



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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## Our Vision

### Enhancing the Quality of Life of the People We Support

**Our vision is to create an inclusive community where people are supported 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.**

## What We Do



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 2022-2023 financial year

**Direct Funding:**

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

**Requests to provide services funded through:**

Bendigo Health Care Group  
City of Greater Bendigo  
Angel Fund  
Fair Play Regional Victoria Symposium  
Guide Dogs Victoria  
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

# Partnerships

- Gillian Martin- Soiléir Psychology Services, Dublin
- Matthew Spicer- The Centre for Positive Behaviour Support
- Jade Kohler- Active Ability
- Simon Brown-Greaves - SBG Group



Above: Cast of Move With Me at Phee Broadway Theatre, Castlemaine.  
Photo: Samantha Bews



# Chair's Report

Golden City Support Services Inc (GCSS) is headquartered on traditional lands of the Dja Dja Warrung people and provides its services on Dja Dja Warrung, Yorta Yorta, Taungurung and Wurrundjeri Country.

On behalf of the board, I wish to pay our respects to the elders past, present and emerging for all the traditional lands upon which we serve and recognise their continued connection and custodianship of the land, waters and skies.

## Returning to a new 'normal'

The return to somewhat 'normal' activity following the more challenging periods of the COVID epidemic has seen some reinvigoration of GCSS's community access and engagement programmes.

In April 2023, Nova and I had the pleasure of attending CreateA's production *Move With Me* in Castlemaine as part of the Castlemaine State Fair. The performance – largely the brainchild of GCSS's John Willis and supported by Mount Alexander Shire – explored how we all move through the world differently. With only 10% of communication thought to be from our words, the audience was immersed in a sensory experience showing how the body and the tone and rhythm of our voices communicate, and invited to join in the performance at key intervals.

From April to June 2023, the artwork of Paul Harrington was honoured in an exhibition at the Bendigo Visitor Centre (see flyer right). Paul's GCSS support worked with him to pursue his interest in creating art through a placement DONUT Studios.

## Impact of the floods

The return to 'normal' was of course soon to

be disrupted by the significant flooding that impacted many parts of Victoria, including areas of the Loddon Catchment in which GCSS provides its support.

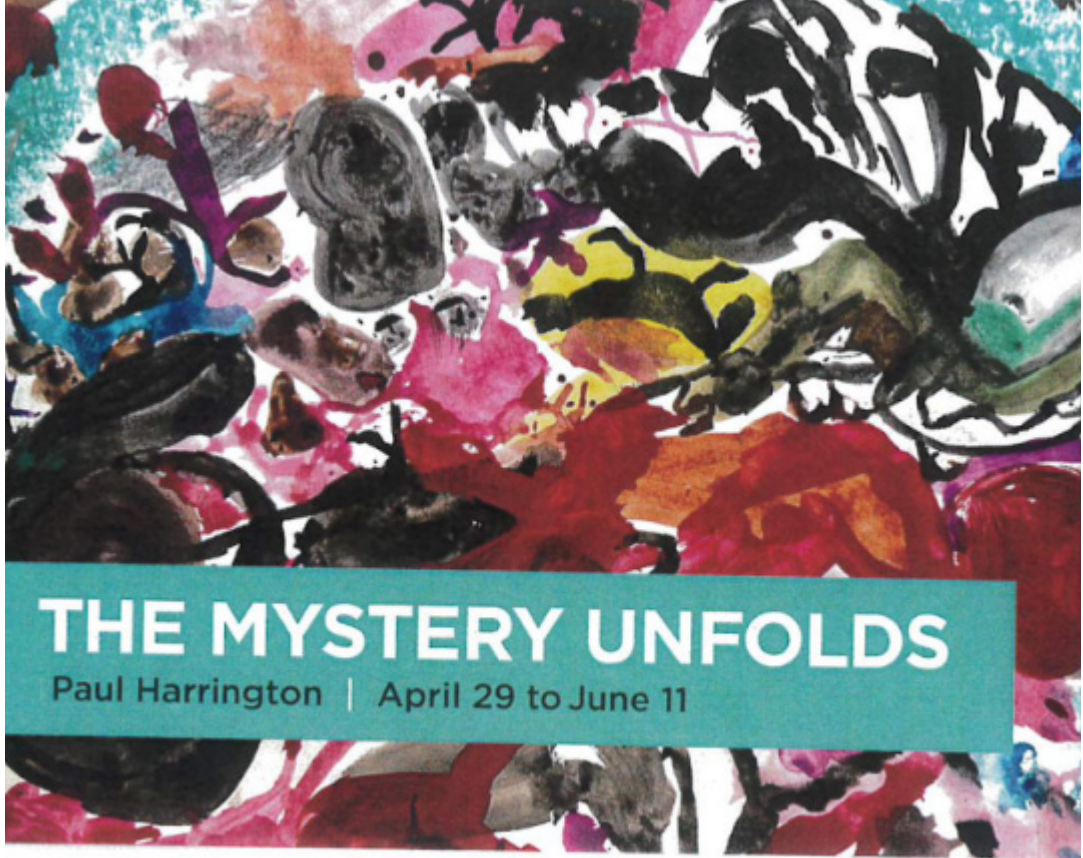
The board was deeply grateful for the dedication and commitment shown during this tough period to ensuring continuity of support to our impacted clients, recognising also that many staff were themselves adversely impacted by the floods.

Unfortunately, as a consequence of the flood disruption, GCSS needed to suspend some of its respite services in order to redeploy staff to action of greatest need. We recognise the impact this had on families who have grown to rely on GCSS's support and thank them for their patience as we gradually were able to return to regular service provision.

## A disruptive year in the sector itself

It has been a significant year in the disability sector with a change in Federal Government promising changes and improvement to the NDIS, the commencement of the NDIS Independent Review chaired by Bruce Bonyhady and Lisa Paul and the closing months of the Disability Royal Commission. While GCSS cautiously welcomes many of the improvements proposed so far, it has been challenging to grapple with the constant media speculation on the growing cost of the NDIS whilst at the same time experiencing an ever-tighter funding environment in the context of rising costs on all fronts. The government, in collaboration with the disability sector, will need to carefully consider the proposed recommendations, and allocate adequate funding to guarantee smooth implementation without compromising quality.

Temporary arrangements in the Commonwealth Home Support Program ended in 2023 and GCSS made the difficult decision to discontinue



The Living Art Space at the Bendigo Visitor Centre  
57-61 Pall Mall, Bendigo · 03 5434 6060 · las@bendigo.vic.gov.au  
www.bendigoregion.com.au · #ExploreBendigo



its services in this area. As part of its renewal of its strategic plan, the board and management recognised a need to focus on the organisation's key strengths whilst accepting the necessary additional regulatory oversight of the aged care sector meant it was the right time for GCSS to

conclude its services in aged care.

GCSS will continue to monitor developments arising from these key reviews and adjust its strategic approach as necessary.

## New 3-year Strategy

Between April and July 2022, the board convened a series of workshops, supported by senior management, to develop GCSS's 3-year strategic plan to run from 2022 to 2025. As part of the process, and following from the adoption of a new Constitution, the board also reinvigorated its organisational values and mission.

The adopt strategy focusses on four key result areas: our services & approach, risk & governance, viability and influence. Each area is supported by a number of goals to be delivered of the life of the strategic plan.

## Welcome to new board members

Following a successful recruitment campaign, the board welcomed two new members to its ranks, Donna Petrusma and Julie Evans, in September 2022.



# Chair's Report

Donna started working in the disability sector in the mid-1990s and has continued to work in the field in a variety of contexts including residential support, adult community programs, as a coordinator for the Community Visitor Program with the Office of the Public Advocate and in forensic disability at Corrections Victoria. She has held roles in local and state government, not-for-profit community services and the private sector. Donna brings expertise in strategic planning and implementation, project management, community engagement, advocacy and governance.

Julie brings over 35 years of experience across the public sector and the insurance industry, with strong financial and commercial acumen together with experience in assessing enterprise risk and developing and driving strategic change. Julie is an actuary with both local and international experience. She has worked as an actuarial consultant, a partner with a large professional services firm, and most recently a senior executive at WorkSafe Victoria. She is a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries of Australia and a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

### Maturing the board's approach

In the latter half of the year, the board established two committees: a Risk and Governance Committee and a Practice Standards Committee. The creation of the committees is part of a longer-term process in which the board has been evolving its approach to governance in line with expectations of, amongst others, the NDIS Commission as we continue to embed the principles of the NDIS into the way we operate. I would like to thank Teresa Iacono and Stacey Bloomfield for leading the committees and guiding a richer and more focussed approach to addressing board affairs.

### A big thank you to Shelley

Finally, In May 2023 we wished Ian bon voyage as he took well-earned long service leave. During his break, our Chief Finance Officer, Shelley Moore, took on the challenge of acting Chief Executive Officer, supported by Shane Mason as acting CFO and Ash Griffin stepping into Linton's role as General Manager Operations for 9 months.

The board has been grateful for the extra effort Shelley put in during her time as acting CEO, noting in particular her tenure overlapping with the financial years' end. Shelley did a terrific job keeping the show on the road and supporting the organisation to continue to flourish. GCSS are currently in the process of rolling out a significant IT enhancement leading to the provision of more streamlined, productive and efficient services. The board wishes to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of the staff involved in ensuring the success of this crucial infrastructure upgrade.

Finally, I wish to thank GCSS's dedicated staff across the organisation for their continued commitment to the values and mission of GCSS and the leadership shown by GCSS's management team



We work to support people to have more control of their own lives, with more friends and more opportunities.

### Strategic Objectives: 2022 - 2025

Our services & approach	Risk & Governance	Viability	Influence
<div>1. Clear Practice Models for each of the services we offer</div> <div>4. Maintaining and enhancing organisational capability</div>	<div>2. Strengthened Quality, Compliance and Reporting</div> <div>3. Strengthened risk management and governance</div>	<div>5. Long term viability and exploring options for expansion</div>	<div>6. Influencing disability policy and promoting GCSS model</div>
<div>GCSS values</div> <div>1. Human rights at the centre of all we do</div> <div>2. Evidence-informed, collaborative and evolving practice</div> <div>3. Meaningful, respectful and person-centred participation</div> <div>4. Building on strengths, choices and aspirations to support meaningful participation in communities</div> <div>5. Welcoming diversity and difference</div> <div>6. Accountable for our actions and outcomes</div>		<div>GCSS five bases of support:</div> <div>1. Communication</div> <div>2. Engagement</div> <div>3. Choice and Control</div> <div>4. Predictability and Consistency</div> <div>5. Positive and Respectful language</div>	<div>Life. Choice. Community.</div>

# CEO's Report

As CEO, I thank all staff for their commitment, contribution, and sustained effort through a challenging year, as we worked to maintain the quality of our support in the face of COVID, floods, workforce shortages, changes to award penalties, and changes to our core software platforms.

During the past year the World Health Organisation declared that the COVID Pandemic was over; however, for GCSS supporting participants who caught COVID, including ensuring they had early access to antiviral treatment, has remained an ongoing requirement. The impact of COVID (and other illnesses) has also affected our staff availability, often making filling shift vacancies for essential supports very time consuming and a high priority.

Central and Northern Victoria had a major flood event that impacted on the lives of participants and our staff for weeks (and for some of our staff the impact on their homes and lives, especially in Rochester, is ongoing). Participants and staff had to evacuate their homes, other staff were cut off by flood water and could not attend their shifts. They say that one of the ways to understand the culture of a group is to assess what they do in times of crisis. I can attest that at GCSS our culture includes: creativity, problem solving, interdependence (we are functionally interrelated), collaboration, flexibility, conscientiousness, empathy for others, trust in each other, functional leadership (staff 'stepping up' to extra responsibilities), good clear communication and focused on the welfare of the people we support and our staff.

Workforce shortages has been a key theme for all industries 'post COVID' and we are no exception. We have not been able to recruit the number of staff required in the past year, this has led to (along with staff illness) our staff being rostered more flexibly and GCSS being required

to make more unfunded shift penalty payments as a result (part of the deficit we have this year). Even though this is a significant financial risk factor for GCSS in the future, GCSS is in a strong financial position.

The increase of shift penalties in the Modern Award this year has exacerbated the cost impact of needing to use our staff flexibly, especially the new split shift penalties and new overtime entitlements for casual staff. GCSS supports the need to lift the wages of staff, however, GCSS is a 'price taker' where the NDIA sets the price paid per hour in the sector for a catalogue of supports. The NDIA's cost build assumes that an organisation will roster staff in a way that won't incur penalties. The new penalties in the Modern Award are unfunded adding to our deficit this year.

The upgrading and implementation of new software always takes enormous focus, time and resource, as it has for GCSS. All our staff have been impacted to some extent by this. I'd like to thank the teams of staff driving the implementation of our new software; for their commitment, dedication and preparedness to work overtime to keep the projects on track.

- There are three reasons for the necessity of software upgrades this year:
1. software platforms have become redundant, stopped being supported and are becoming less integrated (ability to seek and share information with other programs/data sources automatically) with newer software on new platforms.
  2. as the NDIA implements new software, organisations need to have the appropriate platforms to exchange data with them efficiently.
  3. GCSS is seeking better efficiency and effectiveness in our systems through new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, Workforce Management software

and Finance/Payroll software.

I congratulate GCSS direct support staff for keeping the lives of the people we support a priority in a year full of diversions. This year's independent report (2023) by La Trobe University of GCSS's Person Centered Active Support saw strong front line leadership from our Practice Leaders. Our overall active support score was lower than last year's score; however, we must take note that coaching of staff 'on the job' had been suspended or severely reduced due to COVID, team meetings were only on-line, and even though staff were orientated and shadow shifted to new support rosters, they were still learning how to apply their skills with someone they have not supported before.

Happily, I can report that front line leaders are back coaching our staff and regular face to face team meetings have resumed. It is possible that the richer communication that face to face team meetings can have is essential to equipping and maintaining Person Centred

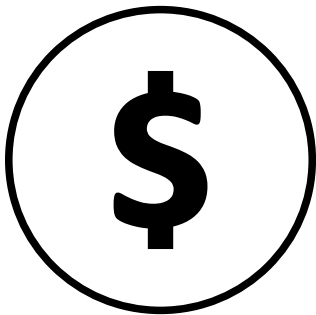
Active Support in our staff teams. Face to face team meetings potentially provide a more immersive environment- resulting in increased focus and engagement; the non-verbal part of communication is potentially easier to perceive - aiding understanding and connection; rapport-building is easier to build in a shared physical space- real-time interactions enhance the flow of information; physical meetings provide a broader social context for informal conversation – relationship/team building and enhanced sense of belonging.

GCSS is committed to learning from this past year and providing our staff the tools to build and maintain their support skills.

I'd like to thank the senior management team Shelley Moore, Neil Sing, Linton Ashley, Ash Griffin (Acting GMO while Linton was on leave) for their skill, commitment and massive contribution during another challenging year, this included Shelley taking on the Acting CEO role during my long service leave.

**We had**  
**\$12,217,267**  
**in NDIS Services**

**We had**  
**\$197,792**  
**in Contracted Services**



**We had**  
**\$1,105,246**  
**in Government Grants**

**We had**  
**\$13,893,909**  
**in Wages**



# CEO's Report

I thank Dru Marsh, Board Chair, for all the support and guidance to my CEO role through the year; and the whole Board of Management for their insight, support, leadership and focus on preparing for the future.

This being my 27th and last GCSS AGM CEO Report I ask you to indulge a little reflection on what has been a very meaningful journey. It has been a privilege contributing to the work of GCSS alongside such a great staff team, striving to provide the right support for people to have agency over their own lives.

I came to GCSS committed to praxis (practical application of theory). During my time as CEO, if I've made a significant contribution to the lives of the people we support and to the broader disability support field, it is in the area of providing part of the leadership required for GCSS to bridge the gap between research/theory and practice/outcomes. The Recovery Model was already well entrenched in the Psychosocial Support area. However, for disability support, there were only a few organisations that were seeking to implement researched practice frameworks.

GCSS has been able to demonstrate what is possible when a service provider actively listens to the people they are supporting and organises with the ends focused on the person's quality of life. GCSS has demonstrated how to use the frameworks of Person Centred Active Support and Positive Behaviour Support to equip staff to provide skilled support, which in turn has provided the participant with opportunities and involvement in their own interests, their own relationships and their own communities.

I'd like to thank and acknowledge the generosity, interest and time given to GCSS by the initial GCSS Board of Reference: Prof. Jim Mansell, A/ Prof. Chris Fyffe, Emeritus Prof. Robert Schalock, A/Prof Robert Davis and Prof. Ann Turnbull.

I'd also like to thank those who were part of the essential networks that sustained GCSS; allies, mentors, advisors and 'friends' of GCSS over the past 27 years: Mr. Jeffrey McCubbery, Prof Chris Bigby, Prof Julie Beadle Brown, Dr. Dave Allen, Emeritus Prof. Roy Brown, Dr. Alice Schippers, Dr. Gary La Vigna, Mr. Mathew Spicer, Mr. Gary Radler, Mr. Simon Brown-Greaves, Mr. Andrew Hollo, Ms. Sarah Fordyce, Mr. Chris Glennen, Mr. Warwick Cavanaugh, Ms. Estelle Fyffe, Mr. Daryl James, Mr. Ralph Modena, Members of the IASSIDD Quality of Life SIRG. I apologise to those who I should have included on this list and have been remiss.

What GCSS does is not the legacy of any one person- it is fragile and depends on the sustained skilled interactions and decisions that occur moment by moment, every day, within GCSS.

In the words of Paulo Freire:

*"The future isn't something hidden in a corner.  
The future is something we build in the present."*

My sincere and warm wishes for every success in building the future in the present.

**Ian McLean**

Chief Executive Officer  
Golden City Support Services

Right: Kyra Drummond and ensemble members  
rehearse choreography for Burnout Ballet.  
Photo: John Willis

Golden City Support Services Annual Report 2023





# Minutes 2022

## Minutes of the Forty-Third Annual General Meeting

Offices of Golden City Support Services  
48 Mundy Street Bendigo  
Monday 28th November 2022

**Meeting Commenced:** 7:45 pm

**Present:** Christine Bigby (Deputy Chair),  
Stacey Bloomfield (Secretary),  
Julie Evans, Teresa Iacono,  
Dru Marsh (Chair), Nova Marsh,  
Donna Petrusma, Jessica Wade,  
Ashleigh Griffin, Ian McLean,  
Shelley Moore, Neil Sing

**Minute Taker:** Neil Sing

**Apologies:** Ross Baring

### Acknowledgement of Country:

Dru Marsh (Chair) acknowledged that this meeting of Members of the Association is being held on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Warrug people and that Golden City Support Services Incorporated is headquartered on traditional lands of the Dja Dja Warrung people and that Golden City Support Services provides its services on Dja Dja Warrung, Yorta Yorta, Taungurung and Wurrundjeri Country.

Respect is paid to elders past, present and emerging, for all the traditional lands upon which we serve and we recognise their continued connection and custodianship of the land, waters and skies.

### Welcome:

Dru Marsh (Chair) welcomed members

of the Association of Golden City Support Services Incorporated and others present, to this Forty-Third Annual General Meeting of Members of the Association.

### Notice of Meeting:

In accordance with clause 33 of the Golden City Support Services Incorporated Rules the Chair, Dru Marsh, advised that the Secretary of the Association has given at least 14 days' notice of this Annual General Meeting. The said notice being read and tabled at this Annual General Meeting of the Association.

### Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

- The minutes of-
- (i) the 42nd Annual General Meeting of Members of the Association of Golden City Support Services Incorporated, dated 20 November 2021.
  - &
  - (ii) the Special General Meeting of Members of the Association of Golden City Support Services Incorporated, dated 16 May 2022

were circulated prior to this meeting and tabled at this meeting.

The Members of the Association of Golden City Support Services Incorporated that were recorded as present at the afore mentioned Annual General Meeting and the Special General Meeting resolved to adopt the minutes of each of these meetings as true and correct.

### Reports and Financial Statement:

The following reports were tabled at this

meeting as included in the 2022 Annual Report and Financial Statements-

- (i) President (Chair) Report – Dru Marsh
- (ii) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Report- Ian McLean
- (iii) Financial Statements of the Association – Shelley Moore

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

In accordance with clause 26 (b) of the Golden City Support Services Incorporated Rules Dru Marsh inquired of those members present if any member required an adjournment of this Annual General Meeting to further consider business arising from the tabled reports and statements. No member of the Association present at this meeting requested an adjournment.

The Members of the Association of Golden City Support Services Incorporated, present at this Annual General Meeting, resolved to accept all reports and statements as presented and tabled at this meeting.

### Election of Board Members:

- In accordance with clause 55(a) of the Golden City Support Services Incorporated Rules, the following Board Members were elected to casual vacancies since the last Annual General Meeting of Members of the Association –
- (i) Nova Marsh
  - (ii) Julie Evans
  - (iii) Donna Petrusma

This Annual General Meeting of Members

of the Association resolved that the number of Board Members be set as seven (7) for the next year. On the calling of nominations by the Chair of this meeting (Dru Marsh), the following Members of the Association nominated to be Board Members-

- (i) Nova Marsh
- (ii) Julie Evans
- (iii) Donna Petrusma

As the number of members nominated for the position of Board Member is equal to the number of board vacancies and equal to the number of Board Members as set for the next year (being seven (7)) the following Members of the Association are elected to the Board of the Association for a period of three (3) years in accordance Division 3 of the Golden City Support Services Incorporated Rules-

- (i) Nova Marsh
- (ii) Julie Evans
- (iii) Donna Petrusma

The meeting congratulated and welcomed the new Board Members.

### Election of Auditor:

The Annual General Meeting resolved to hold over the appointment of financial auditors for the financial year 2022/ 2023. The Board will discuss the matter further.

### General Business:

Stacey Bloomfield (Secretary), advised the meeting that no matters of general business have been received.

**Meeting Closed:** 8:10 pm



# Agenda 2023

**Forty-Fourth Annual General Meeting:  
7.15 pm, Monday 27 November 2023**

**Venue:**  
Boardroom | First Floor 48 Mundy Street

- 1. **Acknowledgement of Country**  
– Dr Dru Marsh
- 2. **Welcome**  
– Dr Dru Marsh
- 3. **Notice of Meeting** – Dr Dru Marsh
- 4. **Apologies, roll call and quorum**
- 5. **Confirm Minutes:**  
of the 43rd Annual General Meeting,  
dated 28 November 2022
- 6. **Reports:**  
**Tabling of Reports:**
  - Annual Report
  - Audited Financial Statements
- 7. **Questions on Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements**
- 8. **Election or confirmation for the vacancies on the Board**
- 9. **General Business**  
(of which 7 days notice has been given)
- 10. **Meeting Close**

Right: Filming for Burnout Ballet, video screened in Hargreaves Mall as part of Create Lab. Photo: John Willis





# Positive change and exceptional support

**Our commitment to excellence shines through our dedicated support teams, whose devotion consistently exceeds expectations. Our staff, widely recognised as some of the most sought-after professionals in the region, go above and beyond to ensure the well-being and satisfaction of those we support. Our Customer Service, Rostering and Front Office teams play indispensable roles, complementing and collaborating with our Support Teams.**

Our Customer Service Team bridges the gap between our organisation, external stakeholders and our participants. Their commitment to enhancing participant experiences, coupled with their adeptness in utilising cutting-edge tools like Lumary, has revolutionised participant interactions. They excel in offering personalised, efficient, and responsive support, ensuring that every interaction reflects our dedication to exceeding expectations.

Behind the scenes, our Rostering Team operates to ensure optimal staffing levels meet the evolving demands of our services. Their considered planning and meticulous coordination enable the seamless delivery of support, maintaining a delicate balance between participant needs and staffing resources. Despite the challenges, their dedication drives our ability to uphold quality care and support.

The Front Office Team serves as the welcoming face of our organisation, providing administrative support that underpins the efficiency of our service delivery. Their professionalism and organisational skills streamline the

workflow, ensuring smooth coordination between various departments, enhancing communication channels, and facilitating the effective functioning of our support services.

At the forefront of our service delivery are our Practice Leaders, guiding our staff to new heights. Their leadership is not only instrumental in maintaining the high standards for which we are known, but also in fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Through mentorship and unwavering support, our Practice Leaders inspire their teams to provide personalised, meaningful support that goes beyond expectations.

Our staff, known for their expertise and compassion, have become synonymous with quality support. Their proficiency in navigating complex situations, coupled with a genuine commitment to the well-being of our participants, sets a regional benchmark for professionalism. It's no wonder that our Service Delivery Teams are consistently sought after for their unparalleled support.

The collaboration between these integral teams reinforces our commitment to sustained excellence. Their collective efforts enable our organisation to navigate complexities, ensuring that participants receive the highest standards of support. The alignment of their roles plays a pivotal part in upholding our reputation as a provider of quality services in the region.

This year marked a significant stride in our commitment to meeting the needs of our community. We extended the operating hours of our respite services, providing a more extensive and flexible support system



Above: Steffi Mahnic and Leon Wilcox. Picture by John Willis

for individuals and families. It has been challenging to balance our staffing levels and increase our services, but this expansion has been important as we strive to meet the evolving needs of our participants.

Life is a journey filled with transitions, and our support teams stand as companions through these moments. Whether it's assisting individuals in relocating their

homes or fostering new friendships, our teams have been there, offering support and guidance during these significant life events. Their adaptability and empathy ensure that participants feel empowered and secure during times of change.



# Creating Independence

**When people with lived experiences of disability come together to form an advocacy group, they create a powerful platform for change. By fostering a culture of empowerment and inclusion, this group aspires to create a more equitable and supportive society for all.**

Under the guidance of our Community Development and Inclusion Officer, Yvette and Phillip have continued their work advocating for people with disabilities and representing their best interests.

In February 2023, Yvette and Phillip took centre stage at the Having a Say conference in Geelong. Together, they co-presented with the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID), sharing their experiences and insights. This remarkable achievement showcased their growing confidence and ability to advocate for themselves and others in the disability community. Their participation not only empowered themselves, but also highlighted the immense potential that lies within each person when provided with the right support and opportunities.

In June 2023, Phillip's dedication to inclusivity took him to the Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning Forum hosted by the City of Greater Bendigo. This event provided a platform to discuss and address emergency preparedness within the context of disability. Phillip's presence and contributions were invaluable, shedding light on the unique needs and considerations of individuals with disabilities during emergencies. His active engagement reflects GCSS' commitment to fostering collaboration and awareness in every aspect of community life.



Above: Yvette Keane and Phillip Blair, two members of the Creating Independence group, attending the Having A Say Conference 2023 in Geelong. Picture by John Willis



# Engaged in contemporary arts

When given opportunities to explore and develop skills in creative arts people are able to contribute to the cultural life of their community. By participating they are also able to develop positive self-identities and confidence in expressing their identity.

## Plenty of creative activity

After two years of not being able to present work publicly and cancelled performances, our CreateA performing groups have had a great year getting back on the boards.

The CreateA Saturday Drama Group united their talents to craft a series of short video episodes titled “Italy in Bendigo”. These episodes, showcased at the Conflux conference in Bendigo in September 2022, follow the events of a fictional pizza restaurant in Bendigo. The series has been in production since 2019, having to endure multiple lockdowns over the last few years. Shot at various locations around Bendigo, the series was devised by members of the group. There is humour, intrigue and surprising turns; all you could want in a quirky local soapie.

CreateA’s Performance Ensemble produced “Venous Return”, presented at Goods Shed Arts in Castlemaine in July 2022.

Blood, tides, the circulation of the elements, the circulation of the stuff of our lives. Part installation, part performance, part playful experiment, this theatrical work leads its audience through physical and emotional spaces to experience the relationship between our body and our world, internal flows and external currents. The Goods Shed is a venue run by Castlemaine State Festival.

The Festival, along with Bendigo Venues & Events have supported the development of new work by CreateA over many years.

This support was evident again this year with a City of Greater Bendigo funded ‘Artist in Residence’ program that enabled the ensemble to collaborate with choreographer Heidi Barrett. The work resulted in a new performance piece, “Move With Me”, which was included in the Castlemaine State Festival theatre program. This was a movement-based piece that explored individual’s unique ways of expressing themselves physically. It drew in an audience that might not have considered how powerful the inclusion of people with disability in performance can be.

“There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to  
fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat;  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures”

- William Shakespeare – Julius Caesar



Opening Shot from Burnout Ballet (video). Leonie Van Eyk (videographer)



# Systems to keep up with change

When empowered with innovative technology and expert support, our Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) team ensures seamless operations and fosters a digital culture that propels GCSS' ongoing digital transformation. They thrive in adaptable work environments, keeping our systems up-to-date to navigate a changing landscape while empowering individuals to embrace the digital age with confidence.

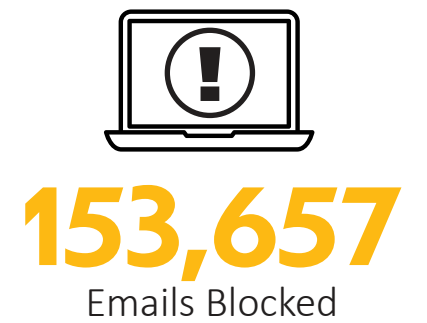
The ICT team has been working hard to improve the security and operational efficiency of our existing IT services for both staff and participants. This involved further work on migration of on-premises infrastructure to cloud services, the adoption of cloud-managed laptops, multifactor authentication for essential organisational roles, and various other minor enhancements.

In alignment with current trends in a blended workplace, hybrid conferences, and a greater reliance on digital interactions, we have upgraded our meeting facilities to smoothly accommodate external parties in our on-site meetings. This improvement enables us to maintain more convenient connections with our partners.

This year marked a significant step in our journey towards a comprehensive set of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems as we went live with Lumary. Lumary serves as the cornerstone of our software suite, providing us with real-time, up-to-date

information. This empowers us to better engage with our participants, uphold quality and safeguard standards, efficiently manage our workforce, and optimise our workflows.

Looking ahead, our commitment to enhancing our CRM solutions continues, with the integration of Skedulo on the horizon. Skedulo will offer our support staff quick access to their work schedules and real-time connectivity to the systems maintained by other teams within the organisation.



Above: Nicholas Cobbold during filming for Burnout Ballet. Picture by John Willis



# Committed to Best Practice

When our Practice Team collaborates with our Practice Leaders and their dedicated support teams, they form a driving force behind positive change. Comprising experts from various disciplines, including exercise physiology and behavioural analysis and intervention, the Practice Team plays a pivotal role in promoting well-being and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

One of our Practice Team’s responsibilities is the provision of Behaviour Support Services. They work closely with participants to develop individualised strategies that promote positive behaviour, enhance well-being, and ensure a safe environment. Their expertise in behaviour analysis and intervention is instrumental in helping individuals achieve their goals and reach their full potential.

In addition to their proactive support services, our Practice Team plays a critical role in upholding our commitment to ethical and responsible services. This year, they conducted audits of our service delivery settings to identify restrictive practices to ensure the safety and dignity of our participants. Their dedication to continuous improvement and adherence to best practices in care underscores our organisation’s unwavering commitment to the well-being and rights of those we serve.

Our Practice Coaches collaborate closely with our Team Leaders and support staff, equipping them with the tools, knowledge, and guidance necessary to provide the best possible care and support to our participants. Through mentorship, training, and ongoing support, they enable our staff to deliver

quality services and create meaningful positive outcomes.

The Practice Team embraces a person-centred approach, recognising the uniqueness of each individual. They prioritise the autonomy and choices of our participants, ensuring that all support and interventions are aligned with the individual’s preferences and goals. This philosophy reflects our commitment to providing the highest quality support services.



# Yvette on the go!

Yvette recently completed a fundraiser walk to support the Epilepsy Foundation, assisting her team to walk an impressive 150km. Facing inclement weather, Yvette wisely took her walk to the Bendigo Marketplace, doing laps of the building.

Yvette explained that aside from fundraising for epilepsy, she’s absolutely “flat out”. Yvette has been volunteering at her local Vinnies, participating in the CreateA Drama group and the choir, and she’s thinking about going back to swimming. Yvette recently completed the steps so that she can begin volunteering in Aged Care. “And I’ll probably do [the fundraiser] again next year,” said Yvette.

Yvette might just be the busiest person we’ve met.

“When my Mum and Nan talk to me, they always say ‘We’ve got make an appointment to see you!’”.

Right: Yvette Keane. Photo: Supplied



# Empowering Disability Services through Strategic Finance Management

**With a mission of providing high-quality services to individuals with disabilities, the Finance team plays a crucial role in ensuring GCSS' financial health and sustainability by managing financial resources. By budgeting, financial planning, and monitoring of expenses they ensure fiscal responsibility and compliance with NDIS funding requirements. Collaboration with other parts of GCSS to align financial strategies with the broader goals allows the team to help facilitate informed decision-making that enhances the overall effectiveness of disability services.**

In navigating the intricacies of NDIS funding, the Finance team plays a pivotal role in claiming, reporting, and maintaining transparency in financial transactions. They work to establish robust financial controls, ensuring that funds allocated for specific purposes are utilised efficiently and in accordance with regulatory guidelines. They are responsible for preparing accurate and timely financial reports for internal stakeholders, the Board of Management, and external entities, such as government agencies and auditors. These reports not only showcase the organisation's fiscal responsibility but also help in building trust and credibility with participants and the broader community.



A key challenge in the past 12 months involved the implementation of a new payroll system for office staff with integrating the system posing some significant problems. Additionally, navigating the dynamic landscape of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) financial environment presented an ongoing challenge. The NDIS is characterised by continual changes and the team had to adapt to this while anticipating further challenges ahead. Balancing these intricacies demanded a strategic and proactive approach to ensure effective financial management within the evolving NDIS framework.

Over the course of the next 12 months, our primary focus will be on finalising the implementation of our new client management, rostering, and payroll systems. These enhancements are aimed at optimising efficiency in claiming and budget management. Additionally, we are undergoing a transition to new finance and budgeting software, necessitating a realignment of processes and procedures. Another significant challenge on the horizon is adapting to the PACE system rollout by the National Disability Insurance Agency. This introduces uncertainties in fund claiming, potentially impacting cash flow and revenue certainty. Despite these challenges, our strategic approach aims to navigate these changes successfully, ensuring a smooth transition and continued operational excellence.

The overarching objective of the Finance team is to support GCSS in realising its vision by ensuring financial stability, transparency, and accountability in delivering quality services under the NDIS framework.

# Tailoring Support for Enhanced Independence and Inclusion

**Serving as the linchpin between service recipients and the various providers, Support Coordination plays a pivotal role in putting in place effective delivery of services to individuals with disabilities, and thereby enhance the overall quality of their life.**

Their primary responsibility involves navigating the complexities of the NDIS framework, collaborating with participants to identify their unique needs, and strategically coordinating a tailored mix of support services. This may include liaising with healthcare professionals, organising community resources, and facilitating communication between the participant, their families, and service providers to ensure a holistic and person-centred approach to support. Through their expertise and commitment, the Support Coordination team endeavours to empower individuals with disabilities to maximise their independence, participation, and social inclusion within the community.

In addition to their direct participant-focused responsibilities, the Support Coordination team also serves a critical role in maintaining compliance with NDIS guidelines and regulations. This involves staying abreast of the latest developments and updates within the NDIS framework, and ensuring that GCSS' services align with the prescribed standards. Through continuous improvement initiatives, they contribute to GCSS' overall vision of fostering inclusivity and empowering individuals with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives.

Over the past year, support coordinators have faced significant challenges. These

include grappling with stagnant funding, navigating complexities in communication between government departments, and addressing critical gaps in the system. The shortage of accessible and affordable housing options has posed a major hurdle in assisting participants in achieving their desired outcomes. Moreover, support coordinators have found themselves bridging unforeseen challenges and providing additional support not initially accounted for in the plan budget, further underscoring the multifaceted nature of their role.

Our support coordination team have also achieved notable successes in their work, including connecting participants with stimulating programs that align with their goals. One of these successes included fostering artistic expression through a placement in art program resulting in a public exhibition. Additionally, support coordinators have played a pivotal role in maximising plan benefits by assisting participants in obtaining assessments, ensuring optimal plan utilisation and securing increased funding. The positive outcomes extend beyond financial considerations, with not only improved participant engagement but also contribute to reduced carer burnout and strengthened relationships between carers and participants. Moreover, the positive impact of support coordinators is evident in their role in enabling carers to re-enter the workforce.

The combined efforts of the Support Coordination team is not only try to facilitate seamless service provision but also contribute to the broader goal of advancing the well-being and rights of people with disabilities in accordance with the principles of the NDIS.



## Providing financial confidence for NDIS Participants

**With the goal of ensuring effective utilisation of funds allocated by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) the Plan Management team provides a crucial service for participants in overseeing the financial aspects of NDIS plans, encompassing budgeting, monitoring expenses, and facilitating smooth financial transactions. Their primary objective is to empower clients by maximising the value of their allocated funds, allowing them to access a comprehensive range of disability services and support tailored to their unique needs.**

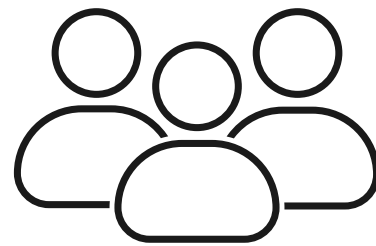
In addition to financial oversight, the Plan Management team serves as a crucial liaison between participants, service providers, and the NDIS itself. They navigate the complexities of the NDIS funding model, providing guidance to participants on funding options and ensuring compliance with NDIS regulations.

Looking ahead, the complexity of navigating the NDIS funding model in light of the reports published by the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Independent Review will require the team to stay abreast of evolving regulations and guidelines.

They will also need to effectively convey information about changes to participants and facilitate smooth transactions between participants and service providers. Establishing and maintaining these relationships is crucial not only for financial transactions but also for enhancing the overall quality of support offered by the GCSS.

By fostering transparent communication

and building strong relationships with both participants and service providers, the Plan Management team plays a key role in enhancing the overall quality of support offered by GCSS. Through their expertise and commitment, they contribute to GCSS' vision of promoting inclusivity, independence, and well-being for individuals with disabilities in the community.



**439**  
Total Participants

**163**  
Direct Support  
participants

**259**  
Plan Management  
Participants

**178**  
Support Coordination  
Participants

## Closing our Aged services

**When compassion and dedication meet the changing needs of our community, our aged care services have provided support, care, and a sense of belonging to many individuals. Although our journey in aged care services has concluded, our legacy of enhancing lives through quality care and empathy endures in the hearts of those we've supported.**

We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to our dedicated staff and their Team Leader. Their unwavering commitment to the well-being of our participants was truly commendable. We would also like to thank all the participants who were part of our Aged Care services over the years.

GCSS undertook transition planning with the new provider, working diligently to support our participants in their transition to the new services, which was successfully completed by July 2023. Our staff went above and beyond to make this transition as seamless and stress-free as possible for our participants, always keeping their well-being and comfort at the forefront during this period of change.





Left: CreateA Visual Art Group Cactus Garden, exhibited in the foyers of The Capital, View St.





Above: Heidi Barrett, Residency Artist with CreateA, rehearsing for Move With Me.  
Photo: Leonie Van Eyk

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