

Golden City
SUPPORT
SERVICES



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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Values and Mission Statement

Enhance the Quality of Life of the People We Support

The primary mission of GCSS is to enhance the quality of life of the people we support. We support people to have homes in their local communities, develop their own relationships and enjoy the same access to community resources, opportunity to participate and rights as other members of their community.

- > We implement support practices that work
- > We do what we say
- > We make it easy for individuals and families to use and understand our services
- > We are a purposeful organisation with committed staff
- > We work locally within communities
- > We work for social change

Funding Sources

Golden City Support Services Inc recognises the following main source of funds in the 2020-2021 financial year

Direct Funding:

- Bendigo Health Care Group
- Department of Health- Commonwealth
- Department of Health – Victoria
- Murray PHN
- NDIS Participants through the National Disability Insurance Agency

Requests to provide services funded through:

- Bendigo Health Care Group
- Centre for Disability Studies
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Department of Jobs, Precinct's and Regions – Creators Fund Panel
- Regional Arts Victoria
- The Angel Fund
- Villa Maria



Partners 2021

- ABI Road Tour
- Alan Hough – Purpose at Work
- Anglicare Victoria
- Annie North Inc
- Arena Theatre
- AFS and Associates
- Bendigo & District Aboriginal Cooperative
- Bendigo Art Gallery
- Bendigo Community Health Services
- Bendigo Health
- Bendigo Health- Community Care Support | Carer Support
- Bendigo Health Older Persons Mental Health
- Bendigo Health Psychiatric Services
- Bendigo Psychology
- Bendigo TAFE
- Bendigo Tech School
- Bendigo Venues & Events
- Bruce McIntosh- Lionhearted
- Catholic Care Sandhurst
- Centre of Disability Studies
- Choice Voices Choir
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Consumer Participation Group
- CreateA Reference Group
- Creative Victoria
- Daryl James – Cielterre Management Services
- David Moody
- Dementia Australia
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Dr. Gary LaVigna of Institute for Applied Behaviour Analysis
- DSC
- Eliza Hull
- 5 Angry Men
- Haven Home Safe
- Housing Justice
- Intereach Loddon LAC
- James Rigby
- Joan Harris
- Kate Stones
- La Trobe University Bendigo
- Lander & Rogers
- Laura Hogan – OT Supervision – Centre for Disability Studies University of Sydney
- Leonie van Eyck
- Living with a Disability Research Centre - La Trobe University
- Lumary
- Marcus Turnbull – TurnCode Productions
- Matching Pets to People
- Mental Health Victoria
- Murray PHN
- National Disability Services
- Peace Choir
- Possability
- Professional Advantage
- Regional Arts Victoria
- RIAC
- Simon Brown Greaves- FBG Group
- Simon Harvest
- Sunraysia Residential Services
- The Angel Fund
- Tim Carrodus – BIAAS
- VALID
- Z Fit Studios



Chair Report

A challenging year

It has been another challenging year both for the Golden City Support Services community and the sector generally. It has also been another year where the Golden City Support Services team, led by its committed senior management and supported by dedicated staff, has managed superbly to chart a steady course in serving the people we support. Despite the frequent changes to both the COVID risks and rules and the waves of outbreaks, the Golden City Support Services team has always been prepared and responded quickly and thoughtfully. The board is extremely appreciative of the effort and care shown by the team over this period.

Consolidating our governance approach

Over the past 12 months the board has invested considerable time and energy reflecting on its governance approach in order to ensure a substantiable organisation. We have been working closely with Dr Alan Hough of Purpose at Work to review

the board's approach to the increasing expectations on disability support providers

As part of the review the board is close to finalising significant updates of the organisation's constitution consistent with the 'model rules' of for incorporated associations in Victoria. The board has been ably supported by the generous support of Lander & Rogers Lawyers, receiving pro bono support from their corporate practice, with particular thanks to Alison Davey, Alex Dworjanyn and Rob Neely. It is hope that the amended constitution will be considered by the members of Golden City in the coming months.

Supporting the sector

As part of Golden City Support Services' commitment to embracing advances in the sector and translating these into practice for the people we support, a strong contingent of Golden City Support Services' staff and board members participated in the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability 2021 Conference. In September 2021, as president, I was invited to

address a masterclass organised by the National Disability Services providing a comparison between the NDIS quality and safeguarding systems with WHS regulation.

Providing a quality service

Golden City Support Services' mission on enhancing the quality of life of the people we support was well tested as COVID changed our routines and tried to isolate us from our community, friends and family.

Golden City Support Services Staff remained alongside the people we support providing: essential information for their decisions, checking in on essential food and grocery supplies, supporting people to find new ways to remain connected with family and friends, supporting people to remaining active and engaged both at home and in outside spaces close by. Exploring what was possible when changes often happening at short notice. Golden City Support

Services staff went above and beyond taking on extra shifts created by colleagues isolating at short notice due to COVID close contacts, dealing with uncertainty and change, keeping in touch colleagues and attending team meetings electronically. Keeping their safety and the safety of the people Golden City Support Services support front of mind.

A crisis such as COVID tests the quality of an organisation, staff and systems, last year we came up trumps in a very difficult time

Growing the team and recognising service

We welcomed a new board member, Bendigo local Ms Stacey Bloomfield, in March this year. Stacey has a strong history of experience supporting not-for-profits, corporate governance, accounting and stakeholder engagement. Stacey has been an enthusiastic participant in board meetings and is already making an important contribution

towards the governance of the organisation.

The board also recognised the extraordinary service of its longest-serving board member Ms Jessie Wade. Jessie has clocked up a remarkable 38 years of service on the board – more than double the total number of years' service the rest of the board has combined! To honour Jessie's contribution, the board has appointed her a Life Governor and thanks her for her service to the Golden City Support Services community to date.

Dr Dru Marsh

CEO Report

The main strategic issues of COVID 19 and the NDIA design and price structure changes reported to last year's Annual General Meeting have continued unabated through the past year and demanded an inordinate amount of time and energy.

Our Covid planning continued to serve us well in the ever changing COVID environment and we thank our staff for their diligence as they responded with understanding and commitment to the changing needs of the people we support, maintained GCSS COVID safe systems of work, stayed connected and looked out for each other, and filled shifts at short notice due to colleagues needing to isolate or changes in the access to day time activities for the people we support.

The NDIA have continued changing the design and pricing structure of the NDIS; it creates real uncertainty as to whether skilled services can be maintained. It is not unlike starting a new NDIS business every year as we break down and analyse the impact of design and pricing changes on Participants, GCSS and the sector as a whole. We know skilled staff are a key to providing good support for people who want to be involved and thrive in their local communities. GCSS will continue providing staff training, coaching on the job and staff meetings (for the fine tuning of supports and consistency of application across a staff team) and highlight the need for these essential elements of quality and safety need to be funded by the NDIA.

There are other strategic areas where GCSS has made significant progress in this past year; we successfully completed our NDIS Quality and Safeguards Audit, ran our first Practice Leader Core Training, completed the GCSS Staff Wellbeing Strategy development, assessed and purchased a new Client Relationship Management system, purchased and began implementing new finance software and increased our fee for service Allied Health and Behaviour Support Practitioner assessments.

I thank the GCSS Management Executive; Shelley, Neil and Linton for their contribution this past year it has taken an enormous amount of energy, often 7 days a week, to provide the service compliance, leadership and development in their respective areas, all the time managing the every changing work requirements COVID caused. I would like to thank the members of the Board for their tireless efforts and expertise in steering Golden City Support Services in what continues to be a truly challenging and unique time.

Ian McLean



Finance Report

Golden City Support Services Inc. (GCSS) is pleased to present the accompanying Financial Statements to our Annual General Meeting.

Our report is prepared and audited in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations of the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

The statements show a good financial performance across the programs of GCSS with a year-end net current surplus of \$417K.

The majority of this surplus is the result of investment gains and property holdings. Revenue from operating activities declined with the disruption of the pandemic and withdrawal of COVID-19 support funding from NDIS and Federal Government and the restructure of the Supported Independent Living pricing model by the NDIS on 1 July 2020.

The restructure of the SIL pricing model by the NDIS removed funding required to ensure successful oversight of active support and engagement at each location. GCSS are currently subsidising these reasonable and necessary supports while discussions around the

SIL pricing model continue with the NDIS but this is not sustainable on an ongoing basis.

GCSS continue to be active in emphasising the need for essential 'non face to face supports' such as specialised training and practice leadership to be acknowledged and funded to ensure the SIL funding model is based on the principle of providing skilled support. It is through engagement in meaningful activity and relationships that many aspects of quality of life are realised. People with intellectual disabilities rely on staff to provide opportunities for participation and assistance to be engaged in activities and social interactions. It goes beyond the in home attendant care model of support the NDIS is currently funding.

The COVID-19 pandemic response has seen an increase in overheads due to the increased costs associated with PPE, rostering, administrative support, quarantining of staff and an inability to provide services at full capacity due to restrictions mandated by the Victorian Government.

The Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) shows net assets of \$17.5M, an increase of \$.5M over the prior year result of \$177M.



This provides a confident debt equity ratio to sufficiently cushion the very rapid operational and strategic changes required by all organisations in the sector due to the NDIS and the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Total revenue of \$14.3M represents a 5.1% decrease from last year. Support service income, which represents the NDIS stream of revenue, was \$13.6M, down from 14.4M last year. Salaries and wages increased 6%. Overall, expenses increased 5.4% with the pandemic continuing to reduce motor vehicle expenses.

Service provision requirements have again been achieved and GCSS continues to put focus and resource

into providing a person centred service that improves the quality of life of those who choose GCSS as their service provider. This is becoming more challenging in a funding environment that changes without notice or consultation. It is not sustainable for GCSS to rely on investment income to support disability services into the future and we will continue to advocate for an adjustment to the funding model to reflect payment for all the reasonable and necessary supports required to achieve positive outcomes.

Communication.
Choice
& Control.
Engagement.
Predictability
& Consistency.
Positive
& Respectful
Language.



2021 Agenda

Forty-Second Annual General Meeting: 5.30pm Monday 29 November 2021

Venue:
Boardroom | First Floor 48 Mundy Street

1. Acknowledgement of Country
2. Welcome
3. Notice of Meeting
4. Apologies
5. Confirm Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting
6. Reports:
Presentation of Reports
 - (a) President Report
 - (b) CEO Report
 - (c) Financial Report
 - (d) All other reports are presented as written in the Annual Report
7. Reception | adoption of Reports and audited Statement of Accounts
8. Election for the vacancies on the Board of Management
9. Election of Auditor for the year ending 30th June 2022
10. General Business (of which 7 days notice has been given)
11. Presentation of Life Governorship
12. Meeting Close



2020 Minutes

Minutes of the Forty-First Annual General Meeting

**Boardroom | 48 Mundy Street Bendigo
Monday 30th November 2020**

Meeting Commenced: 6.36pm

Present: Ross Baring, Dru Marsh, Jessie Wade, Chris Bigby, Teresa Iacono, Ian McLean, Shelley Moore, Neil Sing, Linton Ashley

Minute Taker: Terri Mackay

Acknowledgement of Country:

Read by Ian McLean

Welcome:

Given by Dru Marsh

Notice of Meeting:

Read by Dru Marsh

Apologies: Nil

Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

Motion: That the Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting be confirmed

Moved by Ross Baring **Seconded by** Chris Bigby *Carried*

Reports:

The following reports were addressed verbally in addition to being presented in the Annual Report-

President & CEO Report – Dru Marsh | Ian McLean

Read by Ian McLean

Finance Report

Read by Shelley Moore

Written stories and data are presented in the Annual Report as a snap shot of the year

Motion: That all reports be received as presented in the Annual Report

Moved by Jessie Wade **Seconded by** Chris Bigby *Carried*

Motion: That the audited Statement of Accounts be received

Moved by Jessie Wade **Seconded by** Chris Bigby *Carried*

Election of Committee Members:

7 Positions Vacant

Nominees

Chris Bigby

Teresa Iacono

Election of Auditor:

One nomination received for Auditor of Golden City Support Services Accounts for the 2020|2021 financial year being AFS & Associates Pty Ltd

General Business:

Nil received

Meeting Closed: 6.49pm





A Yearly Snapshot



152

Support Staff

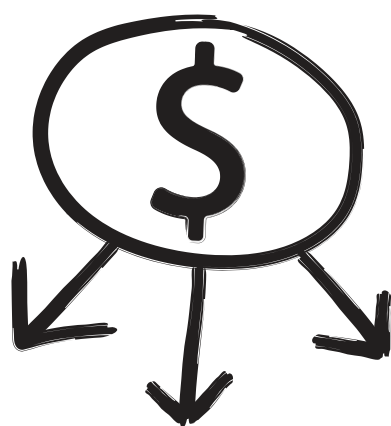


9

Practice Leaders



42 New Support Staff



We had \$12,150,813 in Wages

We had \$12,603,033 in Contracted Support Services

We had \$911,000 in Government Grants



201

Direct Support participants



207

Financial Intermediary Participants

164

Support Coordination Participants



25

New Support Participants



62

New Financial Intermediary Participants



16

New Support Coordination Participants

We support

28



Supported Independent Living Participants

Theatre Doors Project

We were thrilled to be invited to be part of this project that includes portraits of performers who use the Engine Room at the Old Fire Station.

Kyle is a member of our Saturday ensemble and his lovely face can now be seen on the View Street doors.

The text that goes with his image, accessed via the QR code on the street:

Kyle Waddington is an actor with a passion for comedic roles. His inspirations include John Cleese, Rowan Atkinson and Michael Crawford. He is a member of the Saturday ensemble of performers with CreateA who provide opportunities for people with disability to engage with contemporary arts practice and performance.

“I enjoy being around people with a good sense of humour. I want to use Drama to make more friends.” - Kyle



Providing Support

Disability Services, Psychosocial (Mental Health) Recovery Services and Frail Aged and Dementia Services

When looking back over the last year COVID certainly stands out as a major theme; with 22 periods of isolation for the people we support, 166 isolation periods for our staff and 1 COVID positive diagnosis for a staff member; in and out of lock down and all the support people required to understand the new rules, moving from group work to individual support and back again, welfare checks and ensuring people and their carers had sufficient groceries and food, learning how to stay in touch electronically with family and friends, trying to stay engaged and active, going for COVID testing and working through getting a vaccination.

Thank you to all our staff for their great work during these uncertain and often demanding times. Keeping the wellbeing of their colleagues and people we support paramount. The sheer numbers of shifts that had to be filled at short notice due to Covid isolation or because peoples day time work/day programs closed with at times only a few hours' notice; our staff looked out for each other, kept up the cleaning/disinfecting, hand hygiene, PPE wearing, getting tested, very high vaccination rates, keeping in touch with colleagues on-line and understanding the need to take on

extra shifts when there were vacancies to fill at short notice.

Amazingly managing COVID is far from all we did last year. We have trialled the next steps in our GCSS Practice Leader Core Skills Training, participated in the Staff Wellbeing and Strategy Development Process (with staff from all areas of GCSS) and been through a process for choosing our new Client Relationship Management (CRM) System. We have continued with the key elements required to develop skilled staff: our recruitment process (although numbers of suitable applicants fell through the year as it did across the sector and in Aged Care), induction, base training, 'on the job coaching' and staff meetings. Our Practice Leaders went to 916 staff coaching shifts last year; this would have been much higher except for Practice Leaders playing a key part of providing skilled backfill to shifts vacated by staff isolating due to COVID.

Thank you to our Practice Leaders: Craig, Amanda, Taiche, Bhupinder, Jess, Rosh, Sarp, Lynette and Karen our Lead Workers (who have supported and backed up their Practice Leaders and staff teams so well) Leanne, Chloe, Jackie (until Jan 21) and Bec; and staff that provided support to their Practice Leaders- taking on specific tasks: Patrick, Caitlin P., Carolin, Scott, Mark, Andrew McG, Marcia, Mel and Elizabeth.

Thank you to our Workforce Planning & Rostering Team: Caitlin (Team Lead), Danielle, Morgan, Jayne, Kay, Bec T (recently left for CST)

And finally thank you to our Practice Coaching Team who span the disciplines of Behaviour Support, Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Social Work and Community Development. This team's expertise is directly focused on developing and maintaining skilled practice by mentoring Practice Leaders (and their

teams), providing expert knowledge and guidance in both our practice models and the skills required to apply them. The Practice Coaching Team have also begun accepting a small number of external referrals for behavioural support and occupational therapy assessment services. The Practice Coaching team has access to skilled external supervision. Thanks to Ash (Team Lead), Alex, Tara, Paige, Claire, Andrew McS, John and Brooke (new to the team).



Finance

The COVID-19 pandemic and State Government mandated lockdowns have continued to have an effect on our financial processes.

We have continued to be given the opportunity to be involved in the NDIA national reference pricing groups and we provided submissions to the Supported Independent Living and Support Coordination consultation papers.

The past 12 months have seen the team continually adjust and refine their work processes to adapt to the constant changes to funding models and accountability required by the NDIS and the Commonwealth Department of Health, often with little notice and against short timelines. The uncertainty of funding for COVID-19 responses and when and how it is to be claimed is an example of this, as is the sudden change of the Supported Independent Living funding model without any transition funding.

The team integrated the use of Power BI more fully as part of expanding the level of analysis of financial data available to decision makers.

The next 12 months will see significant developments including the introduction of new payroll software, a major upgrade of the existing financial

software, introduction of a fully automated accounts payable system and continued contributions to NDIA consultation papers.

The team of Shane, Elly, Rob, Michelle, Punit and Maria continue to provide a high level of skill and expertise across the financial spectrum. They all constantly look to improve and become more efficient in their work as well as build on their current knowledge base.

Financial Intermediary / Plan Management

The GCSS Financial Intermediary/Plan Management service has continued its growth over the past 12 months to over 200 participants.

The focus over the next 12 months will be on launching the participant portal for even more timely access to information, providing access for providers to upload invoices to a portal and establishing a regular newsletter. These were delayed in

the part in the last 12 months due to the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kate was joined by new team member Maria and together they have worked to try and ensure Plan Management becomes a smooth and effortless part of a participant's NDIS experience and they have shown a high level of commitment and determination to achieve this.



Support Coordination

GCSS Support Coordination is stable with 4 full time and 5 part time team members providing both general and specialist support coordination.

We are continuing to develop the areas of mental health, complex supports, justice, housing and disability. Mental health and housing supports were the areas that have demanded the greatest attention.

New team members have completed a 2-day support coordination training course and the team as a whole continue to regularly attend webinars and seminars presented by sector relevant groups to expand their knowledge of support options. The Support Coordination Team also accesses External Professional Supervision.

The pandemic and the government mandated lockdowns have continued to impact on the availability of services. The team have continued with regular participant welfare checks, working with providers and allied health therapists to maintain support in a restricted environment, and continually providing up-to-date advice on government directives and vaccinations. The ability

to communicate clearly, negotiate in a considerate way with providers, and empathise with all continues to be important characteristics of the support coordination role.

The lack of available social housing for all participants, but especially for those with a psycho-social diagnosis, continues to be a huge impediment to stability in the life of NDIS participants. Plans continue to be inconsistent, without appropriate levels of funding for necessary support to achieve the stated goals and often fail to take into consideration the effect of the pandemic in the support environment. There continues to be a lack of availability of appropriately skilled allied health and behaviour support specialists, and a lack of choice of quality support providers.

Kirstie, Rozita, Joe, Katie, Sarah, Yvonne, Cassie and Linton thoughtfully led, engaged and supported by Tammy, continue their dedication to the achievement of a good outcomes for participants. Shane continues to provide the team with valuable financial guidance and support.

We give heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Pam Kendrick who has retired after 25 years with Golden City Support Services. Pam successfully ran the Future for Young Adults program for many years, achieving amazing outcomes, always within budget. Alongside other roles in the organisation she was instrumental in the successful development of the Support Coordination team at GCSS. Pam has been a mainstay of the organisation over the past 25 years and we are grateful and appreciative of all her advice and enthusiasm. She will be missed.



Customer Services

Being a Customer Service Coordinator in a time of COVID-19 lockdowns has presented specific challenges. How to stay connected to those we support without meeting face to face. How to support those we support, through the often complex processes of being vaccinated against COVID-19 disease. How to support those we support, when other supports are uncertain, as day services have stopped and restarted under COVID-19 restrictions. How to support those we support to negotiate the maze of ever changing COVID-19 restrictions and the impact that brings.

It has been a challenging time, and the team have remained focused and dedicated to their crucial role of ensuring those we support receive the services they have signed up for and the outcomes that enable people to engage with their community are progressed step by step and achievements are celebrated.

Thanks to Amelia, Georgia, Maddy, Michelle, Molly and Norm and Bec who has just joined the team.

Reception

For much of the last year we have limited the walk-up visits to our Mundy Street offices; doing our bit to ensure we keep our community safe from COVID-19. The reception team have remained connected with those we support and our staff through well designed and implemented communication systems, but it is a real change from being the front of house smiling and supportive face of GCSS. From contactless deliveries to supporting staff who have had to come into a near empty office to meet face to face or pick up supplies has presented challenges and has resolved

in the implementation of some innovative approaches. Challenges the reception team have taken on with dedication and understanding that the job just needs to be done.

Thanks to Makayle and Tania and as well Amelia, Olivia and Terri for also being there.

Information and Communications and Technologies we Deploy

Never has it been so true that our IT staff are the “engine drivers” of our modern technology managed business. From the enormous challenges of rolling out remote working systems to implementing systems to counter cyber security threats, the team have been there and remained focused and committed. Also, technology change never takes a rest, and cloud based solutions have become the norm, and over the last couple of years have caused a complete overhaul of how we provide IT based services.

Communication technologies aren't

a means unto themselves and our communications strategy has continued to evolve. We still use print media to inform the public of our services, but this sits alongside smart use of internal social media platforms and internet and intranet. In the end it's what you have to say that matters most and choosing not to overburden ourselves or others with information, but provide clear and relevant information, always aligned to the GCSS mission.

Thanks to Adam, Alex, Catherine and David

Supporting Our People and Our Culture

It's a simple idea, but it can be easily forgotten; we are nothing without our wonderful staff, right across the agency. From the newest recruit to the longest serving staff member. From those providing direct support to those supporting our direct support staff. Our supportive culture is shaped around being there for our staff, applying our Five Bases of Support to all we do, being collaborative and consultative and always having the health and safety of staff and others front of mind. This last year we have to refocused on the most important area of mental health wellbeing, not just because of the complexities of COVID-19, but because mental health wellbeing is central to our staff, all of us, getting fulfilment out of doing a good job.

Recruiting the right staff at a time of industry wide staff shortages and doing much of the recruitment process online has caused us to dig deep to ensure the recruitment solutions have still delivered only the very best staff. The quality of life outcomes for those we support depend on having the right staff not just any staff.

Thanks to Reanna and to Makayle for your support of Reanna and to Caitlin for your invaluable support in recruitment.

Thanks to our health and safety representatives Amanda, Elizabeth, Fiona, Jacki, Jessica, Kim, Michael, Stephanie and Troy.

Our Infrastructure

Like the IT engine driver, those that taking responsibility for ensuring our infrastructure is reliable, safe to use and available is essential. From buildings to our fleet of vehicles. From carefully designed and maintained COVIDSafe workstations, to ensuring we engage with the right trade services is crucial.

Thanks Olivia for covering such a wide area of infrastructure support and to our long time contract maintenance partners.



CreateA

It has been a very hard year for the arts. Artists have lost work and lost opportunities to perform, exhibit and work together. There have been very long periods where venues have had to remain closed. Nevertheless, despite lockdowns and restrictions, artists have continued making art and creating new ways to share their art and new ways of making their art. We need art more than ever, to share experiences and connect with others, to celebrate the creative spirit that fuels our hope and to think differently about what our future might be.

The artists in CreateA are celebrating the opportunities to return to working together. Our groups are back meeting together, still with some precautions and constraints, but able to reconnect and continue creating new work.

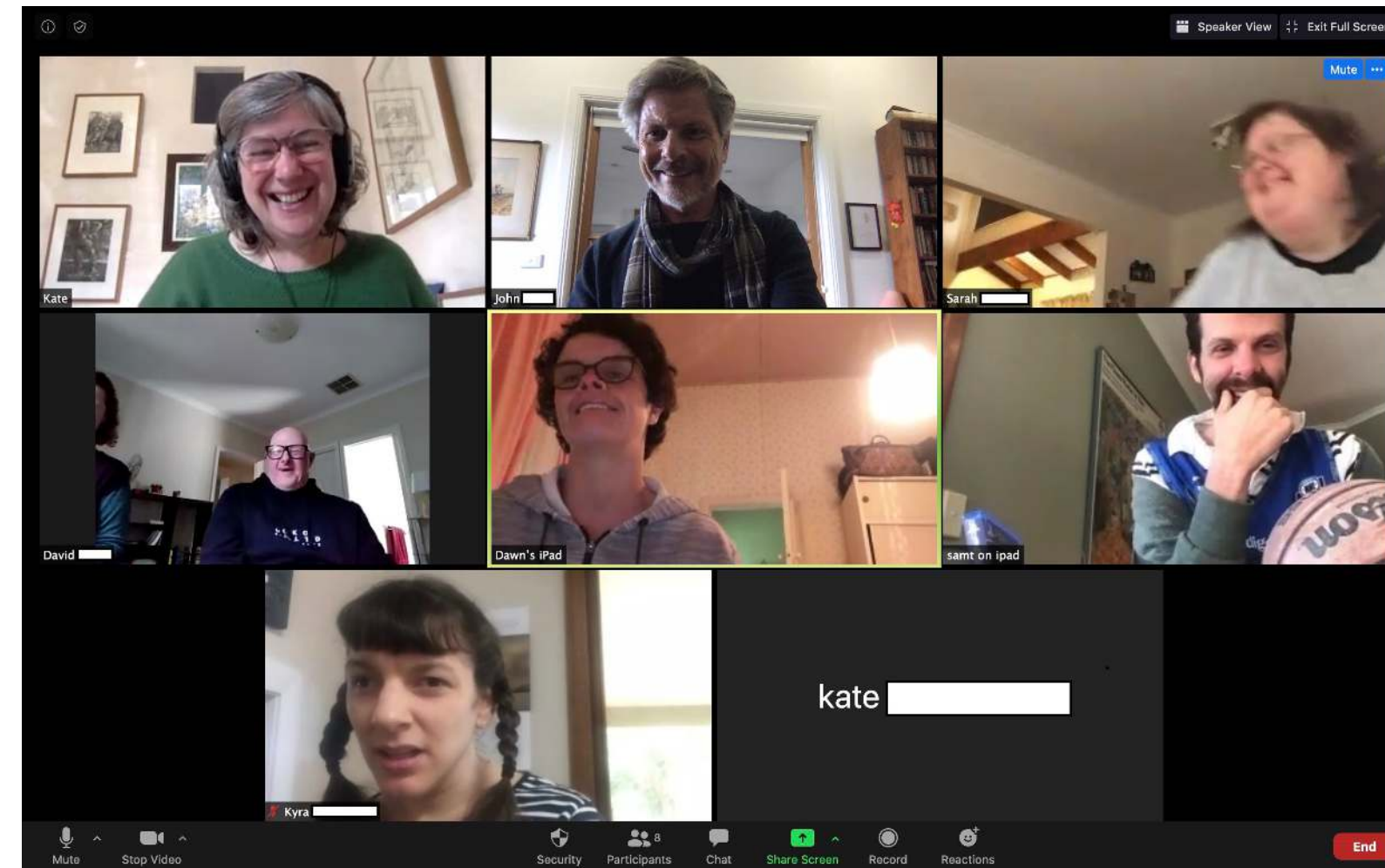
CreateA's Performing Ensemble narrowly missed being able to present their show PhoneHeads in Horsham due to a sudden lockdown at the end of May. However, they did manage to collaborate with a group of performers in Horsham via Zoom sessions, preparing them to participate in the performance. This connection with another region was an achievement in itself. We expect to continue building on this and creating connections with other communities in Victoria. PhoneHeads was selected to be part of ShowCase Victoria this year,

an industry networking event where we pitched the show to venues across the State. Interest was shown by a number of venues and we will look to follow those up as the State opens up again.

We have been given other opportunities to promote our work this year. We are included in a revolving slideshow of creative practitioners that is shown on screens located in the street front windows of Emporium Creative Hub on Mitchell Street. The image of one of the Saturday Drama ensemble members is on the doors of the Old Fire Station in View Street. You can use your phone camera to access information about CreateA by focusing on his image and following the link. (This is an example of one form of augmented reality)

A small grant to research augmented reality and apply it to theatrical performance has given us a creative tool that will give us options in the way our work is presented. This may help provide ways for audiences to experience our work in COVID-safe environments.

We are excited that we are able to exhibit art work for our annual visual art exhibition in the foyers of The Capital. The Saturday Visual Art Group did not have the usual number of workshops this year but made the most of the opportunities they had! Work will be on display until the end of the year.



Both choirs, Choice Voices and The Peace Choir, have been severely constrained this year. Zoom and Facebook Live online sessions have had short seasons during the year. One period of easing of restrictions allowed Choice Voices to meet with social distancing but this was short lived. It remains very difficult for choirs to sing indoors with the restrictions currently in place. They may try meeting outdoors before the end of the year but that is reliant on good weather.

Throughout this time our partnerships have been incredibly supportive. (Bendigo Venues & Events, Bendigo Art Gallery, City of Greater Bendigo, Arena Theatre, Bendigo Tech School, Z Fit). Special thanks to the staff at Bendigo Venues & Events who are always eager to hear how we are going and respond to our needs.

Thanks to all the members of the CreateA Reference Group. It has been a disrupted year but the committed support of this group is empowering.

All our participants, their families, the Artists and Arts Support Workers deserve thanks and congratulations this year for adapting, persevering and continuing to recognise the importance of art in our lives.



Creative Links

The work of this valuable program has continued throughout this year. The format of daily sessions has had to switch (often with very little notice) in response to lockdowns. Participants have become used to navigating Zoom sessions from home when face to face work has not been possible. This has created opportunities for participants to build skills in using technology that they otherwise may not have. Many people with disability are left behind in the swift progress of technology and we were pleased to take some steps to increase their digital literacy.

The core work of the program, providing meaningful planned activity in participants' lives, continues whether online or in person. Maintaining connections and building better communication has been proven to be more important than ever during a pandemic.

We are finding that basing activity in creative work not only allows participants to express themselves but is also a pathway for positive social interactions. Social interactions give us the foundation of our mental and physical health. We see people thriving when they are engaged creatively and socially.

The staff in this program have built great skill and the lead worker, Mary Burke, has been very much responsible for the skills and focus that this team has.



Kate Prendergast
Untitled, 2021
Acrylic on board



Golden City **SUPPORT** SERVICES



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Email customerservices@gcss.org.au

Web www.gcss.org.au



Registered
NDIS
Provider

My Aged Care
Supported by the Australian
Government Department of
Health



Projects we support