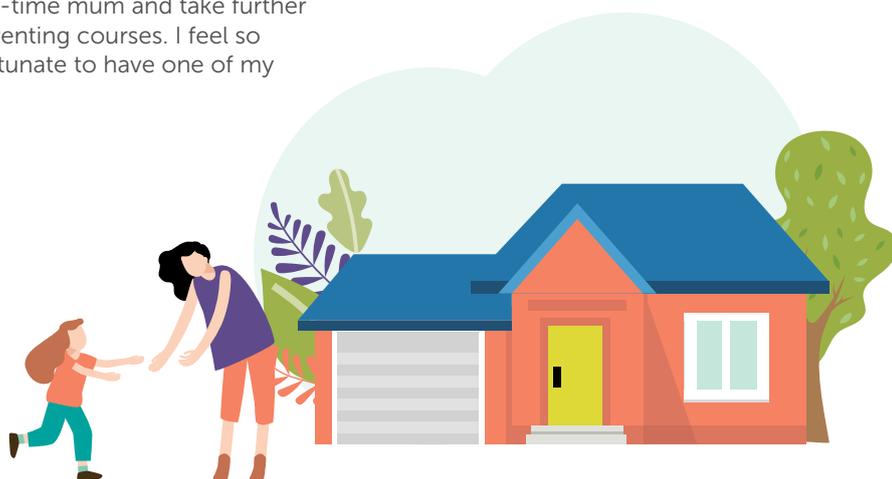
NDIS funding makes it possible for me to focus on being their full-time mum and take further parenting courses. I feel so fortunate to have one of my



daughters back at home with me, that I just want to be there for her and support her in her schooling.

Flourish Australia have done the right thing by me, which inspires me to do the right thing by them, and keep up the commitments I've made to myself and my kids.

Remaining resilient at times I felt I would never make it, was well worth it. To overcome challenges, you have to really want to. Find support that is right for you, then just keep going, no matter what! You'll soon see light at the end of your tunnel.



John

Reconnecting with photography has been transformative

I've built the resilience to turn things around in my life since connecting with Flourish Australia and accessing the NDIS with their support. Getting involved in creative activities offered by their New Outlook program put me back in touch with my love of photography and song writing, and opened a way forward to new social connections.

For me, recovery is about more than feeling better, it's about getting better at feeling. Capturing beautiful images of the world around me has brought me joy since my father first gave me a camera when I was six, and when I became unwell and felt my life lacked meaning, reconnecting with that passion helped me to stay resilient.

I absolutely love literature and had been studying to become an English poetry professor. Though I pushed through with my studies, and continued to win awards, I felt unhappy on the inside and was not really functioning well. After graduation, pursuing my interest in photography, by shooting old farm equipment while working at my uncle's vineyard, seemed therapeutic.

I made voluntary admissions to hospital, three times during 2016-2017, where I was told about Flourish Australia and took the initiative to check out their centre. I had never heard of the NDIS until they informed me that I may be eligible and assisted me to access funding. It's been a game changer for me, opening doors to art and exercise therapies, having my lawn mowed and my house cleaned. Flourish Australia's New Outlook program offers all of these, as well as a café with \$7 chef meals and a variety of TAFE courses, so there is always opportunity to learn something new.

With their support I found a trusted doctor, who is willing to listen, and as a result of changing my medication for the first time in

20 years I now feel able to venture beyond my front door. Just getting out of the house to participate in New Outlook helped me to overcome feelings of paranoia.

Getting involved in group activities was a great way to connect with other creative people. I found a musical mentor for my song writing and my art therapist has been a great encouragement. When he learned of my interest in photography, I was invited to co-facilitate a photography group and discovered that I love coaching people. It strengthens my optimism and gives me a reason to get out in the community, after shutting myself away for 14 years, while caring for my parents.

This inspired me to create "The Portrait Chair", where people who pass through the place can sit to have their portrait taken. Some feel uncertain at first, but tend to be pleasantly surprised with the result once I walk them through the process. Like famous photographer Annie Leibovitz, I pick up on a person's individual mannerisms and let them be themselves, rather than posing, so that the portrait feels as natural as possible. One woman,



who struggled with body image issues and dreaded posing, told me she really enjoyed the experience and loves her portrait. That's a response that makes taking someone's picture so worthwhile.

The more I make self expression part of my life and develop skills around it, the more useful it becomes for maintaining my mental health.

Just prior to lockdown I was on a real high, having launched an exhibition of my work in Wollongong CBD. I'm now building a body of work about seeing things in a new way, using an editing program to give everyday scenes a dreamlike quality. Flourish Australia supported me to get up to scratch with technology so that I could ease into social media and take my work online. Thanks to the skills I developed, I have been able to reconnect online with a woman I had once loved deeply. Losing her had played into my illness and we have now re-established a friendship.

My journey has taught me that by approaching life with a positive attitude, times of unhappiness can actually make me more resilient.



Carmal

Turning life around to keep my heritage alive for generations

A proud Kamilaroi woman, I was first connected with Flourish Australia following traumatic life experiences and the loss of my mother. At the time, I felt my life was spiralling out of control.

My drug use added to the mental health issues I was struggling with and I was admitted to hospital as a result. With my family's support, I came back to my home town of Moree, where I was introduced to Flourish Australia's services through Moree Mental Health, by my brother.

Turning my life around has come together with the support of Flourish Australia who have encouraged and supported me to make positive changes. I'm grateful to also have a supportive family who helped me to settle into a unit of my own.

I am currently on a CTO and my Mental Health Worker, June, supports me with keeping my appointments as well as doing my grocery shopping. Flourish Australia also assist in my interactions with Communities and Justice Parole Services.

I am so happy with the choices I am making in my life now that I never want to go back to the way that I was living. I feel in control of my mental health and know that I can contact Flourish Australia if I feel unwell and they will support me to seek medical assistance by taking me to see my GP or the Emergency Department at the hospital.

After many years of separation, I am thrilled to be making progress with reconnecting with my son. I am very excited that he and his partner are due to have their first baby soon. My two children and two grandchildren mean the world to me and give me hope for the future. I want to be there for them in their lives and be the best mother and grandmother I can possibly be, to make up for all of the years when I feel I missed out on so much.



My goal now is to contribute to the community by passing down my cultural knowledge and traditions, so that these live on for generations to come. I want to get back to volunteering with children and connect them with their heritage through cultural dancing and weaving. It's encouraging to have Flourish Australia alongside me as I take steps toward this.



Dylan

Through my music I want to help others

I've changed so much in my life for the better since connecting with Flourish Australia through headspace. It's such a safe space, with clear guidelines for inclusion and respect, that it's drawn me out of my comfort zone. In the past I found it challenging to make new friends but I enjoy meeting new people whenever I visit headspace. I've even started up a pool comp for a bit of fun.

Since connecting with Flourish Australia I've developed the resilience to be able to say no to addictive behaviours. When there's something on my mind now, I can be upfront about what's going on for me, with my Peer Worker. We talk over a game of chess, because I'm on a mission to beat my sister at it. One of the guys who comes here is a chess legend and has taught me a thing or two.

It's a bit like a family sometimes, we are all here for one another.

Moving on from a home environment where I was surrounded by problems was an important step. My mum was dealing with her own issues, so wasn't the easiest person to talk to about mine.

When I'm under pressure, part of me is still drawn to self destructive behaviour but I tell myself I don't need it. I'm a fighter at heart. I don't just give up. I overcame the stress of lockdown by finding the resilience to pull through without self-medicating. I know my life is worth more than that now and I reach out for support when needed.

When I first visited Flourish Australia and saw that they offered a music group, I couldn't wait to get an NDIS plan in place so I could join in. It's the best feeling to grab a mic and join in with a band.



Music helps me to manage my emotions. When I experience anger or frustration, I jot down words and use them to create songs. Rap music gives me an outlet for what I feel and I hope that hearing my songs will inspire other people to make positive changes in their own lives.

With Flourish Australia's assistance, I secured NDIS funding to also continue with counselling I needed.

Right now, I'm focused on getting my P's so I can get around for work. I'm set on becoming a mechanic, so I'm putting myself out there for an apprenticeship. Working with cars has been a big part of my life. Before my parents split, Dad and I always tinkered with them together. It's calming for me. You can scream all you want at a car and it won't scream back!

I also want to get involved with volunteering where I can share what I've learned to help others.



Darrin

From supported employee to Supervisor

A fresh start in life, through supported employment with Flourish Australia's cleaning business in Tamworth, led me to recognise my own inner resilience and to persist with seeking opportunities for promotion.

I was virtually homeless when I first connected with Flourish Australia. I had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, after being involved in a crash while serving in the army, and lost my marriage, my home, my locksmith business and even my car, following a series of strokes which impacted my ability to walk and talk. When Flourish Australia found me, everything in my life changed for the better.

To begin with, they helped me to find stable accommodation and access NDIS funding.

Through determination, with extensive physical rehabilitation and speech therapy, I made a remarkable recovery and Flourish Australia was there every step of the way. They taught me to cook for myself again, drove me to appointments and took me out for coffee to keep my spirits up.

When they offered me supported employment with their Tamworth cleaning team. I jumped at the chance. I was provided with four weeks of training and flexibility to continue my rehabilitation.

The managers are just brilliant. They would come alongside me and ask if I needed anything or had any issues, and when I did, we resolved them together on the spot. They even gave me a dictionary to encourage me in my efforts with

speech therapy and memory loss. My team mates were such good people too. The whole experience changed my outlook on what was possible for my future.

Mindful of how down and out I had felt when Flourish Australia reached out to me, I felt motivated to want to return the kindness by helping others.

I feel driven to use my experience of how life changing it was to be supported and encouraged in the way that Flourish Australia approaches things, to relate with others who are struggling in life. Initially, I set my sights on becoming a Peer Worker and applied externally for two positions with the organisation. Though I was unsuccessful, Flourish Australia was impressed with my resilience and suggested I apply for the job of Supervisor with their cleaning company.

I am thrilled to say I aced the interview for that role. I enjoy continuing to work alongside the team members I formed friendships with, now offering advice, guidance and encouragement as their trusted supervisor. They really appreciate the progress I've made and tell me



that what I've achieved inspires them to strive for promotion themselves.

My goal now is to make my mark in this role and build my skills and experience, with a view to one day advancing even further within the organisation. I admire the way that Flourish Australia does things and would very much like to remain a part of it.

Having regular income has made it possible for me to pay out my car as well as own a motorcycle, and owning my own home again is top of my list. I'm proud of myself for finding the resilience to come such a long way in life, from struggling to walk or talk, to supervising a commercial team.

I am extremely happy right where I am in my life. When I recently bumped into my former wife, she could barely believe it was the same person.



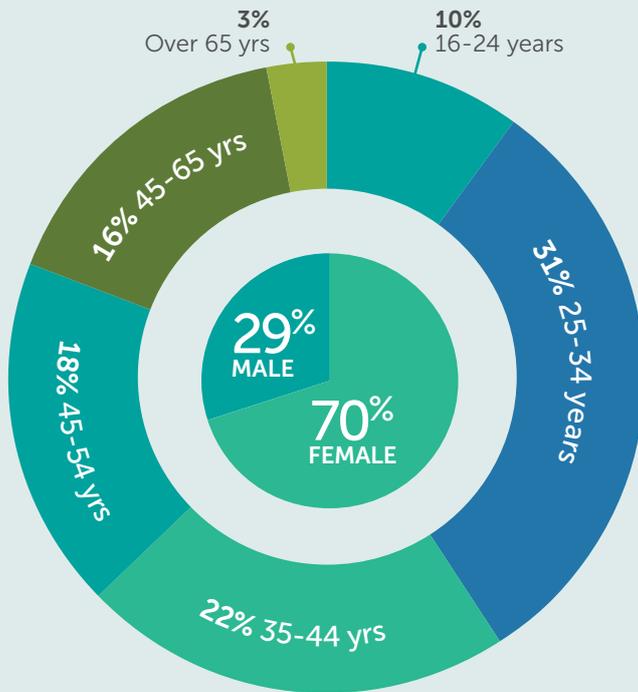


Chapter 5

Our Organisation & People

Who we are

Flourish Australia is proud of the diversity we have amongst our 915 team members.



0.44% NON BINARY



55%

of our team have a lived experience



18%

are Culturally & Linguistically Diverse



5.3%

are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



8.4%

identified as LGBTI

93%

of the Flourish Australia team tell us they enjoy the work they do

Employee Net Promoter Score of

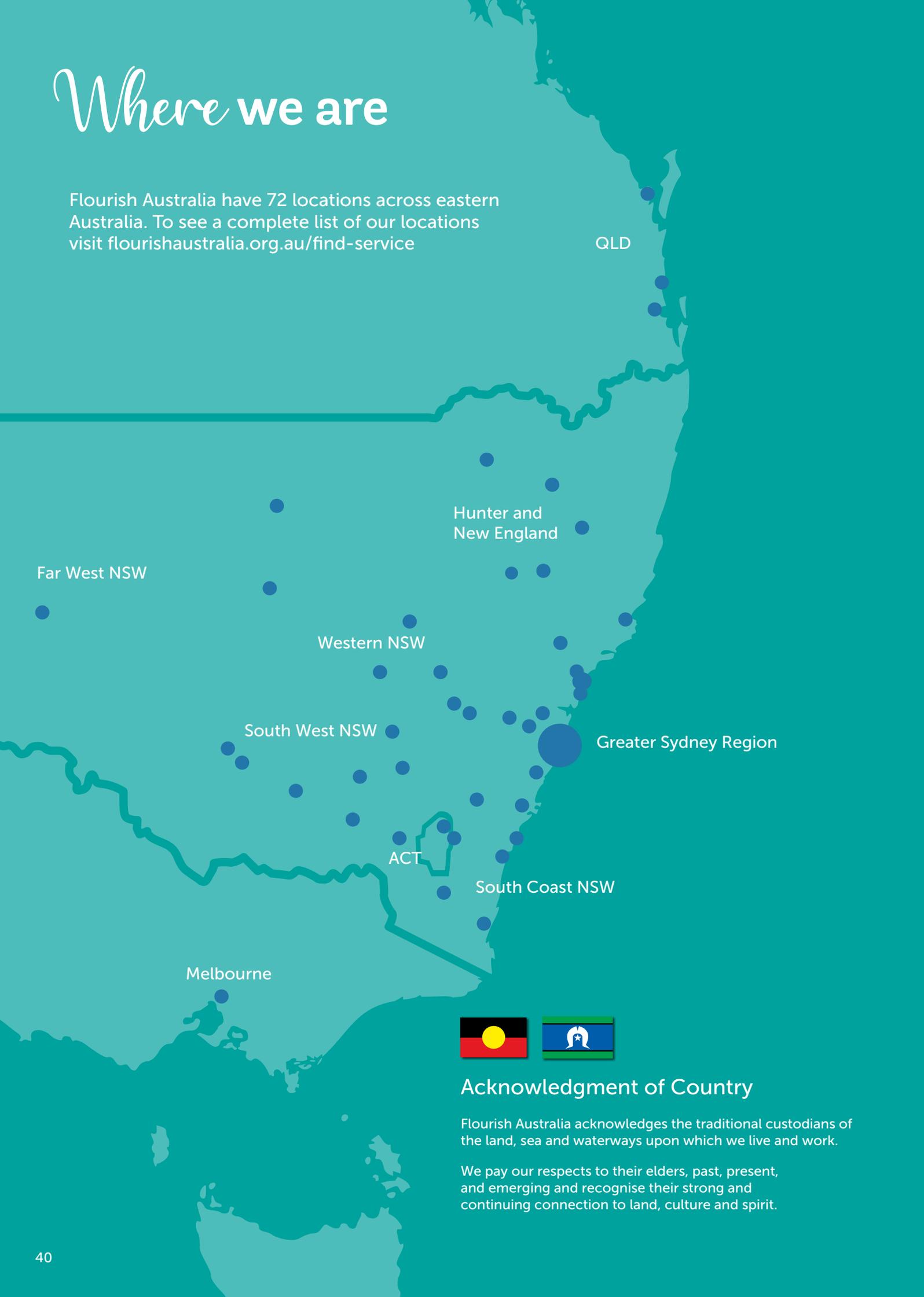
+21

92%

of the Flourish Australia team report they believe in our values and ethos.

Where we are

Flourish Australia have 72 locations across eastern Australia. To see a complete list of our locations visit flourishaustralia.org.au/find-service



Acknowledgment of Country

Flourish Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways upon which we live and work.

We pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging and recognise their strong and continuing connection to land, culture and spirit.

Progress and recognition

Learning and development in 2020/21



Our commitment to capacity building is consistent through challenges

The persistent challenges of a pandemic and working remotely did not deter our team from advancing their education and training throughout this year. Flourish Australia firmly believes that investing in building the skills and resilience of the Flourish Australia team, and organisational culture ensured the people who access our services receive high quality and safe supports. We provide a wide range of e-learning modules as well as vital industry training in Peer Work, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and more. It has been great to see peoples' commitment to continuing to develop their skills, throughout the pandemic period, despite the added pressures of lockdowns and adapting to a whole new way of working.

Skills significantly increased

20 people commenced Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work training with 3 full completions. 11 commenced their Certificate IV in Mental Health with 3 completions and one completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

We embraced further education

Always driven to advance their knowledge of mental health and what works, many of our staff attained relevant qualifications this year, including 24 university bachelors degrees, 5 masters degrees and 5 diplomas.

Making great headway with mandatory training

Growing digital capabilities across the organisation this year has made it even easier for the team to access and complete mandatory training. The team have shown great commitment, investing many hours in essential training modules. Across 26 key courses, there were a total of 9,292 module completions, in all-important areas such as Code of Conduct and Ethics, Using Personal Protective Equipment, NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Orientation and Strengths Based Language.

Training undertaken actually increased!

A total of 21,230 staff training hours were undertaken from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, representing 7,664 hours of internally developed e-learning, 13,566 hours of e-learning content developed externally and 3,572 hours of face-to-face training. That is 23.2 hours per FTE, exceeding our benchmark.

Prioritising suicide intervention practices

Flourish Australia believe it's vital for every workplace to invest in building the confidence and competency of all employees for suicide prevention and this year we provided ASIST training to 32 team members; and provided refresher sessions to those who had attended suicide prevention training previously.



Mental Health First Aid

We know that training in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is every bit as important as knowledge of physical first aid and 66 of the team gained accreditation this year. A further 120 people undertook a Mental Health First Aid Refresher. This is great progress towards Flourish Australia gaining recognition through the MHFA Skilled Workplace Program.



Flourishing Awards acknowledge resilience

On October 28, our annual Flourishing Awards were hosted as a virtual event, recognising outstanding, recovery-oriented service and the embodiment of our organisational values – trust, respect, hope, inclusion, integrity, diversity and partnership. We are extremely proud of every Award nominee whose high level of commitment inspired their colleagues to put them forward.

Our Individual Winner Abubakarr Fofanah from Queanbeyan has been a fearless advocate for those who feel powerless and rejected by society. Nothing is too hard for this valued team member whose boundless dedication and resilience instills in others a desire to always do their best.

Highly Commended in this category was Lisa Natrass from Penrith for her compassionate and understanding approach to her work and the trust this has earned her among colleagues.

Well-deserved Team Winners from our Maitland site expanded their program so substantially that they needed to find a bigger building to work from! Every person they support is encouraged to take control over their supports and make their own informed choices and the whole team is 100% committed to providing the highest standard of recovery focused support, striving tirelessly to develop respectful and trusting professional relationships and partnerships through everyday practices with family, friends and other stakeholders.

Congratulations also to our Leeton Team, Melbourne Team and IT Team who were all Highly Commended for the work they undertook over the year.

Winner of our inaugural Innovation Award was Penrith Westclub for their true commitment, passion, integrity and innovation to continue supporting people during lockdown. They brainstormed ideas together on new ways to deliver supports so that peoples' needs could continue to be met and they did not feel forgotten.

This year, our Service Awards recognised staff who have devoted 15 years of service to Flourish Australia. We thanked and congratulated Mario Fioretti, Rebecca Tsang and Kate Peschar for their commitment to Flourish Australia's work.

Mental health first aid training milestones

We are delighted that 150 of the team have now completed our two-day training course, with a further 10 classes scheduled. Course delivery is very flexible across our many sites, facilitating it as a team building exercise. Refresher classes are offered for people who have held this accreditation for three years.

Flourish Australia knows that early assistance often provides the best results when a person experiences a mental health crisis. Formal training in Mental Health First Aid adds to the skills team members have to help them recognise that somebody may be struggling with their mental health, understand how best to support them, and know about resources available to them.

Through this course, team members develop confidence and practical skills for effectively supporting someone, as a first responder, which can make a major difference to the outcomes for that person. Even staff who are extensively trained in supporting people in crisis have strengthened and sharpened their capabilities.

Accredited staff tell us that applying what they've learned in this course has improved how they perform their work, by better preparing them to navigate challenging situations.

Flourish Australia facilitates Mental Health First Aid's evidence-based content, aligning it with our recovery-oriented practice principles, and added lived experience perspectives. Limiting each training session to 12 people, from diverse backgrounds, promotes beneficial discussion and interaction.

Additional ASIST suicide prevention training is also delivered and will resume once face-to-face delivery is possible.

Challenges that saw us flourish

– The Nourishing Team

Recognising the need to nurture staff wellbeing, boost morale and build resilience in the face of this year's relentless challenges, our Senior Leadership Team came up with a series of fun team challenges under the banner of 'Nourish to Flourish.'

Designed to promote team spirit and collaboration, we started with a Step Challenge during July and August 2020, followed by a Family Feud in September and October, and a Photography Challenge in February and March, 2021.

As the COVID-19 pandemic kept us apart, our first priority was to support physical, mental and emotional wellbeing across our organisation, by creating a fun way for everyone to keep moving and stay connected. We invited staff to form teams of four and motivate each other to get individual steps up, week by week. The response was as creative as it was competitive, prompting a sudden spike in people walking, for a variety of reasons, and ramping up distanced sports participation to smash weekly targets. Progress updates spurred rival teams on and drove strategic collaboration. To lift us out of restricted thinking, a challenge map was created to show where in the world your tens of thousands of steps could take you.

Following in the footsteps of this overwhelmingly popular activity, it was game-on again with our Family Feud challenge. Each week, teams received a series of ten questions to get them thinking, such as 'what



is the most popular group activity with people we support?' Weekly results culminated in a play-off finale at our Town Hall meeting.

To bolster our resilience as ever-changing pandemic restrictions continued into 2021, we introduced a 'Be Snappy, Be Happy' photography challenge. Promoting creativity as a way of keeping everyone physically active, and emotionally and mentally engaged, the challenge was to capture a moment when you felt relaxed and happy by pausing to really take in your everyday surrounds and snap a close up of an object, space or pet. Everyone had the opportunity to place likes for their favourite photos, with a prize awarded to the pic that resonated most with people.

Team leaders told us that what made taking part so worthwhile for people was the thrill of the chase and team connections they experienced.

Our CEO Mark Orr noted, "The strong level of participation in our Nourish to Flourish challenges, across all levels of the organisation, tells us that we achieved what we set out to do, which was reignite team spirit, keep our people connected and build resilience by promoting problem solving and collaboration, around fun challenges. Staff are already coming to us with ideas for new challenges and thinking strategically about their team selection for the next round."

Our corporate governance

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 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 nine members, all of whom are non-executive Directors. The Board renews its membership in a progressive and orderly manner. 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 six 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. These are ratified by the full Board.

The six standing committees are:

Finance, Audit & Risk Management 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 financial and commercial management and reporting, investment and borrowing policy, management and endorsement of the annual budget and underlying assumptions, risk management, external and internal audit, and internal control functions. Major investments and capital purchases are referred to this Committee for review prior to approval by the Board.

Digital Capability Committee

This Committee is responsible for supporting the development of the organisation's digital capabilities focused on both corporate functions and service delivery. This includes developing a digital culture, digital skills, and access to the right technology by staff and people accessing supports.

Service Quality & Safety 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 safeguarding, 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, overseeing the management of service delivery risks, advising the Board on services, receiving reports from the Independent Advocate, and reporting on these to the Board.

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. The Committee meets as needed.

Marketing & Advancement Committee

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

Remuneration Committee

The Remuneration Committee is tasked with the oversight of the organisation's employment, rewards and recognition arrangements to ensure Flourish Australia is an attractive place to work, and that we continue to support the Flourish Australia team to feel valued and to deliver high quality, recovery-oriented, trauma informed supports.

Performance Review

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 Directors' contribution to the ongoing performance and strategic direction of Flourish Australia.

Annual General Meetings

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.

Director Remuneration Committee

The Members have established a Director Remuneration Committee to independently make decisions about remuneration and other related benefits of the Directors. This is to ensure strict compliance with our Conflicts of Interest policy and the NSW Charitable Fundraising Authority.

Our Board

The Flourish Australia Board provides strategic leadership to the organisation and ensures the highest level of corporate governance is maintained. Board member bios can be found on our website: flourishaustralia.org.au/about/leadership



Professor Elizabeth More AM MAICD
Board Chair
BA(Hons), Grad Dip Mgt, M Comm Law, PhD
Appointed December 2015
Marketing & Advancement Committee
Remuneration Committee Chair
Finance, Audit & Risk
Management Committee



Andrew Pryor GAICD
Treasurer
FCA, BComm
Appointed February 2019
Finance, Audit & Risk
Management Committee Chair
Remuneration Committee
Digital Capability Committee



Dr Josey Anderson
BA, BMed(Hons), M Med,
M Health Law, Cert Child Adol Psych,
FRANZCP
Appointed August 2015
Service Quality & Safety
Committee



Paul Clenaghan
M Nurs, PG Dip Nurs Mgt
Appointed April 2009
Service Quality & Safety
Committee



Paula Hanlon
BA
Appointed February 2015
Service Quality & Safety
Committee



Robyn Carmody
Appointed July 2012
Service Quality & Safety
Committee Chair
Marketing & Advancement Committee



Diane Robinson
BA, LLB (Hons), LLM (Hons)
Appointed November 2017
Marketing & Advancement
Committee Chair
Remuneration Committee



Jeremy Thorpe
BEc, LLB (Hons)
Appointed October 2015
Finance, Audit & Risk
Management Committee



Dr Phillip Wing
CA, BEcon, M Econ, PhD
Appointed February 2019
Marketing & Advancement Committee
Digital Capability Committee Chair

Our organisational structure



Our Senior Leadership Team

The Chief Executive Officer and Senior Leadership Team are responsible for the daily operations and administration of Flourish Australia. SLT bios can be found on our website flourishaustralia.org.au/about/leadership



Mark Orr AM

Chief Executive Officer

BSc (Hons), MHLth Serv Mgt, Me-Hlth (HI),
Grad Dip Spec Ed, Grad Dip ACG, Grad
Cert App Fin and Invest, GAICD, FGIA,
FCG(CS), Registered Psychologist



Megan Hancock

Chief Financial Officer

CA, BBus, Grad Dip App Fin
and Invest, GAICD



Susan McCarthy

Chief Operations Officer

BSc (Nutrition and Physiology),
MPH, GAICD



Mohammed Alkhub

**General Manager,
Business Excellence**

BSc, Eng (Hons), MEng,
MBA, MLaw, JP



Tim Fong

**General Manager,
People and Culture**

BSc(Psych), MAppPsych,
Registered Psychologist



Fay Jackson

**General Manager,
Inclusion**

BCrea Vis Arts, Dip Ed



Peter Neilson

**Chief Development
Officer**

BComm, CPA



James Herbertson

**General Manager,
Employment**

MBA



Aidan Conway

**General Manager,
Operations
North & West**

MBA



Andrew O'Brien

**General Manager,
Operations
South & East**

BEd (Econ & Geog),
Dip Comm Mgt, MAICD



Julie Fraser

**Manager,
Administration and
EA to CEO**

BA in Professional
Writing



Chapter 6

Looking Ahead

The year ahead



Outcomes and Improvement Measurement

The new outcomes and improvement framework will be piloted, and then rolled out across all sites and programs to measure outcomes and impact. This will include the identification and development of targeted measures, and a review of the customer experience pilot data.



Digital Capability

The Strategic Plan has a major focus on digital capability. The next twelve months will see us map out a pathway to maximising the impact of digital approaches in both our corporate and service delivery work. It will also see us focus on building the digital skills of people accessing supports so that they can participate in their communities, and take up their digital citizenship rights.



Staff Innovation Conference

We will hold a staff innovation conference to draw on the wisdom and experience of the Flourish Australia team. This will help us identify areas where we can improve, and focus our investments for innovation.



Data Analytics

A new data analytics position will begin to help us unlock the vast amount of data we capture and use it to evaluate and improve services, make our work process more efficient and drive greater impact from our resources.



Climate Action

A new position statement on climate action will help focus our procurement decisions and everyday behaviours so that we can play a bigger part in addressing climate change and sustainability.



Service Quality KPIs

We will develop and trial new service quality key performance indicators and continue to implement a new Safeguarding Report. This will support our continuous improvement and strengthened focus on quality and safeguarding.



Chapter 7

Our Financials

Financial summary

For the 2020/21 financial year

At 30 June 2021 our financial position remains strong

Our operating result for the year was a surplus of \$3,768,421.

This result was impacted positively by compensation for the compulsory acquisition of RichmondPRA Limited's interest in land at its leased business premise at Sydney Olympic Park for the Sydney Metro West Project. We were also able to sell two of our Guildford units during 2020/21.

We continued to support people through government service contract programs, and these programs remain a very important part of what we do representing 46% of our overall revenue from ordinary activities in 2020/21. As more of our support arrangements transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) our NDIS revenue as a proportion of our overall revenue from ordinary activities continues to grow. NDIS revenue as a proportion of our overall revenue from ordinary activities grew from 40% in 2019-20 to 42% in 2020/21.

We believe that helping people to maintain stable housing, make friends, get involved and learn new things are beneficial to mental health and wellbeing. During 2020/21 we continued our support in these areas, with associated costs representing 33% (2019-20 32%) of our total costs.

OUR SOURCES OF REVENUE	2020/21	2019/20
NDIS	36,060,330	33,841,224
NSW Government	27,737,116	28,206,827
Commonwealth Government	10,644,143	13,448,378
Business Sales	5,974,350	4,135,357
Other income – operations	4,484,799	2,440,816
Queensland Government	1,957,759	1,981,076
Subtotal – Operations	86,858,497	84,053,678
Other income	5,053,882	320,956
Total Revenue	91,912,379	84,374,634

COSTS SUMMARY	2020/21	2019/20
Helping people make friends, get involved and learn new things	28,826,998	27,159,225
Supporting people where they live	27,324,637	28,696,684
Working with people to find a job	18,072,472	16,796,609
Other expenditure	13,919,851	11,070,384
Total Costs	88,143,958	83,722,902

OUR BALANCE SHEET AT A GLANCE	2020/21	2019/20
Assets		
Cash and cashable investments	20,631,536	14,308,887
Investment properties	10,014,934	11,007,422
Property, plant and equipment	20,737,036	19,620,408
Intangibles	199,258	582,302
Receivables	4,347,533	8,432,213
Right of use assets	3,360,801	3,219,471
Other assets	5,902,411	4,223,271
Total Assets	65,193,509	61,393,974
Liabilities		
Accounts payable	3,288,840	2,810,014
Other current liabilities	10,949,547	13,448,872
Financial liabilities	1,679,877	1,684,666
Provision for staff LSL and holiday pay	8,764,088	8,476,069
Lease liabilities	3,395,878	3,260,592
Total Liabilities	28,078,230	29,680,213
EQUITY	37,115,279	31,713,761

Our Funders & Consortia Partners

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 Communities and Justice – Child and Family Services
- Department of Family and Community Services – Housing NSW
- Hunter New England Local Health District
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District
- Murrumbidgee Local Health District
- Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District
- NSW Health – Justice Health and Forensic Hospital Network

- NSW Ministry of 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

- Capital Health Network
- Central and Eastern Sydney PHN
- EACH Social and Community Health
- Grand Pacific Health
- HealthWISE New England North West

- Hunter New England and Central Coast PHN
- Hunter Primary Care
- Mission Australia
- Murrumbidgee PHN
- Nepean Blue Mountains PHN
- New Horizons
- One Door Mental Health
- South Eastern NSW PHN
- South Western Sydney PHN
- SVA Nominees Pty Ltd as trustee of the Resolve SBB Trust
- Western NSW PHN
- Western Sydney PHN

Flourish Australia receives funding from the Australian, New South Wales and Queensland Governments.

Flourish Australia Consortia Partners include:

headspace Bankstown

- Dr Josey Anderson (Chair) Clinical Director – Black Dog Institute
- Black Dog Institute
- Canterbury Bankstown City Council
- DAMEC At Work
- One Door Mental Health
- Salvation Army – YouthLink
- South West Sydney Local Health District

Supporting Organisations

- ACON
- Arab Council of Australia
- City of Canterbury Bankstown Council
- FYRST – a part of The Salvation Army
- Lifeline Macarthur
- Transcultural Mental Health Centre

headspace Broken Hill

- Broken Hill City Council
- Black Dog Institute
- Far West Local Health District
- JobLink Plus
- Lifeline Broken Hill
- Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Service
- Mission Australia
- Nachiappan Surgery
- Neami National
- Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)

Supporting Organisations

- ACON
- Police Citizen Youth Club (PCYC)

headspace Castle Hill & Parramatta

- Interrelate
- Northmead Uniting Church
- Ability Options
- Salvation Army – YouthLink
- TAFE NSW
- Wise Employment

Supporting Organisations:

- Twenty10
- ACON
- Western Sydney Local Health District
- Parramatta Mission
- CanTeen

For more information visit flourishaustralia.org.au/funders

Lindal

We can't underestimate the vital importance of peer-driven programs

I'm the Manager of Flourish Australia's Resolve Program in Orange, in partnership with NSW Health. People who have experienced frequent hospital stays, of between 40 and 270 days within a 12-month period, are referred to us, and we focus on what that person feels they need in order to stay out of hospital.

The COVID-19 lockdown impacted what we do, greatly. Our Peer Workers have always connected with the people we support, face-to-face but many were frightened and didn't want anyone coming to their home.

We felt very strongly that we needed to find a way to maintain more of a presence in people's lives and technology was the way to do that. All of our Peer Workers have their own lived experience and decided to show up for people by sharing our personal strategies for remaining resilient, through a series of short videos. We produced these ourselves in a way that was very relatable and provided people with a link to a private channel where they could access the content whenever they wished.

People appreciate being able to tap into the videos at any time of the day or night.

I shared my tried-and-tested techniques to quit smoking, others shared tips for mindfulness, journaling or cooking; whatever it was that helped them to keep moving forward on their own journey. This person-to-person approach is in line with Flourish Australia's belief that each person we support is the expert in their own journey. When someone feels understood by a Peer Worker who has walked in their shoes, it often really is the missing piece needed for healing to begin.

Just knowing you are not alone, because a Peer Worker has had the courage to say "I've been there too," can be life changing. As a Manager, I know that supported Peer Workers provide better support, too.

We recently submitted our video program "Hope into Lights Camera Action" for consideration to be presented at the annual TheMHS Conference, themed 'Hope, Into Action'. Our videos were chosen as one of Flourish Australia's submissions.

As regular operations resume, we'll continue to produce videos. They've become a valuable resource for reaching people across our broad service area which covers a 200km radius, from Orange to Dubbo, Mudgee, Cowra, Parkes, Forbes and Bathurst.

Some people see distance as a barrier to coming to us for the support they need, so we produced a video to address this. It provides the opportunity to view our house remotely, and gain a clear understanding of what we are all about.

It's only since working as part of this program that I fully appreciate the importance of making peer-driven supports available and this year has shown us the value of harnessing digital technologies to do that.



Stigma holds too many people back from seeking the support they need and connecting remotely from the comfort and safety of their own home can make the difference. In my own lived experience, I can recall instinctively hiding my depression from others. Stepping into a role at Flourish Australia where I can use my story to support others in their own personal growth has played an important part in my own recovery.

We all have multilayered stories. How much I share varies from person to person. Flourish Australia does a wonderful job of teaching us relevant sharing of our lived experience, which they value highly. These videos have been proven to be a powerful way of using our lived experience to help others build their resilience, in pandemic conditions.





Where mental wellbeing thrives

Want more information?

Freecall 1300 779 270

Email info@flourishaustralia.org.au

www.flourishaustralia.org.au

   FlourishAus

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Registered Office of RichmondPRA Ltd

Head Office & Postal Address:
Quad 3, Level 3, Suite 3.01
102 Bennelong Parkway, Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127
Phone 1300 779 270
Fax 02 8756 5050
Email info@flourishaustralia.org.au
www.flourishaustralia.org.au

Flourish Australia Services is a Registered Business Name of RichmondPRA Limited (ABN 66 001 280 628), commonly known as Flourish Australia.



We are a quality accredited organisation.



AUSTRALIAN
LGBTQ INCLUSION
AWARDS 2021

HWEI
BRONZE SERVICE
PROVIDER